

**City of West Orange
Monday, March 22, 2021
Workshop Session**

**West Orange Community Center
2700 Western Avenue (rear entrance)
West Orange, Texas
5:00 p.m.**

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mayor Roy McDonald
Brent Dearing
Shirley Bonnin
Michael Shugart, Sr.
Randy Branch

COUNCIL MEMBER ABSENT:

Dale Dardeau

APPOINTED OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Theresa Van Meter
David Roberts
Mike Stelly
Simmie Gibson
Jon Sherwin

OTHERS PRESENT:

Jay Odom
Meritta Kennedy
Marvin Burke Weems

Call to Order

Mayor McDonald called the workshop to order at 5:00 p.m. The invocation was given by Council Member Branch.

Workshop

The mayor stated that the purpose of this workshop was to discuss specifications for, and purchase of, a new fire truck, however no action would/could be taken.

Council Member Branch stated that the Council should look to Asst. Fire Chief Gibson for guidance, as he has "specked" out trucks for other departments. Asst. Fire Chief Gibson stated that he feels that the City should be looking at a custom truck for the safety factor, more options that are available, air packs can be inside the cab, value of the truck down the line will be more and the turning radius is much better than a commercial truck. He added that, regardless of what truck is purchased, he recommends only using Emergency Vehicle Technicians (EVTs) for maintenance and service work.

Council Member Branch then questioned why the addendums were added to the specs that had been approved by Council. Chief Stelly responded that the addendums were made because vendors had specific questions on the specs. Then every vendor received copies of that addendum.

Council Member Shugart then questioned the bid from Siddons-Martin for a 300-hp truck when the bids specs called for a 400-hp or better. Asst. Fire Chief Gibson reported that a representative from that company called him after their bid had been submitted and told him that they had "bid wrong." Chief Stelly cautioned Asst. Fire Chief Gibson on talking with prospective bidders before it gets to Council as it could possibly invalidate the grant. Asst. Fire Chief Gibson responded that he did not make the contact. He was called by them.

The Siddons-Martin bid was the only one that met all bid specifications and included all required contractual documentation. Council Member Shugart stated that since their bid was for a 300-hp engine, rather than for a 400-hp or better, it really did not meet bids specs and should have never been considered. Chief Stelly responded that the bid specs did allow for "alternative" bids, in which case if the vendor can offer something that they feel to be better for the situation, Council can consider it.

Council Member Shugart asked Chief Stelly when this grant had been approved. He responded that he believed it was either December, 2020 or January, 2021. Council Member Shugart then questioned when the grant application had been submitted. Chief Stelly responded that it was in 2019. He went on to explain that the General Land Office (GLO) is doing this grant and they generally do not do equipment grants, so this is new ground for them. The Chief even had to submit an environmental clearance for a fire truck.

The discussion then turned to the changes made by the grant administrator to the original specs turned over to her. Chief Stelly stated that Mrs. Smith had gone through the form with the GLO and apparently it was approved, or it would not have gotten this far. He suggested taking the Request for Bids that was put out and make the changes that are wanted and then send it back to her and go from there.

Council Member Shugart stated that he does not feel anyone is more qualified than Asst. Fire Chief Gibson to write up fire truck specs and he does not think Mrs. Smith should be changing them. Chief Stelly replied that the City can take his specs and put them out for bid exactly how he has written them, but the vendor will not accept any liability when the City is refused the \$315,000 in grant funds because something the GLO requires is not included in their bid package.

Fire Chief Roberts reported that Asst. Fire Chief Gibson has gone through the specs that were sent to vendors and made some modifications, filling in any blanks that she may have had. Those present then decided to go page-by-page through the bids specs discussing the revisions being suggested by Asst. Fire Chief Gibson.

Council Member Branch stated he would prefer, first, to go through the changes made from the original specs to see if those changes need to stay in the specs or not. Secondly, he would like to consider the custom cab and how it could be funded if that is chosen. Mayor McDonald stated that he wants to go out for bid on both a custom and a commercial truck.

Council Member Shugart stated that the auditor reported at the last meeting that the City has eleven months' operating capital in reserve, when only six is recommended. He does not feel there is any problem funding the extra cost of a custom truck. Chief Stelly stated that he would like everyone to keep in mind, however, the City does not operate primarily on property taxes. Sales taxes are a very large part of the City's income, and should something happen to stop or drastically decrease that revenue, the City would be in a bind very quickly. The mayor's original goal was to have a year's operating capital in reserve in case of emergency. Said emergency might also be a hurricane or other natural disaster, whose FEMA funding may take well over a year to receive. Repairs cannot wait a year to be made. Most have to be made immediately.

Council Member Shugart asked if Chief Stelly was saying that those funds could not be touched. He replied that he was not, but to be very careful with those reserve funds.

Mayor Pro-Tem Bonnin stated that her issue with spending from the City's reserve funds was that the fire department is not the only department within the City. There are also needs in other departments and every department cannot get everything they want. Chief Roberts responded that the reason that he and Asst. Fire Chief Gibson were asked to come to West Orange was because of the shape the fire department had gotten down to. He added that going out in either of the trucks at the present time was a liability to the City. Mayor McDonald then asked Chief Roberts what more the City would be getting by buying a custom truck over a commercial truck. He responded, "a safer cab."

Asst. Fire Chief Gibson then pointed out the changes he is suggesting to the bids specs that had previously been approved by Council.

The mayor asked if there were any areas in West Orange that were inaccessible in the trucks the department has at this time. Asst. Fire Chief Gibson responded, "with two or three tries, you can get anywhere."

Chief Roberts stated that air packs will be inside the cabin a custom truck, but not a commercial. The firefighters can be putting them on while on the way to the fire. On a commercial truck, their air packs would have to go into a compartment on the outside of the truck taking up storage space that could be used for other things. Mayor McDonald asked how many firefighters generally responded to the station for a call. Chief Roberts replied that it really depends upon the time of the day. In the evening, he believed he could fill the cab of the truck, but during the day, many of the volunteers are at work. The mayor then asked him how long the truck would wait at the station for additional firefighters to arrive before leaving for a fire. Chief Roberts responded that generally, whomever arrives first begins to gather the gear of the others who have responded that they are on their way, and loads it onto the truck. They usually arrive at the station a minute or so.

Mayor Pro-Tem Bonnin asked if this truck would fit in the station. Chief Roberts replied that it would, as it has a 16' wheelbase, whereas the shorter of the trucks currently in operation has an 18' wheelbase and the longer has a 22' wheelbase. Chief Stelly stated that the truck length should not exceed 36'.

Everyone was in agreement that the next step would be to send these changes to Mrs. Smith and then, if there are no conflicts with the grant, take the revised specs for a custom and a commercial truck to Council for a vote. Once approved, they will be returned to Mrs. Smith to advertise for requests for bids.

Adjournment

With discussion being concluded, Mayor McDonald adjourned the workshop at 6:18 p.m.

Roy McDonald

Roy McDonald, Mayor

ATTEST:

Theresa Van Meter

Theresa Van Meter, City Secretary

