



City of Santa Clara, Texas Special City Council Meeting Minutes

Monday, June 5, 2025

The City Council called the special meeting to order on June 5, 2025, at 6:00 PM at City Hall located at 1653 N Santa Clara Road with Mayor Chase Grier.

A. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

1. **Roll Call:** Marian Carty, Ernest Schoenefeldt, Amanda Desormeaux, Dwane Atkins and Darin Henningsen

2. **Declaration of Quorum:** Quorum was present for June 5, 2025, Special City Council Meeting

B. PLEDGE

Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America: I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands: one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all

C. CITY STAFF REPORTS: None

D. PUBLIC COMMENT

- Michael Traugott expressed concerns about transparency, compliance, and accountability in council activities. He provided a 10-point summary of key issues (materials were refused by city attorney but to be circulated electronically). The key issues highlighted by Mr. Traugott were: The social media policy (related to current agenda), deletion of the Marshal's Office Facebook page, Mark Soto's tenure as interim chief without interlocal agreement, and Texas Public Information Act violations — ongoing AG complaint against Santa Clara. Mr. Traugott requested council to review provided information and consider actions; emphasized the importance of citizen access to information.
- Mandy Moore expressed appreciation for council's service, particularly commending Councilwoman Marian Carty. She raised questions regarding delays in budget workshops this year (stating they traditionally begin in February), Council members' process for reviewing the city audit and adequacy of preparation time, whether pressure during the annual audit vote was typical and if it affected council's ability to prepare/decide, and a broader question on transparency and preparedness in decision-making. Ms. Moore raised concerns about public safety spending—questioning whether current investments and strategies reflect town's values and considered more community-based approaches. She suggested openness to novel community safety solutions within future budgets.

E. PUBLIC HEARING: None

F. CONSENT AGENDA

1. **May 12, 2025 – City Council Regular Meeting Minutes**

Minutes from the May 12, 2025, regular City Council meeting to be reviewed; copies made available in-room. Some delay in confirming their presence/distribution. The Council moved to discussion items while minutes' availability was confirmed. It was determined that minutes were not posted due to City Secretary quitting.

G. DISCUSSION ONLY

1. Social Media Policy

a. Official City Social Media Pages

Overview

Items Discussed: Creation and management of official city social media pages; proposal of a formal social media policy. Council presented and discussed a draft policy reviewed by legal counsel.

Detailed Discussion

Purpose and Benefits:

Improved transparency, accessibility, and timely dissemination of city information (agendas, weather alerts, emergencies). Remedy to the "clunky" and frustrating city website. Aligns with common practices in other Texas cities.

b. Proposed Policy

Policy Content:

Social media accounts (primarily Facebook) to be managed by designated admins: Mayor, future City Administrator, future Chief Public Information Officer. Multiple admins permitted; comments and postings restricted to prevent Open Meetings Act violations and inappropriate content. Authorized users may remove inappropriate comments and disable commenting if misused. Council suggested listing admins for transparency (by title and possibly posted publicly). Policy enforcement and monitoring: self-regulated by council members to avoid quorum violations via online comments.

Public Communication & Compliance:

Proposal to "pin" posts explaining commenting protocols and rationale for council's limited responses; educating the public regarding legal constraints. Considered supplementing policy postings with video clips illustrating council's legal obligations.

Interaction and Feedback

Questions clarified regarding who could post versus comment and the use of a "page" over a "group" format to maintain control. Discussed using the platform for information-only purposes, not citizen-initiated posts. Agreed that specifics could be finalized ahead of formal adoption as a resolution. Policy to return as a resolution at a future meeting.

2. Remote Access to City Meetings

a. Video Conference Options

Purpose and Context

Discussion prompted by citizen requests for accessible meetings, especially for hearing-impaired residents and those unable to attend in person.

b. Internet Broadcasting

Options Explored

Facebook Live: Not universally accessible (requires account) and does not provide optimal transparency. Zoom: Provides video conferencing and can enable closed captioning, but current city tech does not support full remote participation with council video feeds.

Streaming-only mode (no remote member participation) can be implemented. Estimated cost: \$15-\$20 per month. YouTube Live: Suggested by a council member as a free and simple platform; no login required; allows posting or embedding of recordings on the city website. Clarification needed regarding integration with current city web platform. Other Services: Google and additional options briefly mentioned.

Consensus emerged on best pursuing options that maximize accessibility, transparency, and ease of use.

Technical and Operational Considerations

Live streaming and archiving of meeting videos discussed. Accessibility features (e.g., captions) highlighted as a benefit for certain residents. Archival options (posting links on official platforms) reviewed.

Next Steps

Council to explore and present best technical solutions and policy language for formal adoption. Members encouraged to send further suggestions or draft language to the mayor's city email for consolidation.

H. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS

Items listed under this heading are for discussion and possible action.

1. Election of President Pro Tempore

a. Nominations

It was explained the purpose of this position.

b. Election

Councilmember Henningsen nominated Councilmember Carty. Councilmember Atkins seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

2. City Secretary Position

a. Duties and Responsibilities

Reviewed job description (posted around mid-May with a May 30, 2025, application deadline). City Secretary is a statutory (state-required) office, core administrative/managerial support to council. Responsible for compliance, records, security, and some and financial certifications. Discussion of experience and educational/training requirements—flexibility built into the job description for combined experience/training. Recognized current administrative challenges due to vacancy—added urgency to fill the position.

b. Compensation

Debate over skill requirements vs. proposed compensation—existing salary not competitive for desired skill level. Option to adjust job hours or create two positions for division of labor (see 4.4 below).

- c. Candidates
Multiple applicants, two deemed viable ("one really stood out"). Preference for experienced candidates but allowed flexibility for equivalent competence. Council agreed to conduct further discussion in executive session for privacy and personnel reasons.

3. City Bookkeeping Services

- a. Terms of Service
- b. Engagement
- c. Budget Amendment to Allocate Funds
Rationale and Oversight
Proposal to separate financial bookkeeping from secretary/admin role to strengthen internal controls and prevent conflicts of interest.
Recognized risk in having a single individual handle finances, records, and minutes.
Consensus to pursue an external contract (accountant or CPA) instead of another city staff member.
Process and Next Steps
Three competitive bids to be solicited. Bookkeeping position intended to verify accuracy, support budget process, and realize auditor cost savings by preparing/organizing financials before audits.
Motion made by Councilmember Carty and seconded by Councilmember Schoenefeldt to have Mayor Grier lead the process and return with quotes for bookkeeping services for council consideration. All in favor, motion carried.

4. Unique City Council Member Emails

- a. Costs
Current use of personal emails for council business creates legal and privacy concerns (subject to discovery in investigations). Desire for standardized, city-hosted email addresses for all councilmembers and relevant city staff. Potential to expand to City Attorney, Marshals, Road Department, and other personnel. Email service presumed linked to city's website hosting (Dreamhost); exact technical feasibility and costs unclear. Varied satisfaction with current email platform; desire for improvement or alternative provider. Suggestion to seek an external web/emails expert (possibly at low cost or pro bono). Multiple councilmembers authorized to investigate pricing and technical feasibility for new city email services. Motions made by Councilmember Carty to investigate the cost of emails and budget to allocate the funds for setup and migration by the Mayor and Councilmember Atkins at a later date. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Schoenefeldt. All in favor, motion carried.
- b. Budget Amendment to Allocate Funds

I. ANNOUNCEMENTS: None

J. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

The City Council adjourned into executive session for personnel matters pursuant to chapter 551.074 of the Texas Government Code at 6:53 PM.

The City reconvened into open session at 7:23 PM. No action was taken. In executive session, Council discussed the City Secretary position and the candidates. Councilmember Henningsen made a motion that the Mayor, Councilmember Carty and Councilmember Desormeaux interview the candidate and have the right to hire at the amount that was discussed. Councilmember Schoenefeldt seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

L. ATTENDANCE BY OTHER ELECTED OR APPOINTED OFFICIALS: None

M. ADJOURNMENT

Councilmember Ernest Schoenefeldt made the motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:24 PM. Councilmember Dwane Atkins seconded the motion and passed unanimously.

Mayor: Chase Grier



City Secretary: Vacant