

A regular meeting of the Groves City Council was held on December 22, 2025, at 5:00 p.m., in the Groves City Council Chamber with Mayor Chris Borne, Mayor Pro Tem Rae Shauna Gay, Councilmember Brandon Holmes, Councilmember Charles Chelette, and Councilmember Mark McAdams in attendance. Mayor Borne called the meeting to order and welcomed the attendees. A representative from VFW 4820 then led the prayer and pledge of allegiance.

Mayor Borne called for reports, and City Manager Kevin Carruth stated that, in case you haven't noticed, we have a new monitor on the wall, replacing the laptop and projector. The catalyst for that was the little laptop we use for Zoom. The laptop, particularly, was reaching the point where it could no longer handle the Microsoft OS, and the projector was getting progressively dimmer. We were able to get this 95-inch monitor during a Black Friday sale for less than replacing those two older pieces of equipment, and it allows us to do more with our computer than just using the monitor itself.

Fire Chief Lance Billeaud then addressed the Council regarding a grant from the Texas Forestry Service. Last year, the City received a grant that reimbursed the firefighters' workers' comp. We received a \$25,000 grant from them the other day, which was actually applied for in 2018 by our previous Assistant Fire Chief, Kelly Moore. There was a massive backlog of grant applications that they finally received some funding for. This grant can be used for equipment or PPE, and once it is decided on what to use the grant money for, Chief Billeaud stated he would bring it back to the Council for an update. There were no further reports.

Mayor Borne asked for citizen comments, and there were none.

DELIBERATE AND ACT TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 8, 2025, CITY COUNCIL MEETING: Mayor Pro Tem Gay moved to approve the minutes of the December 8, 2025, City Council meeting as written, and Councilmember McAdams seconded. Mayor Borne asked for questions or comments, and there were none. The motion passed unanimously.

RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 1, 2025, PLANNING AND ZONING MEETING: Mayor Borne stated that all of the Council members have received the minutes from the December 1, 2025, Planning and Zoning Meeting.

DELIBERATE AND ACT ON AN INVESTMENT GRADE AUDIT AGREEMENT WITH SCHNEIDER ELECTRIC BUILDINGS AMERICAS, INC. TO IDENTIFY ENERGY CONSERVATION MEASURES AVAILABLE IN CITY FACILITIES, PROPOSE A SCOPE OF WORK FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THOSE MEASURES, AND

AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO NEGOTIATE AND EXECUTE ALL NECESSARY DOCUMENTS: Councilmember Chelette made a motion to deliberate and act on an Investment Grade Audit Agreement with Schneider Electric Buildings Americas, Inc. to identify energy conservation measures available in City facilities, propose a scope of work for implementation of those measures, and authorizing the City Manager to negotiate and execute all necessary documents. Mayor Pro Tem Gay seconded. Craig Mesenbrink of Schneider Electric then introduced Troy Hotchkiss, the Chief Engineer at Schneider, who has 33 years of wastewater experience. Mr. Hotchkiss stated that when he first looked at this project, he said it wouldn't work, so he visited the wastewater plant with Public Works Director Troy Foxworth. After visiting the plant, he was proven wrong and commended the workers there for their exceptional work to keep the plant running. Mr. Hotchkiss then stated that, now that he understands how Mr. Foxworth and his team are making the plant work, there are unique circumstances regarding how the plant needs to be operated by the operators, as well as the control systems we are proposing to implement here to maximize energy and handle peak flows. The City has very high peak flows caused by infiltration into the collection system, which the plant was not designed to handle. Again, the workers at the plant are working magic to make it happen. Mr. Hotchkiss then went over the Sampling Campaign Results, which include the flow, CB0D5, TSS, and NH3-N. This data is needed to help design the plant and to provide the performance guarantee for the system designed for the City, which is the essence of the contract.

Mayor Borne asked what the impact of the flow would be if initially, we are looking at a plant that does 2.56 million gallons per day, and then going to a design that will take it down to the standard of 1.6 mgd, and if we get back to that 2.56, will the plant be able to sustain? Mr. Hotchkiss stated that it will. Mayor Borne then asked whether we were able to identify the reason for the mgd dropping from 2.56 to 1.6? Was it the pipe-bursting project or less rainfall? Mr. Foxworth stated it was a combination of both. The plant permit is for 5 mgd, which is the ultimate system we want to install for the aeration components we will discuss. Councilmember Chelette asked whether there was a rain event during these measurements to show the influx of rain they experience from time to time, and Mr. Hotchkiss stated there was not. Councilmember Holmes asked: As far as the egress from rain flow, other than this initial sampling, do we need to conduct further investigation into what effect that would have on the system? Mr. Hotchkiss stated that the collection system requires a lot of TLC and will continue to need investment. Our goal is to change that in a way that allows us to optimize energy use while still handling the inflow of rain. If the plant

is operated in storm mode all of the time, you are just burning money to treat stormwater instead of wastewater. We will change the way the plant operates to treat wastewater when stormwater, the INI, comes into the system. It will go into a different mode, but only long enough to pass that water. Mr. Hotchkiss then went over what has changed in the scope of work from the original, completed in 2022, to the most recent, completed in 2025, which is not that much different. The primary focus is on the aeration, because that is the heart of the treatment plant, and the vast majority of the energy savings is in the actual aeration, the biological process. The aerobic digesters are a secondary process that doesn't address the actual treatment of what goes into the creek; these are the solids that come off the biological process. Because the City has an arrangement with a landfill that will accept sludge, you don't have to digest it, so you don't want to spend that money and time processing it when it is just going to a landfill.

Mr. Hotchkiss then stated that they want to replace the old blowers that feed the system so that the digesters can do what they are supposed to do if they were actually digesting solids. Schneider is suggesting only operating one of those blowers, so that we are not wasting time, volume, and energy processing something that doesn't need to be processed. That way, the City will always have that resource available to operate, and this scope will suggest operational changes to improve energy efficiency. Mr. Mesenbrink then addressed the Council, stating that one of the things he wanted to highlight was that there was a whole lot of work that was done a few years ago to put this together, and part of our mission in this process was to introduce another investment-grade audit that will get us to the finish line. To do this, we had to identify what was the same and what was different, and for the most part, everything was the same. One change is that the controls package will be significantly different, helping manage peak flows that were not part of the original scope but are now. There are also other new things, which is why this investment-grade audit incurs a cost. The last scope of work included the headworks, which have already been completed, and we are now focusing on aeration, digestion, and a robust controls and sequencing package. Councilmember Holmes then asked whether there was any information on the service life and life expectancy of the new blowers, and Mr. Hotchkiss stated that the high-speed turbos have gained traction over the last 20 years. Whichever one we end up going with, there's a trade-off on longevity and efficiency. Day one out of the box, it is super-efficient but requires maintenance, which is part of the technology selection we will go through with Mr. Foxworth. Councilmember Holmes asked about the cybersecurity aspect, and Mr. Hotchkiss stated that they intend to have these control panels and their logic feed into the plant-level SCADA system.

Mr. Mesenbrink then stated that they will complete this investment-grade audit and return with a scope of work and a price for the final project. If the Council approves the investment-grade audit process now, then Schneider can start it immediately. Mayor Borne asked about the cost of the audit, and Mr. Mesenbrink stated it is \$590,000. Mayor Borne asked City Manager Kevin Carruth if he had information on how this could be funded at this time, and Mr. Carruth stated that we have sufficient reserves. Mr. Carruth then said that if we reach the end of the IGA and the Council decides not to move forward, the City would still have to pay the \$590,000 and part ways. If we move forward, the cost of the IGA will be rolled into the project. Mr. Carruth stated that both he and the City Attorney have reviewed the agreement and are both good with it. Mayor Borne reiterated that the \$590,000 would be paid at the end of the audit if we decided to part ways and asked if that was correct. Mr. Mesenbrink stated that the contract includes an invoicing stage with a one-step invoice of approximately \$140,000, which would likely occur in April, after which the final part of the IGA would be rolled into construction. Mr. Carruth then stated that the 5-year rate plan for utilities anticipated issuing debt, servicing this project's debt, and servicing debt for other projects. Mayor Borne asked whether this scope of work would yield cost savings, and Mr. Mesenbrink stated that it would, including energy savings and operational savings. The operational savings will exceed the energy savings. The motion passed unanimously.

DELIBERATE AND ACT TO AUTHORIZE THE CLOSURE OF 39<sup>TH</sup> STREET FROM GULF AVENUE TO LINCOLN AVENUE ON SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2026, FROM 4:30 P.M. TO 7:00 P.M. FOR A MARDI GRAS PARADE: Councilmember McAdams made a motion to deliberate and act to authorize the closure of 39<sup>th</sup> Street from Gulf Avenue to Lincoln Avenue on Saturday, February 7, 2026, from 4:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. for a Mardi Gras Parade and Mayor Pro Tem Gay seconded. Emily Daniel from Stacked Cake and Confection Co. addressed the Council and stated that they want to do a golf cart, motorcycle, and boat parade down Lincoln Avenue for a Mardi Gras event. Ms. Daniel noted that she understands this is not an approved parade route and is okay with having it on the existing approved route. Mayor Borne asked City Marshal Christopher Robin if he had been involved in this planning, and he stated that he had. Marshal Robin also indicated that it would be simpler to use an already established route, but whatever the Council decides, he will make sure it gets worked out. Marshal Robin would rather use the 39<sup>th</sup> Street route than hold a couple of Workshops to develop ideas for an alternate parade route for smaller parades, and get it recognized by the Council and on the books. The Council then discussed various route options. Fire Chief Lance Billeaud then addressed the Council and stated that his most significant problem with the parade being on Lincoln

was that people would park on the side of the street, leaving hardly any room, and it was unsafe, especially for kids. Councilmember Chelette stated that he would like to see this parade happen this year and not put it off. Marshal Robin then said we could shorten the already-approved parade route, still on 39th Street, and go only from Lincoln Avenue to Gulf Avenue. Councilmember Chelette stated that it would improve safety and still provide adequate parking. Councilmember McAdams amended his previous motion to authorize the closure of 39<sup>th</sup> Street from Lincoln Avenue to Gulf Avenue on Saturday, February 7, 2026, from 4:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. for a Mardi Gras Parade. Mayor Pro Tem Gay seconded. There was no further discussion, and the motion passed unanimously.

**DELIBERATE ON VACANCIES AND NOMINATIONS FOR POSITIONS ON THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION AND ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT:** Mayor Borne stated that this item is informational only, and at this time, we have only three applicants. Mayor Borne suggested that we continue accepting applications until the next City Council Meeting, and hopefully, we can receive more. After further discussion, it was stated that we still need six more people across both boards. There was no further discussion.

**DELIBERATE AND ACT TO ESTABLISH WEST JEFFERSON STREET, BETWEEN GRAVES AVENUE AND GULF AVENUE, AS A ONE-WAY STREET DURING SPECIFIED MORNING AND AFTERNOON HOURS TO ENHANCE GROVES INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL STUDENT SAFETY:** Councilmember Holmes made a motion to deliberate and act to establish West Jefferson Street, between Graves Avenue and Gulf Avenue, as a one-way street during specified morning and afternoon hours to enhance Groves Intermediate School student safety. Mayor Pro Tem Gay seconded. City Marshal Christopher Robin addressed the Council, stating that over the last five months, they have found a series of issues arising in this specific region of West Jefferson. During peak time, there is a lot of congestion and frustrated parents. Marshal Robin then went over some diagrams with the Council, discussing what is happening now with the current drop-off and pickup, and then he discussed the new pickup and drop-off recommendation. Marshal Robin then stated that the first recommendation is to make West Jefferson from Graves Avenue to Gulf Avenue a one-way street. In the morning, there will be one line for drop-off, and in the afternoon, two lines for pick-up. The exit will be a right turn only. Marshal Robin then stated that the crosswalks will be painted during the Christmas break. They have worked with the school in planning this idea, and the school loves it. Marshal Robin then went over the afternoon pickup plan. Mayor Borne then asked about the outer left-hand lane, and the Marshal stated that it is for emergency vehicles only.

Mayor Borne then asked about the through traffic that has to travel on West Jefferson, and Marshal Robin noted that it will not be an option for the afternoon pickup. City Manager Kevin Carruth then noted that it will only be unavailable for two blocks. Marshal Robin then explained the reasoning for that, stating that for pickup, they will line up in two lanes, so any through traffic would have to drive on the wrong side of the road to even reach that section and proceed through. Mayor Borne then asked about the church's parking lot being blocked, since it has only one entrance and exit, and Marshal Robin stated that they had informed him this would not affect their operations. Councilmember Holmes asked who would be responsible for putting out the barricades and cones, and Marshal Robin stated that the crossing guards would be. There will also be a designated drop-off point on the side of the road at the beginning of the sidewalk leading to the school. Councilmember Holmes amended his previous motion to include Ordinance 2025-24, and Mayor Pro Tem Gay seconded. There was no further discussion, and the motion passed unanimously.

DELIBERATE AND ACT TO APPROVE A CHANGE ORDER TO THE WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT IMPROVEMENT CONTRACT TO ADD THE REMOVAL AND REPLACEMENT OF THE HANDRAILS AND GRATING FOR THE STAIRWAY OF THE GRIT CHAMBER: Mayor Pro Tem Gay made a motion to deliberate and act to approve a change order to the Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvement Contract to add the removal and replacement of the handrails and grating for the stairway of the grit chamber and Councilmember Chelette seconded. City Manager Kevin Carruth informed the Council that this scope of work should have been included in the original ARPA project, which, for whatever reason, was missed. This was a binding in our last TCEQ inspection, so it must be completed. All of our ARPA funds have been allocated, so this will come from our maintenance line item for the Wastewater Plant. Mayor Borne asked Finance Director Troy Foxworth if these are the original handrails, and Mr. Foxworth stated that he believes they are. Councilmember Chelette noted that he toured the plant the day before and insists that these need to be replaced; there is no price on safety. Councilmember Holmes asked whether the current contractor working at the plant would also perform this replacement, and Mr. Foxworth stated that he would. There was no further discussion, and the motion passed unanimously.

DELIBERATE AND ACT ON THE DECEMBER 22, 2025, INVOICE LIST: Mayor Pro Tem Gay made a motion to deliberate and act on the December 22, 2025, invoice list, and Councilmember Holmes seconded.

INVOICES: City Manager Kevin Carruth presented invoices for payment totaling \$154,455.86 as follows:

1.	Allco	Change order for replacement of handrails at WWTP.	\$52,825.00
2.	CITI Bank	Purchasing cards payment.	\$10,925.78
3.	City of Port Arthur	Sludge disposal for November 2025.	\$5,460.00
4.	EGSW	Micro-solve 55-gallon drum.	\$6,550.00
5.	Lower Neches Valley Authority	Raw water purchase for November 2025.	\$25,875.00
6.	Republic Services	Sludge disposal November 2025.	\$6,835.08
7.	Soutex Surveyors	Engineering for 25 <sup>th</sup> Street.	\$5,000.00
8.	Soutex Surveyors	Engineering for WWTP improvements.	\$23,500.00
9.	TCEQ	Permit fee for Water Plant 2026.	\$17,485.00

Mayor Borne asked for questions, and there were none. The motion passed unanimously.

CITY COUNCIL WILL HOLD AN EXECUTIVE SESSION PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF CHAPTER 551 OF THE TEXAS GOVERNMENT CODE, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE AUTHORITY CONTAINED IN:

A. SECTION 551.071 (1) (A) – CONSULTATION WITH ATTORNEY WHEN THE GOVERNMENTAL BODY SEEKS THE ADVICE OF ITS ATTORNEY ABOUT PENDING OR CONTEMPLATED LITIGATION.

The Council went into Executive Session at 6:36 p.m.

The Council reconvened into Open Session at 7:32 p.m.

DELIBERATE AND ACT TO AUTHORIZE THE CITY MANAGER TO EXECUTE SETTLEMENT CLAIM FORMS FOR THE AQUEOUS FILM-FORMING FOAM PRODUCTS LIABILITY LITIGATION: Councilmember Chelette made a motion to deliberate and act to authorize the City Manager to execute settlement claim forms for the Aqueous Film-Forming Foam Products Liability Litigation, and Councilmember McAdams seconded. City Attorney Brandon P. Monk stated that the deadline is January 1, 2026, so if the City Council wants to authorize it, now is the opportune time. There was no further discussion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Borne asked for Council comments, and Councilmember McAdams wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:34 p.m.

  
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Mayor Borne

ATTEST:

  
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City Clerk

