

Public Hearing Minutes
Breckenridge City Commission

August 16, 2016 – 5:30 P.M.
Breckenridge City Offices Commission Chambers
105 North Rose Avenue
Breckenridge, Texas 76424

Those Present: Jim McKay, Mayor; Tom Cyprian, Mayor Pro-Tem; Rob Durham, Commissioner; R. Kent Thompson, Commissioner; David Wimberley, Commissioner; Andy McCuiston, City Manager; Heather Robertson-Caraway, City Secretary; Stacy Harrison, Public Works Director; Judy Wolfe; Tommy Wimberley; Bob Sims; Tommy Pittman; Paula Chisholm; Eugenia & James Hall; Eddie Melford; Kipi Parks; Patsy McMullen; Danielle & Chad Anderson; Josh Davis; Justin Hopkins; James Moreno; Wayne McMullen; Maggie & Ronnie Anderson; Melinda Lane; John Cook; Brenda Ball

Those Absent: None

1. Call to Order

Mayor McKay at 5:30 P.M. a quorum was established.

PUBLIC HEARING

2. Discussion: City of Breckenridge Tax Increase

Mayor McKay asked we limit to 5 minutes per person, one at a time and that the person stand and state their name clearly so that it may be recorded.

Tommy Wimberley stated you all are killing our town with the tax rate. Out of 1208 City tax entities in the state of Texas we are at 28th from being the highest. Going to \$1.04 will take up to the 19th highest. He compared the amount of employees along with certain department employees between Breckenridge, Eastland and Graham. He also compared permit and water fees in each town. Spoke about all the equipment that the City owns being oversized and we are wasting money. Small businesses cannot operate on the restraints that you all are putting on us in Breckenridge.

Judy Wolfe stated she had moved back in 2009 and her family came here in 1863. We need a cohesive relationship between the County and the City to do the best for Stephens County. She explained how to work with the Texas Workforce Commission to save 25% on payroll. Suggested that we could eliminate positions. Possibly annex more property into the City limits to bring in more property taxes. We need hope, we need a plan and we need to work together.

Bob Sims stated we have had some people move recently because of the taxes and the conditions of the streets. We are not getting anything for what we are paying.

Eddie Medford stated he doesn't know what the answer is but this town is dying. When the kids at school leave, their parents leave. We need to get more activities in this town to bring people in. We are cutting our throats trying to pay our taxes.

Commissioner Rob Durham stated, Eddie, I appreciate you coming out because a lot of our foundation of the community are the small business owners. I spoke with Johnny Stoker in regards to the lake. Bass Clubs have already scheduled their tournaments for the year. This next year taxes will be tough for all of us. Hopefully this next year will bring in more tourism to help with sales tax. I also understand how small business owners are affected here locally by lack of tourism as well.

Paula Chisholm stated she is concerned about not being able to afford to have higher taxes. I think we could generate more water revenue if we lower our rates and then people will use more water. Everyone's properties were reevaluated and now paying \$600 more a year from that.

Ronnie Anderson stated he has 2 water meters and one is for his sprinkler system, but he was being charged for sewer. He suggested to Paula Chisholm to check into that. He runs a business in Albany for about 40 years and they've been hit hard. His business went from \$10 million a year to \$1.5 million. We had to make a lot of tough decisions. Everyone and everything around here is affected by the Oil & Gas Industry. He thinks the City needs to take pay cuts and make adjustments.

OJ Hall stated his taxes have been going up every year for the last 3 or 4 years. I am here to complain about the taxes.

Eugenia Hal stated I am the oldest person in this room, grew up here and graduated in 1951. She talked about how beautiful Breckenridge used to be compared to what it looks like now. She stated there are lots of things that everybody can do to make this town look better, be cleaner and neater that won't cost us a thing. Spoke about Ordinances in the City of Richardson that people had to follow regarding the way their property looked. We all need to do more to save Breckenridge and bring back our pretty town.

Eddie Medford asked if we have a plan if the tax increase doesn't work. City Manager McCuiston replied raising the taxes was the last thing we did. We laid off 6 ½ positions, there is no purchasing of equipment or vehicles, no raises – except for the fire department, which is a part of a previous agreement, and the reserves are dangerously low. Reserves are for unplanned events that happen and we have had plenty of those in this community. We have about \$10 million in capital projects, part of which the state of Texas is requiring. Discussed projects completed and in progress. City Manager McCuiston points to the map and explained the purple lines are \$1.7 million in water line replacement and that is not a lot of area covered. He explained the TxDOT project on US HWY 180 from Gonzolus Creek to Hwy 67. Stated we can't put new streets over old water lines, then you are tearing up the new street to repair the lines. Discusses future possibilities of pay cuts and layoffs without decreasing the service level. City Manager McCuiston stated when I came here in 2012 the tax rate was a little over \$1.04. I thought at that time the tax rate was too high and we lowered it for three years in a row, this current budget year we are in, it

went up to \$.94 from \$.86. I am not opposed to decreasing the water rates. It is a risk hoping that you would bring in the same or more revenue.

Commissioner David Wimberley stated we don't get salaries like the county.

Jimmy Moreno stated I appreciate you all showing up here knowing that all of these people were going to come today. I also want to thank you all that everyone is being civil and respectful. This is not sustainable. We are all affected by the economy. I appreciate you all, and I know that you are looking at everything and I trust that you are doing what needs to be done.

Tommy Wimberley stated we not only have had tax increases, we have also had property reevaluations which are all increases. He discusses what the police could do and about the money spent at the City Park. He suggests that we become a Home Ruled County and do away with the City of Breckenridge all together. The City is paying for dispatch at the Sherriff's department. Why doesn't the County pay for it. We have Firemen and Policemen attending fires and wrecks in the County, why doesn't the county send their crew out. The county should reimburse the City every time we go out there. I've looked into this Home Rule County and it is possible, because we are only 1 city in the County. County Judge and Commissioners are high paid and can work more than 2 hours a day. BEDC is spending money cleaning up all these other properties which is tax payer's money and you all have to approve everything they are doing. We are wasting money. They are my competitor now buying up these properties. When they buy them, those properties are taken off the tax roll.

Justin Hopkins stated last night at the basketball courts there were 38 kids playing – no sex or drugs. That is great for our kids.

Tommy Ditmar stated I was the juvenile probation officer for 5 years and was laid off due to budget. Everybody needs to do their part. We are in some tough times here from Federal, State & Local.

Kipi Parks asked when there was 6 ½ positions cut, was there a pay/salary cut? City Manager McCuiston replied no. There won't be any raises this year or next year. If the economy keeps sliding, unexpected expenses come up, revenues continue to decrease, and then we will look into pay/salary cuts. When I came in 2012 we had 85 employees and now we have 75 employees. We have cut 11% of the workforce. The City is trying to do our part. Also when I came here the City employee's rates were exceptionally low and I gave them raises for three years. When salaries are low you lose a lot of folks with talent and skills to other businesses and the oil field took a lot of my public works employees. We were losing our police officers to the county when there were vacancies. Recently had a huge turn over in the fire department part of it was salary. We got rid of the Assistant Fire Chief position and distributed the salary amongst the fire department at 3% each year for three years. Tommy mentioned the equipment that was bought, that equipment was purchased before I came, they are paid for now and the City owns them. Some costs like the health insurance are going up, 8% last year and 12% this year. Commissioner David Wimberley stated we do not have the option to not furnish health insurance.

Eddie Medford asked how it works between the City and the County. The county makes \$72 thousand a year and you all (Commissioners) make 5 dollars a meeting. City Manager McCuiston stated I can't address that but I can address the relationship between the City and the County as far as the fire and dispatch. The County is now paying for 1 dispatcher. As far as Fire, we get \$50 thousand a year. When you look at the costs, they do not pay their share. Due to the County's financial issues we have had to back off of approaching them for more money for Fire.

Commissioner Kent Thompson stated this man (Andy) impresses me and you (Andy) need to give them your background. City Manager McCuiston stated half my career has been in the private sector. Served 4 years in the Navy. I worked for the City of Irving in the accounting department – that's what my degree was in – for 5 years. Went back into the private sector for 10 years. After that I went to the City of Palestine as the City Manager and then went back into private sector again. I try to run this as a business and treat the citizens as if they could go somewhere else. Commissioner Thompson stated he (Andy) doesn't bring anything to us without looking at every aspect and having all the facts.

Bob Sims stated these problems were here before Andy came here. The previous City Management did not handle things the way they should've been handled. City manager McCuiston stated I am not trying to criticize anyone who preceded me. We are dealing with old water and sewer lines, water and sewer treatment plants and curbs and sidewalks broken. We are doing the best we can with what we have.

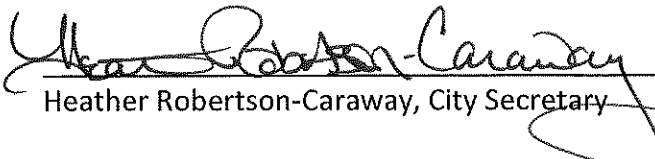
Jimmy Moreno asked are there other options to bring outside money in to fuel our economy rather than using inside money. City Manager McCuiston stated I will tell you about Trade Days. The last five years before I came here I was at Canton. He explained a little of the history of Canton Trade Days. Breck Trade Days is to bring people in that will generate revenue for not only the City but for all businesses in town. All the features and facilities have multiple uses. He explains the facilities at Trade Days and Park and the new features of both. BEDC funded \$18,000 on the Walking Trail and the rest of the funds were from a grant. Discussion ensues on different activities to occur or to bring back.

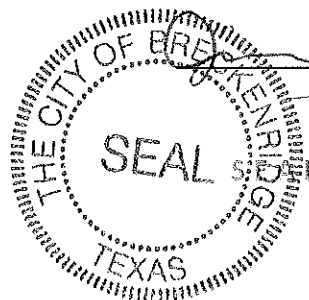
Mayor McKay asks if there is anyone else who would like to address the Commission. If not, I will entertain a motion to adjourn.

3. Adjourn

Commissioner Wimberley made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Thompson to adjourn the meeting. When the motion was put to vote, it prevailed as follows: Ayes: McKay, Thompson, Cyprian, Durham, Wimberley. Nays: None. Absent: None.

Meeting adjourned at 6:41 P.M.


Heather Robertson-Caraway, City Secretary




Jimmy McKay, Mayor