

January 25, 2021

The Graham City Council met in a SPECIAL CALLED MEETING in the Council Chambers at 6:00 p.m. on Monday, January 25, 2021 with the following members present:

MEMBERS: Mayor: Neal Blanton
 Mayor Pro-Tem: Lee Boyd
 Council Member: Kyle Peavy
 Alex Heartfield
 City Manager: Brandon Anderson
 City Secretary: Sharon McFadden
 Public Works Director: Randall Dawson

VISITORS: Gary Smith, Lindsey Taylor, and Robert Taylor.

ENTERED INTO A PUBLIC HEARING AT 6:00 P.M.

Brandon said during this part (referring to the public hearing) that citizens rarely attend these meetings. Brandon said Grant Works is our (referring to the City of Graham) facilitator and putting the grant together. The purpose of this meeting is to see where the City stands in the process, what the odds are for receiving funding, and identify reasons why previous grant requests were not funded. Gary Smith stated he was the reviewer for the grant application seven years ago (previous application). Brandon said the survey of residents has changed.

Gary Smith said that although not required, he prefers to attend public hearings to become familiar with City staff that are involved in the processes, especially the Public Works Director. Mr. Smith mentioned this is the first year for a state-wide scoring system and has been simplified. The City of Graham is competing with other cities within the NorTex area. The City has not received funding in a while so that helps drive the City of Graham near the top. Gary Smith said the grant application is for \$350,000 and to receive the maximum scoring points, you (referring to the City of Graham) must provide fifteen (15) percent which equates to the City contribution of \$52,500. The total project funds will be \$400,000. Mr. Smith said the fee for GrantWorks services (engineering) will come out of the grant funds. Lee Boyd asked who funds the grants. Gary Smith responded that the Texas Department of Agriculture but the funds are Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funds. The funds are federal, and Gary said this funding process has occurred for years. Lee confirmed with Gary Smith that the program is administered by the state (referring to the State of Texas). Gary Smith stated the priorities are determined by our local COG (referring to Council of Government) NorTex and our region includes water, wastewater, road, street, and drainage. Every two years these grants are funded. Gary Smith said the projects can be city-wide or a target area. Part of the HUD mandate is that 51 percent of the beneficiaries must be low to moderate income residents. Gary said the income census for this area is updated annually. Graham does not meet the income level requirement based on citywide figures. Gary Smith presented a copy of a city map with census data to each meeting attendee. Gary said moderate annual income for a family of four (4) in Graham is approximately \$47,000. Brandon confirmed the City will be using engineering firm Jacob & Martin from Abilene. Gary said Grant Works, Jacob & Martin, and City staff will have a "scoping" meeting. Gary said this type of grant is very competitive. Lee Boyd asked who selects the grant winners. Gary Smith said there is a scoring system in place by the State of Texas. Past performance and how many times a city has been recently funded. The State of Texas prefers to spread the grant funds out to a few communities. Gary said if there is a tie between communities, the tie breaker is median family income. Gary said this public hearing is required 90 days before the application is due, which is May 3, 2021. The City of Graham receives two (2) points for having this meeting.

Graham citizen, Lindsey Taylor, entered the meeting. She commented it is interesting that there may be grants coming to repair the downtown area of Graham. Brandon said this grant being discussed is repairs to Texas Street. Seven (7) years ago, the grant application was \$275,000 and was not provided to Graham. Gary Smith mentioned there is a grant available that is specific to repair of downtown areas (known as Main Street projects). Mayor Blanton stated that the City of Graham has previously participated in the Main Street program, but the value and requirements were no longer viable. Brandon said dues are paid for the program (Main Street), but the grants are very difficult to obtain. Brandon said the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) has interest in taking a main street program on the local level. Lee Boyd identified the census information on the map is dated for 2010 and asked if the 2020 data is available. Gary Smith said the new 2020 data has not been presented. Lee asked if the economic data was for 2019 and Gary Smith agreed the median income percentages are from 2019. Gary Smith asked Brandon what he believes what area should be on focus for the project. Brandon replied that he prefers to remain focused on Texas Street. The trash trucks created street, curb, and drainage issues citywide and Texas Street would be the first area for engineers to begin assessing. Gary Smith said this year is the first for the grant to allow streets to be included. Gary said for the street, seal coating is not allowed, the street must be completely reconstructed. Brandon and Randall agreed that the curbs and edges of the street are worse between Brazos Street and Second Street. Gary said he recommends the "scoping" meeting take place in the next few weeks. Gary said the Council will need to approve the project and he (Gary Smith) will return an authorizing resolution committing to the fund match. Gary said a notice will be published for the public to review. Lee Boyd asked Brandon if he was referring to Texas Street north of Brazos Street. Brandon said from Brazos Street down to Second Street. Brandon said that seven (7) to eight (8) block area will likely use all the funding. Lee Boyd asked if the water lines would be replaced and the streets would be repaired. Brandon said the water lines are priority, but the sewer lines tend to be less damaged. Randall said the area being considered has the sewer lines in the alley. Brandon said since the grant requires total street reconstruction, Texas Street is in the greatest need. Gary Smith said water line repair and the street repairs are generally done together.

Mayor Blanton asked if anyone attending has questions. Robert Taylor (came into meeting during Gary Smith's presentation) said he understands what is going on. Brandon said the hope is to get this project funded and there are few grants available to do this type of infrastructure. Brandon said the City is earning two (2) points for this public meeting toward the grant application process. Lindsey Taylor said it is very exciting that any improvement to infrastructure is good to know. Ms. Taylor said she appreciated being able to attend the meeting and hopes the City will receive the grant. Robert Taylor said the grant is \$350,000 and the project is seven (7) to eight (8) blocks. Brandon said it is more likely it will be two (2) to three (3) blocks due to costs. Robert Taylor asked where the additional funding will come from. Brandon said at this time, they are considering what can be done within the scope of \$350,000 for the project. Brandon stated that Jacob & Martin, the engineers hired, will provide details of the best process to expend the funds. Robert Taylor said he understood it to be the entire street must be redone in the process. Brandon said an option may be to use the grant money for replacing water lines and then seek other funding to fix the streets. Brandon said everyone prefers nice streets, water and sewer lines are "out of sight, out of

mind." Graham is not the only community lacking focus on replacing infrastructure and we have 80-year-old lines where we are sitting (612 Elm Street). Brandon said there is a plan in place for a \$5 million project with an alternate line along with all the old transmission lines right in the main part of town. Brandon said that is an entirely different pool of funds to seek. Brandon said it is important to see this grant. The City is currently highly leveraged in the water department on what can be done. Brandon continued explaining if the water adjustment from five years ago, rather than borrowing money, the hope is to set up a reserve. The City is setting aside a \$300,000 to \$500,000 reserve each year since the new water rate was put into place. Brandon would like to seek a low interest loan from the Texas Water Development Board to pay for the additional projects discussed. Brandon said this grant requires the City do the grant project in an area that meets the required criteria. Randall said Texas Street has been discussed several times in the past and mainly due to the number of times the water line has been dug for repairs. Gary Smith said the engineers identify the needs and bids a low to moderate income area. Gary said the amount of grant funds does not solve all the problems and that is the purpose of planning to make funds go as far as possible. Lee Boyd announced he needed to exit from the meeting.

Mayor Blanton asked if there were any additional questions from the Council. Brandon asked Gary Smith if he had any additional comments. Gary responded that he did not have additional comments. Mayor Blanton thanked everyone for attending the public hearing.

PUBLIC HEARING ADJOURNED AT 6:26 P.M.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, Kyle Peavy made a motion to adjourn and Lee Boyd seconded. The Special Called Meeting was unanimously adjourned.


Neal Blanton, Mayor

ATTEST: 
Sharon McFadden, City Secretary