

City Council
June 16, 2025

A regular meeting of the Mayor and City Council of the City of Waxahachie was held at the Waxahachie Civic Center, 2000 Civic Center Lane, Meeting Rooms A and B, Waxahachie, Texas, on Monday, June 16, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.

Council Members Present: Billie Wallace, Mayor, Council Member Place 4
Patrick Souter, Mayor Pro Tem, Council Member Place 2
Chris Wright, Council Member Place 3
Travis Smith, Council Member Place 5

Council Member Absent: Tres Atkins, Council Member Place 1

Others Present: Michael Scott, City Manager
Albert Lawrence, Deputy City Manager
Joshua Galicia, City Attorney Representative
Amber Villarreal, City Secretary

1. Call to Order

Mayor Billie Wallace called the meeting to order.

2. Invocation

3. Pledge of Allegiance and Texas Pledge of Allegiance

City Manager Michael Scott gave the invocation. Mayor Wallace led the Pledge of Allegiance and the Texas Pledge of Allegiance. Caroline Condor sang the National Anthem and the Ellis County Marine Corps League presented the colors.

4. Public Comments

Savannah Williams, 108 S. Hawkins, Waxahachie, Texas, spoke in support of ZDC-69-2025.

Crissy Brown, 503 W. Parks, Waxahachie, Texas, spoke in support of ZDC-69-2025.

Sandra Beard, 1607 Alexander, Waxahachie, Texas, expressed opposition to racism and injustice in Waxahachie.

Rebecca Wilson, 410 Williams, Waxahachie, Texas, spoke in support of ZDC-69-2025.

Sandy Emmons, 1310 E. Marvin, Waxahachie, Texas, spoke in support of ZDC-69-2025.

Sharon Sonneborn, 805 Bryson, Waxahachie, Texas, spoke in support of ZDC-69-2025.

Alex and Jennifer Lohmann, 801 W. Marvin, Waxahachie, Texas, expressed thanks to those in support of ZDC-69-2025. They explained that they have been actively addressing concerns raised by staff and citizens, and would like to withdraw their current request in order to submit a revised plan for further consideration.

5. Consent Agenda

- a. Minutes of the City Council meeting of June 2, 2025
- b. Minutes of the City Council work session of June 6, 2025
- c. Event application for DFW Youth World Baseball Classic to be held August 1, 2025-August 4, 2025 at the Waxahachie Sports Complex
- d. Event application for Warrior Walk at Getzendaner Park to be held September 6, 2025
- e. Event application for Hachie 50 to be held March 7, 2026
- f. Budget amendment for increase in funding for the Police Department parking lot expansion project

Action:

Patrick Souter moved to approve all items on the Consent Agenda. Motion was seconded by Travis Smith and carried unanimously (4-0).

6. Introduce Honorary Council Member

Council Member Chris Wright introduced DV Lebron as the June Honorary City Council Member and presented him with a Certificate of Appreciation. Born in Puerto-Rico, Mr. Lebron grew up in New York City and California. He grew up facing a difficult childhood and, for a time, became involved with gangs. Recognizing the need for a change, he made the courageous decision to turn his life around. He joined the U.S. Navy, and his life changed forever. He traveled across Asia and the Middle East, experiencing new cultures and places. He was later deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. After leaving the Navy, he began a career in law enforcement in 2012, later transferring to a position in Texas. He moved to Waxahachie in 2014. By 2019, he found himself at the ballot box, frustrated that he didn't know enough about the candidates he was voting for. That moment sparked something in him. He launched the first version of *The Ellis Talker* and began reaching out to local candidates, inviting them for interviews—many said yes. Since then, the show has grown steadily, covering not just Waxahachie, but cities across Ellis County.

Passionate about supporting his fellow veterans, he volunteered with the Veterans Treatment Court and is always looking for ways to give back. He deeply loves this community, and the people he has met along the way have enriched his life in ways he never imagined.

Mr. Lebron expressed that his experience in Ellis County has been very positive, highlighting the opportunity to meet both elected officials and local citizens. He noted that each council member demonstrates genuine care and a consistent willingness to help. He expressed his gratitude to the City Council.

7. Present Proclamation designating the City of Waxahachie as a “Purple Heart City”

Mayor Wallace presented the Proclamation designating the City of Waxahachie as a “Purple Heart City” and recognized the DFW Mid-Cities Chapter #1513 for their assistance with the City of Waxahachie Purple Heart Designation Ceremony. Mayor Wallace announced that Congressman Jake Ellzey provided a Certificate of Recognition to recognize the designation.

8. Present Proclamation recognizing June 4, 2025-July 4, 2025 as “Crape Myrtle Month”

Mayor Wallace presented the Proclamation recognizing June 4, 2025-July 4, 2025 as “Crape Myrtle Month.”

9. Public Hearing on a request by Alex Lohmann, for a Specific Use Permit (SUP) for an Amusement, Indoor (Haunted House) use within a Light Industrial-2 (LI-2) zoning district located at 500 W Madison Street, Suite B (Property ID 171075) - Owner: Big Blue Truck LLC (ZDC-69-2025)

Trenton Robertson, Senior Director of Planning, announced during Public Comments that the applicant had requested to withdraw their application. As a result, the application would need to be resubmitted, re-posted, and go through the full review process again, including consideration by both the Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Council.

To avoid further delays, Council Member Travis Smith informed the applicants that, as an alternative to withdrawing their request, the Council could table the item. This would allow time to address outstanding concerns and ensure that all Council members are present for a vote, as a supermajority is required for approval.

Applicants Alex and Jennifer Lohmann expressed support for tabling the item to allow for a vote by the full Council and to provide additional time to address concerns and submit a revised plan that minimizes the impact on the surrounding area.

Mayor Wallace opened the Public Hearing at approximately 7:51 p.m.

Jennifer Lohmann noted that they have secured an additional 70 paved parking spaces adjacent to the proposed location, which would allow them to meet the minimum requirement of 110 parking spaces. She also stated that they are requesting only a one-year approval to evaluate the viability of the project and its impact on the area after the season. The applicant is also open to adjusting hours to close at 11pm.

Alex Lohmann presented options for 'No Parking' signage along Jefferson Street and expressed interest in exploring the possibility of temporarily converting traffic to one-way during event dates to improve traffic flow and safety.

Those who spoke in opposition:

Kathleen Bowen, 527 W. Jefferson, Waxahachie, Texas

John Wedel, 417 W. Jefferson, Waxahachie, Texas

Those who spoke in support:

Kalen McCarthy, 307 Highland Avenue, Waxahachie, Texas

There being no others to speak for or against ZDC-69-2025, Mayor Wallace closed the Public Hearing at approximately 7:56 p.m.

Mr. Robertson presented the Item. The applicant proposes a Specific Use Permit (SUP) to allow for the operation of a Haunted House in Suite B at 500 W Madison Street on Fridays and Saturdays in October 2025. A SUP is required for this use due to the fact that the subject property cannot support the minimum on-site parking requirement for an “Amusement, Indoor” land use; which is

approximately 110 spaces in this instance. “Reindeer Manor” is the specific haunted house proposed with this SUP. Owner’s Alex & Jennifer Lohmann have previously operated Reindeer Manor in Red Oak and Grand Prairie and are now looking to relocate the Haunted House to Waxahachie. The Reindeer Manor Haunted House is intended to be complimentary to the “Fall for Hachie – Benny and Boneless Adventure” event planned around the square in the month of October.

The Haunted House at 500 W Madison Street is proposed to take place only on nine nights (Fridays & Saturdays) in October of 2025. Hours of Operation on Halloween night are proposed to be 7:00pm to 10:00pm; while hours of operation for all other nights are proposed to be 8:30pm to 11:30pm. The applicant has noted that nightly clean-up may extend to midnight for staff on most nights. The applicant has noted in the Operational Plan (Exhibit B) for the event that the Haunted House is expected to employ up to 40 seasonal employees. While not explicitly referenced in the Operational Plan, the Haunted House is obligated to adhere to Chapter 20 of the Waxahachie Code of Ordinances; which prohibits noise on private property that constitutes a nuisance.

500 W Madison Street, Suite B is approximately 11,000 square feet in total size. The applicant has provided a Floor Plan (Exhibit D) that identifies how the interior of the building is proposed to be set up for the Haunted House. In addition to the Haunted House path traversed by patrons, the Floor Plan identifies the customer queuing area, staff office, and staff access corridors. The applicant proposes to ensure that all customers wait/queue inside Suite B as opposed to elsewhere inside the building or outside the building. Additionally, it is important to note that the existing building does have a functional fire sprinkler system.

At the Planning & Zoning Commission meeting held on June 10, 2025, the Commission voted 3-2 to recommend denial of case number ZDC-69-2025. A favorable vote of three-fourths ($\frac{3}{4}$) of all members, which equates to four (4) of the five (5) members, of the City Council is also required for any zoning request that was recommended for denial by the Planning and Zoning Commission. (Sec. 2.04, City of Waxahachie Zoning Ordinance)

The applicant has also provided a Site Plan and Parking Plan with this SUP Application. The Site Plan identifies the location of the entrance for the Haunted House on the south side of building and identifies the on-site parking for the use. As noted above, the typical parking requirement for an “Amusement, Indoor” land use cannot be supported on the subject property. In this instance, approximately 110 on-site parking spaces are required for the Haunted House based on the size of Suite B. The applicant proposes to provide 17 un-improved on-site parking spaces for the Haunted House use. The proposed on-site parking does not include the existing 25 concrete parking spaces on the subject property, as these existing spaces are reserved current tenants of 500 W Madison Street. Off-site Parking agreements have been executed for the use of an additional 25 parking spaces spread across the neighboring 303 Patterson Street, 410 W Madison Street, and 510 W Jefferson Street properties.

The applicant proposes that existing public parking around the square be utilized for additional patron parking beyond the on-site and specified off-site parking locations. The Parking Plan provided by the applicant identifies several locations around the subject property where Haunted House staff are proposed to be stationed for way-finding and parking assistance. The applicant has also provided a Signage Plan that identifies the proposed signage for the 500 W Madison Street

building as well as temporary way-finding signs that are proposed to be placed near the subject property.

After review of the SUP Application, staff does have concerns related to the existing conditions and setting of the subject property. Specifically, staff has concerns with parking and accessibility for the site. The lack of dedicated parking for the Haunted House on, and immediately surrounding, the subject property is likely to lead congestion issues around the site. Public parking on and near the square cannot be relied upon for availability to supplement the on-site parking. The lack of on-site parking also contributes to the second staff concern of access to the subject property. A deficiency in dedicated parking has the potential to result in on-street parking on the narrow Patterson and W Madison Streets. Due to the narrow existing conditions of these streets, both patrons and emergency services attempting to navigate to the site may be hindered or slowed by on-street parking.

To address these concerns, staff has provided recommendations for conditions that may be added to the SUP, if the application is approved. These conditions include restrictions for on-street parking, customer queuing/waiting areas, and the placement of vehicles, trailers, and temporary structures associated with the Haunted House. Additionally, the applicant has identified several proposals to address concerns with parking and congestion of the surrounding area. Specifically, the applicant has proposed to require ticket pre-orders for a specific start time. This is intended to limit the number of customers arriving on-site at one time. A maximum of 110 tickets per 30-minute interval is currently proposed by the applicant. Additionally, staff members are proposed to be dedicated to key areas around the subject property to assist in parking and way-finding to the Haunted House.

To comply with State law contained in Local Government Code Chapter 211 and the City's public hearing notice requirements, 29 notices were mailed to property owners within 200 feet of the request. In addition, a notice was published in the Waxahachie Sun and a sign was visibly posted at the property. Staff has received three (3) letters of opposition and eleven (11) letters of support for the proposed SUP.

Based on the details provided in this Staff Report and the present status of the documents associated with the request, if considering a recommendation for approval:

1. The Specific Use Permit shall expire November 1, 2025. The applicant shall be required to submit, and receive approval of, a new or amended Specific Use Permit application to reinstate the use after November 1, 2025.
2. The Haunted House shall remain exclusively within the approximately 11,000 square foot Suite B at 500 W Madison Street; which is identified in Exhibit C & D. The applicant shall be required to submit, and receive approval of, a new or amended Specific Use Permit application to expand the Haunted House beyond Suite B.
3. Patrons shall only be permitted to queue inside Suite B at 500 W Madison Street. Patrons shall not be permitted to wait or queue for access to the Haunted House elsewhere inside the building or outside the building.
4. The drive-aisle around the 500 W Madison Street and public right-of-way (ROW) adjacent to 500 W Madison Street shall remain unobstructed. No vehicles, trailers, or temporary structures are permitted to obstruct the drive-aisle or ROW.

5. The hours of operation for the Haunted House shall remain limited to 8:00pm to 11:30pm on 10/3 –10/25 and 7:00pm to 10:00pm on 10/31. The applicant shall be required to submit, and receive approval of, a new or amended Specific Use Permit application to operate outside of these hours.
6. On-street parking shall be prohibited along Patterson Street and W Madison Street.

Council Member Wright clarified if the parking requirement is based on the 11,000 square foot building or on the 5,000 square foot space for the haunted house. Mr. Robertson confirmed it is based on the 11,000 square foot building in accordance with the Zoning Ordinance.

Council Member Smith inquired about the maximum occupancy of the space and Ms. Lohmann explained timed ticketing will be used, limiting each time slot to around 110 guests to manage flow and parking.

Discussions included exploring temporary traffic flow changes, such as converting nearby streets to one-way during event nights to reduce congestion—though no decisions have been made. The Lohmann’s outlined a multi-layered security plan, including event staff, indoor monitoring through a specialized crisis control system, and at least two off-duty police officers on-site. They emphasized strong safety protocols, staff training, and their readiness to adjust hours or procedures as needed. Additionally, they expressed long-term interest in using the venue for other community events and emphasized their commitment to the city. While hopeful for immediate approval of their Special Use Permit, they were open to the item being tabled to allow time to address outstanding concerns and finalize details.

During a community discussion, participants voiced a mix of support, concerns, and potential solutions. Major safety issues were emphasized, particularly related to traffic flow on Patterson and Madison Streets, inadequate lighting, and the need for emergency vehicle access. Residents highlighted the area’s current lack of infrastructure and expressed concerns over pedestrian safety, congestion, and parking during event nights. There was general agreement that lighting should be improved and parking restrictions implemented on key streets. Concerns were also raised about compliance with city ordinances, such as noise limits and operating hours. Questions about the adequacy of restroom facilities and pedestrian access were also discussed.

In summary, the key concerns raised involve safety, lighting, walkability, parking, traffic flow, and sanitation facilities. Council members suggested tabling the item because of new information and potential costs to the city that haven't been fully clarified.

Council members agreed that the applicant should work with City staff to clarify and submit detailed plans that address concerns. They suggested bringing the matter back at the July 7th meeting, giving everyone time to properly review and ensure public transparency.

The applicant agrees to prepare updated documentation, including:

- A lighting plan (locations, who pays)
- Walkability maps with lighting and sidewalks
- Parking details and distance to the venue
- Porta-potty and handwashing station placement
- Traffic flow and potential no-parking zones

- A commitment to provide an additional police officer

The Council emphasized that the goal is safety and the success of the project.

10. Consider proposed Ordinance approving ZDC-69-2025

Action:

Travis Smith moved to continue ZDC-69-2025, a Specific Use Permit (SUP) for an Amusement, Indoor (Haunted House), to the July 7, 2025 City Council meeting. Motion was seconded by Patrick Souter and carried unanimously (4-0).

11. Consider proposed Resolution of support for 2025 Transportation Alternatives Funding Application with Texas Department of Transportation

Justin Stoker, P.E., CFM, Director of Public Works & Engineering, presented the Item. In January 2025, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) issued a call for projects for 2025 Transportation Alternatives funding. These are funds that prioritize alternative means of transportation between primary public places such as civic centers, parks, and schools. TxDOT is specific that this is not a grant program, but it is a reimbursement program.

A preliminary application was sent to TxDOT for the Waxahachie to Midlothian Regional Trail Phase 2, which extends the Regional Trail from FM 875 to US 287 for a total project cost of \$3,690,000. This is a highly competitive program, however, the preliminary application and interview for the Regional Trail Phase 2 was received favorably by TxDOT. The City received an invitation to submit a detailed proposal for funding and this resolution of support is a requirement of this application. The Regional Trail Phase 1 is currently in design and the limits of this project are between Getzendaner Park and FM 875.

The Regional Trail Phase 2 cost for design, environmental study, and construction is \$3,690,000. The City is responsible for \$768,000 (20% of the project cost), and any potential cost overruns. Funds are proposed in the Parks FY2026 Capital Improvement Program.

RESOLUTION NO. 1379

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF WAXAHACHIE SUPPORTING THE APPLICATION TO THE TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION'S 2025 TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES SET-ASIDE (TA) CALL FOR PROJECTS

Action:

Chris Wright moved to approve the resolution of support for the 2025 Transportation Alternatives Funding Application for the Waxahachie to Midlothian Regional Trail Phase 2 with the Texas Department of Transportation, and authorize the Mayor and/or City Manager to execute all necessary documents. Motion was seconded by Patrick Souter and carried unanimously (4-0).

12. Consider Roadway and Water Line Oversize Participation Agreement for Dove Hollow Phase 3

James Gaertner, Executive Director of Public Works & Utilities, presented the Item. GRBK Edgewood LLC, the developer for Dove Hollow Phase 3 oversized Vista Way roadway per the Roadway Master Thoroughfare Plan and the water line per Water Distribution System Master Plan. The developer is seeking for oversize reimbursement similar to the City agreement approved by City Council on January 18, 2022. City staff has inspected the improvements, evaluated the construction costs and verified the cost difference to oversize the roadway and water line. The following is a summary of the oversize improvements performed by the developer:

1. Vista Way Roadway – Per the Traffic Impact Analysis, the developer is responsible to improve two (2) lanes of Vista Way Road. The developer has widened the road to four (4) lanes from Hundred Acres Drive to Grove Creek Drive for a distance of approximately 880 feet. Storm drainage improvements were constructed within the portion of the oversized Vista Way and are eligible for roadway impact fee reimbursement.
2. 16-inch Water Line - Per City Ordinance, the developer is responsible to construct water lines up to 12-inches in diameter. The developer constructed a 16-inch water line along Vista Way, which is consistent with the City's Water Distribution System Master Plan. The 16-inch water line was constructed along Vista Way from Hundred Acre Drive to Grove Creek Road for a distance of 850-linear feet.

Dove Hollow Phase 3 is the last phase of Dove Hollow's subdivision.

The roadway oversize improvement was \$231,432, which will be reimbursed from the Roadway Impact Fee. The water oversize improvement was \$79,440, which will be reimbursed from the Water Impact Fee. A total reimbursement of \$310,872 from impact fees will go to GRBK Edgewood LLC, the developer of Dove Hollow Phase 3 subdivision.

Action:

Chris Wright moved to approve the Roadway & Water Line Oversize Participation Agreement with GRBK Edgewood, LLC in the amount of \$310,872, and authorize the Mayor and/or City Manager to execute all necessary documents. Motion was seconded by Patrick Souter and carried unanimously (4-0).

13. Discuss and consider proposed Ordinance approving a general homestead exemption at a specified percentage of the appraised value of the residence homestead and with a minimum exemption of \$5,000 for the tax year beginning January 1, 2025

City Manager Michael Scott presented the Item. The City has long recognized the need to provide seniors and disabled persons with property tax relief. The City currently offers an Over 65 homestead exemption and a Disabled Persons exemption in the amount of \$30,000. Additionally, the City offers an ad valorem tax ceiling on residence homesteads of the disabled and of those age 65 or over and their spouses. For these residents, the tax imposed on the qualified homestead is not increased over the amount in the year the resident qualified for this exemption. In 2023, the City Council approved a general homestead exemption of 1%, or a minimum of \$5,000. Last year, in 2024, the City Council approved an increase to the homestead exemption to 3.5%.

During the City Council Budget Workshop held on April 15, 2025, the City Council expressed interest in increasing the general homestead exemption to provide additional tax relief, with general consensus of 7%.

The fiscal impact of increasing the homestead exemption from 3.5% to 7.0% is an estimated incremental revenue loss of \$420,000 in the General Fund and \$260,000 in the Debt Service Fund.

The adoption of a general homestead exemption or any change to the current exemption percentage amount must be approved by City Council prior to July 1 in order to be effective for the current tax year.

ORDINANCE NO. 3635

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE CITY OF WAXAHACHIE, TEXAS, CODE OF ORDINANCES, CHAPTER 30 TAXATION, TO INCLUDE A GENERAL RESIDENCE HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION FOR THE TAX YEAR BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2025 IN THE AMOUNT EQUAL TO 7% OF THE APPRAISED VALUE OF THE RESIDENCE HOMESTEAD WITH A MINIMUM EXEMPTION OF \$5,000; AND FINDING AND DETERMINING THAT THE MEETING AT WHICH THIS ORDINANCE IS PASSED WAS NOTICED AND IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AS REQUIRED BY LAW.

Action:

Patrick Souter moved to adopt a seven percent (7%) general homestead exemption from ad valorem taxes with a minimum exemption of \$5,000 for the tax year beginning January 1, 2025. Motion was seconded by Travis Smith and carried unanimously (4-0).

14. Comments by Mayor, City Council, City Attorney and City Manager

City Management and City Council commended staff for their exceptional response to the recent train derailment incident, recognizing the efforts of first responders, city personnel, and the emergency management team. Additionally, City Council acknowledged and praised Laurie Mosley, Director of the Convention & Visitors Bureau, for her leadership and contributions in helping Waxahachie earn the prestigious Purple Heart Designation.

Council Member Chris Wright expressed his appreciation to everyone who attended in support of Alex Lohmann and spoke on his behalf. He emphasized that while any increase to the Homestead Exemption must be approached with caution, the Council remains committed to prioritizing tax relief for residents. He also extended his gratitude to Honorary Council Member DV Lebron for his ongoing dedication to the community.

Mayor Pro Tem Patrick Souter expressed his gratitude to DV Lebron for his dedicated service and offered words of praise for his contributions. Mayor Pro Tem Souter reflected on his father's service as a Purple Heart recipient, acknowledging the profound sacrifice such an honor represents.

Mayor Billie Wallace echoed the praise for Laurie Mosley, stating it was an honor to present the Purple Heart City designation to Waxahachie. She also thanked City Manager Michael Scott and city staff for their efforts in securing the 7% Homestead Exemption, emphasizing the importance of balancing taxpayer relief with the continued delivery of high-quality city services.

15. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Amber Villarreal
City Secretary