

STATE OF TEXAS §  
COUNTY OF CAMERON §  
TOWN OF LAGUNA VISTA §

MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE LAGUNA VISTA TOWN COUNCIL

DATE: September 1, 2015

TIME: 6:00 p.m.

PLACE: City Hall Building

MEMBERS PRESENT: Susie Houston, Mayor  
Michael Carter – Councilmember Place 1  
Wanda Reyes-Rice – Mayor Pro-Tem  
Frank Davalos, Jr., - Councilmember Place 3  
Leti Keplinger, Councilmember Place 4  
Nadine Smith, Councilmember Place 6

Rolando Vela, City Manager  
Tony David, Police Chief  
Julio Olguin, Fire Chief  
Alma Deckard, City Secretary

MEMBERS ABSENT: Gary Meschi, Councilmember Place 5

ALSO PRESENT: Nancy Ostos, Citizen  
Bob Ostos, Citizen  
Walter Birdwell, Citizen  
Yolanda Birdwell, Citizen  
Trey Lewis, Brownsville, Texas  
Doris Meinerding, Port Isabel, Texas  
Maria Galasso, Citizen  
Alma Leal, Rancho Viejo, Texas  
Diane Teter, Citizen  
Cecilia Garrett, Citizen  
Carlos Canas, San Benito, Texas  
Nydia Canas, San Benito, Texas  
Rick Teter, Citizen  
John Peacock, Port Isabel, Texas  
Eddie M Perez, Citizen  
Rona Hamlinck, Citizen  
Madeleine Sandefur, Citizen  
Charles Lewis, Harlingen, Texas  
Marianne Poythuss, Citizen

Tommy J Saenz, SPI, Texas  
Martha Hanson, Citizen  
Don Hanson, Citizen  
Craig Vest, SPI, Texas  
Carol Gluntz, Port Isabel, Texas  
James Markham-Hill, The Woodlands, Texas  
Steve Muschenheim, Citizen  
Terry Stringfield, Port Isabel, Texas  
Juanita Stringfield, Port Isabel, Texas  
Kerry Schwartz, SPI, Texas  
Ingrid G Ruiz, Brownsville, Texas  
Robert Nixon, Citizen  
Victor Worrell, Citizen  
Marlo Worrell, Citizen  
Jimmye Lee Brown, Citizen  
Jerry Brown, Citizen  
Robin Brown, Citizen  
James Lewis, Citizen  
Eddie Sikes, Brownsville, Texas  
Nicole Ekstrom, Citizen  
Faustino Chapa, Citizen  
Val Ekstrom, Citizen  
Rick Ekstrom, Citizen  
Teran Hughes, SPI, Texas  
Rosa Zapata, Citizen  
Lisa Barocas, San Antonio, Texas  
Jerry Valdez, Austin, Texas  
Lisa Seiser, Valley Morning Star  
Luise Richards, Harlingen, Texas  
Joseph Linck, Brownsville, Texas  
Jessica Bechtel, Citizen  
Bob Bechtel, Citizen  
Terry Galloway, Citizen  
Kay Huber  
Sheryl Bauer  
Katie Ortiz  
Christina Salazar  
Laurie Morrison  
Elizabeth Etheridge, Citizen  
Hank Etheridge, Citizen  
M.P. Baguio, Citizen

L.C. Baguio, Citizen  
Terry Volz, Citizen  
Mary Volz, Citizen  
Rafael Salazar, Citizen  
Lucia Wierenger, SPI, Texas

#### ORDER OF BUSINESS

**1. Call to Order**

Mayor Houston called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

**2. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance** was led by Mayor Houston.

**3. Roll Call/Excused Absences** – Council Member Meschi was absent and was previously excused for the August and September 2015 meetings.

**4. OPEN FORUM:**

**Council Member Rice addressed the audience, stating that this (LNG matter) was not about her or her and LNG. She stated that she wants what's best for our community and would never allow any company to come in that would damage our environment. She hoped that people would come to all council meeting and get involved with the community. I have no conflict with this matter, and I will recuse myself while the Open Forum is on and the council votes on the Resolution concerning LNG.**

**Council Member Rice left the meeting at this time.**

**Bob Ostos addressed the council, speaking on behalf of the LNG Project. He has lived in the Brownsville, Laguna Vista area for 60 years and in denying LNG, we deny our young people the opportunity to have jobs.**

**Steve Muschenheim addressed the council, in support of the LNG Project. The testing and investigation process will take at least two years, he suggested that the Council table the resolution until the investigation is complete.**

**James Markham-Hill addressed the Council requesting that any action be delayed until the reviews and all concerns have been addressed by the investigations.**

**Joseph Linck addressed the Council in support of LNG. He stated that some chemicals at the Port of Brownsville are more dangerous than any gas LNG will**

**have. He urged the Council to table on taking any action on the Resolution, until the 2 year investigation is complete.**

**Trey Lewis addressed the Council in support of LNG. He urged the Council to table any action tonight. LNG will spend tens of millions of dollars in the testing and investigation of this project, it is pre-mature to vote against it.**

**Charles Lewis addressed the Council in support of LNG. He stated that the 3 valley counties of Willacy, Cameron and Hidalgo have the lowest income in the nation. Of the 150 largest cities, Brownsville has the highest unemployment rate in the nation. We export our children because there are no jobs here. LNG will create jobs for our children and grandchildren.**

**Lisa Marie Barocas addressed the Council in support of LNG. The average salary will be \$70,000 for LNG employees, this will be a big boost for the Brownsville area. She urged the Council to allow the process to go through before voting.**

**Jerry Valdez addressed the Council in support of LNG. He urged the Council to allow for results of the investigation to come in before deciding. We need all the facts before we vote against this project.**

**Yolanda Birdwell addressed the Council opposing the LNG Project. She stated that the Laguna Madre area generates and employs 3500 jobs. LNG will not employ or generate money for the area. All their money will go out of State or Country. The City of Port Isabel and the Laguna Madre Water District have voted against LNG. You need to vote for the people not for a corporation.**

**Diane Teter addressed the Council opposing LNG. She stated that her and her husband came to the valley to study at UTB and found jobs here. Our vegetation and plants will die, people will become sick and not know why. She showed the council pictures of plants exposed to gases.**

**Maria Galasso addressed the Council in opposition of LNG. She stated that LNG will have a huge impact to the environment in the Laguna Madre Area. If you vote in favor of LNG, next election cycle you will not be here.**

**Walter Birdwell addressed the Council urging them to pass the resolution as it is written. We need to protect our fishing industry and environment.**

**John Peacock addressed the Council protesting LNG. He stated that the product will be in the air, every day of the week. We are downwind from the plant, it will be here. LNG will not improve our kids' education or improve the job situation.**

**Rick Teeter addressed the Council opposing LNG. He stated that LNG is asking the PI School District for a tax abatement. If they care so much about our kids' education, why don't they want to pay their taxes. We need this resolution approved tonight, because the deadline to submit is September 4, 2015.**

**Alma Leal addressed the Council voicing opposition to LNG. She resides in Rancho Viejo and was looking at the Laguna Vista website that has beautiful pictures of birding, fishing and the bay area. If LNG comes in, you will have to replace your pictures, showing pollution and dead birds and plants. Vote against LNG doing this to our area.**

**Eddie Perez addressed the Council opposing LNG. He stated that if the Council tables the resolution tonight, LNG wins. We have grown, but not at the expense of a corporation. We are a community of peacefulness, tranquility and make no mistake we are downwind from the plant. No LNG.**

**Madeleine Sandefur addressed the Council opposing LNG. We need to oppose LNG, for the health and welfare of our citizens in Laguna Vista. Think of the environmental impact to our birding, beaches, and fishing LNG will cause.**

**Marianne Poythuss addressed the Council opposing LNG. She stated that LNG is suggesting that an average salary will be \$70,000, however that's after 10 years of experience. What's to say that LNG will even be here 10 years after they come in?**

**Tommy J Saenz addressed the Council opposing LNG. The deadline is September 4, 2015 to oppose LNG moving forward with this project. Corpus Christi has an LNG plant, they can move there and start another plant there. The State Comptroller has a report filed by LNG, stating that the average salary will be \$63,167. According to the report filed, they are asking for a 10 year tax abatement.**

**Cecilia Garrett addressed the Council opposing LNG. This is a retirement community, retirees come here for recreation, not employment. The City of Port Isabel opposed this project because of the damage LNG would do to the Bahia Grande.**

**Robert Nixon addressed the Council opposing LNG. The whole Laguna Madre Area is a recreational area, we will be playing golf in a cloud of smog. We rely on property taxes, why are they not willing to pay their share?**

**Ingrid Ruiz addressed the Council supporting LNG. She stated that she works in San Benito and realizes how much jobs are needed in this valley. We have kids in school that cannot do their homework because their parents are unemployed and they have no electricity. LNG will generate jobs for the entire area.**

**Jimmye Lee Brown addressed the Council opposing LNG. I love my community and after my research of LNG, it is not a good thing. Vapors can be carried for approximately 127 miles. LNG says 1.27 miles.**

**Eddie Sikes addressed the Council supporting LNG. He stated that anyone on a jury panel, first waits for all the evidence to come in before making a decision. I urge you to allow the process of the investigation and wait for the results before you make a decision.**

**Juanita Stringfield addressed the Council opposing LNG. She stated that LNG says they will generate 150 jobs, Walmart in Port Isabel can generate those jobs too and will not pollute the air. I am opposed to any tax abatement for LNG. It is your moral responsibility to pass this resolution, against the destruction of our land.**

**Nicole Ekstrom addressed the Council opposing LNG. If LNG creates 150-200 jobs that will not make or break our Laguna Madre area. I've lived in Galveston and Corpus Christi and we moved here because it's cleaner.**

**Christina Salazar addressed the Council opposing LNG. I have lived in Laguna Vista for 35 years, with the exception when I lived in Pasadena Texas. Pasadena is full of refineries, smog and constant smoke, that's why I came back here. What happens at the LNG plant when we have hurricanes, tornadoes or an explosion? Have you all thought about that? The plants will be off the Jetties on SPI, where the dolphins are, what will happen to them?**

**Katie Ortiz addressed the Council opposing LNG. She stated that she has lived in Port Isabel for 15 years. We moved here from Houston because of her asthma. We don't want LNG here.**

**Kerry Schwartz addressed the Council opposing LNG. There is no reason to table the resolution or wait for any investigations. I own a store in SPI and I employ 15 people. Kids may live to attend college, but they do come back and work and live in our communities.**

5. **NEW BUSINESS:** Discussion, consideration and possible action on each of the following items:
  - A. **RESOLUTION NUMBER 2015-20** – Discussion and potential action to approve Resolution Number 2015-20 expressing opposition to the construction of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) facilities in the vicinity of Laguna Vista. (Mayor Houston)

**Resolution Number 2015-20 was moved to the beginning of the New Business items by Mayor Houston and consensus of the Council.**

**Mayor Houston made a motion to approve Resolution Number 2015-20 expressing opposition to the construction of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) facilities in the vicinity of Laguna Vista, Council Member Davalos seconded the motion. Council Member Rice recused herself earlier in the meeting and was not present to vote. All voted “aye” to approve, motion carried.**

**Council Member Rice returned to meeting at this time.**

**B. MINUTES** – Consideration and action to approve the minutes from the August 11, 2015 Regular Meeting.

**Council Member Keplinger made a motion to approve the minutes from the August 11, 2015 Regular Council Meeting, Council Member Smith seconded the motion. All voted “aye” to approve, motion carried.**

**Mayor Houston called for a five minutes recess at 7:15 pm.**

**Town Council re-convened at 7:21 pm.**

**C. ORDINANCE NUMBER 2015-17** – Second Reading – To approve Ordinance Number 2015-17 adopting the 2015-16 Fiscal Year Budget. (City Manager)

**Council Member Carter made a motion to table all the remaining items, until the regular meeting on September 8, 2015, Council Member Davalos seconded the motion. All voted “aye” to approve, motion carried.**

**D. ORDINANCE NUMBER 2015-16** – Second Reading – To approve Ordinance Number 2015-16 adopting the 2015-16 Fiscal Year ad valorem property tax rate. (City Manager)

**E. RESOLUTION NUMBER 2015-18** – To approve Resolution Number 2015-18 to set aside reserve funds in the Fiscal Year 2015-16 for capital outlay projects. (City Manager)

**F. ORDINANCE NUMBER 2015-19** – First Reading – To consider the first reading of Ordinance Number 2015-19, repealing Ordinance Number 2011-24 and establishing new nuisance abatement procedures for property maintenance, repealing ordinances that may be in conflict thereof with this ordinance; and providing penalties for violations of its provisions. (City Manager)

**G. RESOLUTION NUMBER 2015-21** – To approve Resolution Number 2015-21 authorizing the Police Chief to submit application number 2990601 for the 2016 Local Border Star Program for \$85,500. (Chief David)

- H. IT SERVICE AGREEMENT** – To approve the IT service agreement between the Town of Laguna Vista and Leonel Garza, Jr. (City Manager)
- I. REGULAR MEETING – SEPTEMBER 2015** – To cancel the regular Town Council meeting scheduled for September 8, 2015. (Mayor Houston)

**Council Member Carter made a motion to keep the September 8, 2015 regular council meeting as scheduled, Council Member Keplinger seconded the motion. All voted “aye” to approve, motion carried.**

**7. ADJOURNMENT**

**Council Member Keplinger made a motion to adjourn meeting at 7:28 pm, Council Member Davalos seconded the motion. All voted “aye” to approve, motion carried.**

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Susie Houston, Mayor

Attest:

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Alma Deckard, City Secretary