

A regular meeting of the Groves City Council was held June 23, 2025, in the Groves City Council Chamber with Mayor Chris Borne, Councilmember Mark McAdams, Councilmember Brandon Holmes, and Councilmember Rae Shauna Gay in attendance. Mayor Pro Tem Pete Konidis was not 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 said he hopes everyone noticed the large pecan in front of City Hall. Mr. Carruth then stated that he wants to make clear that everyone understands how this came about. The Pecan Festival spearheaded and paid for the materials for this project, and former Councilmember Paul Oliver donated the labor to build and install it. The City fronted the money for the concrete work because we already had concrete work being done, but the Chamber reimbursed us for that concrete work. Mr. Carruth also stated that people have been taking pictures with it every day. Mr. Carruth thanked the Chamber, Pecan Festival, and Mr. Oliver again.

The second item from City Manager Kevin Carruth was a request for the Council to email him with options for July to hold a Saturday Workshop on the Budget.

Mr. Ken Loftin of VFW 4820 then gave a report on D-Day, the invasion of the beaches of Normandy, which occurred on June 6, 1944. By the end of the day, 156,000 Allied troops were on the beaches of Normandy. At the time, D-Day was the largest invasion of naval, air, and land operation in history. This invasion force included over 7,000 ships and landing craft manned with over 195,000 personnel from 8 allied countries. According to some estimates, more than 4,000 allied troops lost their lives on D-Day. On June 11<sup>th</sup>, the beaches were fully secured.

Letha Knaus from the Groves Chamber of Commerce spoke regarding the Pecan statue. Mrs. Knaus stated that when the Pecan Festival tried to pay for the materials, Mr. Paul Oliver would not let them. Mr. Paul Oliver donated the entire Pecan statue, including the materials and work involved in building it.

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

DELIBERATE AND ACT TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JUNE 9, 2025, CITY COUNCIL MEETING: Councilmember McAdams moved to approve the minutes of the June 9, 2025, City Council meeting as written, and Councilmember Gay seconded. Mayor Borne asked for questions or comments, and there were none. The motion passed unanimously.

RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE JUNE 16, 2025, PLANNING AND ZONING MEETING: Mayor Borne stated that all of the Council members have received the minutes from the June 16, 2025, Planning and Zoning Meeting.

HEAR A REPORT FROM THE FIRE CHIEF REGARDING TWO DEPARTMENTAL PROMOTIONS AND THE INTRODUCTION OF TWO NEW FIREFIGHTERS: Fire Chief Lance Billeaud stated that the Fire Department has recently undergone several changes in personnel structure. C.J. Trahan has retired after 23 years of service. Haden Grove has been promoted to Captain, and Daniel Callesto was promoted to Lieutenant. Kris Smiley and John (Kip) Savoy-King are our two new hires. Chief Billeaud went over a brief bio of all of these firefighters. The Groves Fire Department is now fully staffed with these promotions and additions.

HEAR AND DELIBERATE ON THE PRESENTATIONS OF THE GROVES CHAMBER OF COMMERCE SMALL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR FOR 2025 AND MAYOR'S PROCLAMATION CONGRATULATING MARIA DUMESNEIL WITH MARIA'S DINER FOR THIS HONOR: Mayor Borne read the proclamation for Maria Dumesneil with Maria's Diner congratulating them for being named the Groves Chamber of Commerce Small Business of the Year for 2025.

HEAR AND DELIBERATE ON THE PRESENTATIONS OF THE GROVES CHAMBER OF COMMERCE CITIZEN OF THE YEAR FOR 2025 AND MAYOR'S PROCLAMATION CONGRATULATING LEROY FALCON FOR THIS HONOR: Mayor Borne then presented Mr. Falcon with the Mayor's Proclamation congratulating him for being named the Groves Chamber of Commerce Citizen of the Year.

HEAR A REPORT FROM THE FIRE CHIEF AND SAMARITAN COUNSELING SERVICE ON A GRANT PROJECT WITH UNITED WAY FOR FIRST RESPONDER MENTAL HEALTH: Fire Chief Lance Billeaud informed Council that a few months ago, Robin McCutcheon approached him about a grant to help with first responder mental health. Robin McCutcheon then introduced herself to the Council. She is the President and CEO of their Samaritan Counseling Center. Ms. McCutcheon stated that they are a behavioral health non-profit whose principal office is in Port Arthur, but they provide services in Orange, Jefferson, and Jasper Counties. This specific grant funding has to be used in South Jefferson County. This grant is a competition, so you must win the money by votes. There is one free vote on Facebook, and you can also vote with cash donations. Captain Haden Grove is the trained peer supporter for the Groves Fire Department, but they felt like there was a need for an entire team or

Support within the Fire Department, not just one person. This particular funding would include all volunteer firefighters. This grant is a three-tier process, with the first tier providing training for all firefighters in the mental health support peer process. The funding will start in Groves, allowing them to be trained alongside the Port Neches, Nederland, and Port Arthur Fire Departments. The second level of funding would enable Samaritan to be their 911 call for counseling services for the firefighters and their families. The first level of funding is \$30,000, which is strictly voting. Then, there is an opportunity to earn an additional \$40,000, where a panel of judges decides which project has the most impact within the community. The final pocket of money is \$50,000, and that's considered an innovation award for something that is not being done. Fire Chief Lance Billeaud then shared his experience of needing this help early in his career. There was no further discussion.

DELIBERATE AND ACT ON THE APPROVAL OF A REPLAT AT 5931 ALABAMA AVENUE, LEGAL DESCRIPTION TR 19-A, 19-B, 19-C, 19-D, 19-E, & 19-F 1.522 ACRES OF LAND REPLAT ALL OF LOTS BLK 2, DIXIE GARDENS:

Councilmember Gay made a motion to deliberate and act on the approval of a replat at 5931 Alabama Avenue, legal description TR 19-A, 19-B, 19-C, 19-D, 19-E, & 19-F 1.522 ACRES of land replat all of lots BLK 2, DIXIE GARDENS, and Councilmember McAdams seconded. City Manager Kevin Carruth stated that this is currently a large single tract, and the owners want to subdivide it into six tracts and develop it with individual single-family houses. Mr. Carruth noted that the Planning and Zoning Commission's recommendation is to approve it, and staff concurs. There were no further questions, and the motion passed unanimously.

HEAR AND DELIBERATE ON THE PRESENTATION OF THE ENGINEER'S PRELIMINARY ENGINEERING REPORT OF THE 25<sup>TH</sup> STREET SANITARY SEWER IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT: Gary Graham with Soutex Surveyors and Engineers informed Council that they were hired a few months ago to prepare a preliminary engineering report because the City of Groves experiences a lack of service for wastewater in about half of the city when it rains. Soutex has developed recommendations that would alleviate that condition. Mr. Graham informed the Council that in 1956, a 30" reinforced concrete pipe sewer was laid down on 25<sup>th</sup> Street that conveys about half of the wastewater of the City of Groves to the Taft Lift Station. Currently, the Taft Lift Station pumps all the wastewater for the City of Groves to the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Mr. Graham stated that at some point, he is unsure when, the original 30" sewer was distressed and slip-lined with a 24" HDPE sewer, which solved the immediate structural failure problem. Mr. Graham

then stated that since the sewer lies in a water-bearing sand, it was probably putting a lot of sand and clear water into the sewer system. Sliplining it solved those issues, but it decreased the capacity of the 30" sewer by 43%. The sewer should convey about 8,300 gallons per minute, but it has been reduced to about 5,000.

The first option to solve this problem is to build a lift station near Highway 73 and 25<sup>th</sup> Street to pump the flow directly to the WasteWater Plant. This option would cost about 4 million dollars, not including acquiring the site for the lift station and a force main to pump to the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Another option they had discussed would be to pull the slipliner out and pipe burst the 30" sewer, but that was before Soutex discovered that it was, in fact, a reinforced concrete pipe and it was experiencing structural failure. In all probability, the slipliner could not come out, nor would pipe bursting be an option so that solution fell off the table. Mr. Graham then stated that the 3<sup>rd</sup> option is to install a new 24" sanitary sewer a little above the existing one to replace the lost capacity. The new sewer line would only function when the existing line is surcharged, but it would still provide tremendous relief. Soutex recommends this option, which would cost approximately 2 million dollars. From design to finish, will take about 10-12 months before completion. Councilmember McAdams asked Mr. Graham if there would be any benefit in going to a bigger size than 24" to accommodate anything in the future. Mr. Graham stated that Groves is pretty much landlocked, and the problem is not sewer capacity, day to day, but infiltration inflow. The Wastewater Treatment Plant receives and treats, in a typical day, about 2 million gallons of wastewater, but when it rains, it currently receives about 20 million gallons. Councilmember Holmes asked if the 24" pipes are stout, and Mr. Graham stated they are. Mr. Graham then stated that they have met with DD7 [Drainage District 7] and discussed with them the need to go under the concrete line since it's a gravity line we don't have the freedom to dive down and go 5 feet below it like they would like us to, but they are willing to work with the City. City Manager Kevin Carruth stated that this would be a discussion for a workshop to decide on how we want to fund the project. There were no further questions.

INVOICES: City Manager Kevin Carruth presented invoices for payment totaling \$221,517.74 as follows:

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|-------------------------|--|-------------|
| 1. Chameleon Industries | Cationic Polymer.  | \$34,696.80 |
| 2. City of Port Arthur  | Landfill sludge disposal May 2025 and belt press project disposal. | \$15,925.   |

3. City of Port Arthur	Landfill fees 4/28/25-5/22/25.	\$16,785.00
4. Enterprise FM Trust	Vehicle lease for May 2025.	\$11,948.53
5. GFL Environmental	Sludge disposal May 2025.	\$6,179.28
6. Lower Neches Valley Authority	Raw water purchased.	\$24,827.23
7. PVS-DX INC.	Chlorine for Water Plant.	\$6,861.60
8. Republic Services Inc	Commercial dumpster service for May 2025.	\$10,152.89
9. Tyler Technologies, INC	Incode software annual fees.	\$79,928.25
10. Wex Bank	Fuel for all vehicles.	\$14,213.16

Councilmember Gay made a motion to deliberate and act on the June 23, 2025, invoice list, which Councilmember Holmes seconded. Mayor Borne asked how often the cationic polymer is purchased. Public Works Director Troy Foxworth stated that it is purchased about every three months, depending on how bad the water is. Councilmember Holmes asked what the Incode software is, and Mr. Carruth noted that it is our finance package. Councilmember Holmes then asked if we were seeing the savings we expected with switching fuel providers, and Mr. Carruth stated that we did not have enough data yet to determine that. City Manager Kevin Carruth noted that the fees are cheaper with Wex, but he wants to see date points on the savings in the fuel rebates. There were no further questions, and the motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Borne asked for Council comments, and Councilmember McAdams wanted to thank the Chamber and Paul Oliver for everything they have done with the Pecan Statue. Councilmember McAdams also congratulated the new hires and promotions for the Fire Department. Mayor Borne congratulated Maria's Diner for receiving the Groves Chamber of Commerce Small Business of the Year Award, and Mr. Leroy Falcon for receiving the Groves Chamber of Commerce Citizen of the Year Award.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:56 p.m.

  
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Mayor Borne

ATTEST:

  
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City Clerk

