

A Work Session of the Mayor and City Council of the City of Waxahachie, Texas was held at the Waxahachie Civic Center, Crape Myrtle Room, 2000 Civic Center Lane, Waxahachie, Texas, on Wednesday, October 22, 2025 at 8:00 a.m.

Council Members Present: Billie Wallace, Mayor, Council Member Place 4
Patrick Souter, Mayor Pro Tem, Council Member Place 2
Tres Atkins, Council Member Place 1
Chris Wright, Council Member Place 3
Travis Smith, Council Member Place 5

Others Present: Ricky Boyd, Interim City Manager
Albert Lawrence, Deputy City Manager
Terry Welch, City Attorney
Amber Villarreal, City Secretary

1. Call to Order

Mayor Billie Wallace called the meeting to order.

2. Public Comments

None.

3. Hear presentation on proposed Project Southpaw Development

Larry Crosby presented the Item. Safari Development Services, LLC, on behalf of WGC Holdings, LLC, is requesting to lead the development of a 220.7-acre Life Science & Biotech Campus and mixed-use project in Waxahachie. The \$2 billion project will include 1.5 million square feet of research and lab facilities, 300,000 square feet of medical offices, 225,000 square feet of general offices, a 325-key hotel and conference center, as well as retail, restaurants, entertainment venues, and natural park areas. It will also feature 1,160 residential units, including 935 mid-rise apartments and 225 townhomes, and is planned to be completed in three phases.

Located within Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone #1 (TIRZ #1) near the I-35 and US 287 interchange, the project is designed as a signature mixed-use development anchored by a biomedical research campus. Economic impact projections estimate a \$270 million net benefit to the City and over \$575 million to local agencies, including \$147 million to Waxahachie ISD, over the life of the project. A Year 9 snapshot shows the City gaining over \$10 million, the school district nearly \$5 million, and continued growth thereafter. The project is proposed as a public-private partnership with zero financial risk to the City, as reimbursements will only occur after tax revenues are received.

Safari Development Services, LLC proposes amending the TIRZ to allow the City to contribute 75% of its tax increment to the TIRZ fund while retaining 25% for the General Fund, ensuring long-term fiscal benefits. Ellis County has also indicated willingness to join the TIRZ by contributing a portion of its tax increment. This transformative project would not only strengthen Waxahachie's economic base but also enhance public safety, education, and infrastructure—positioning the city as a regional hub for life science and biotech innovation.

City Council expressed that while they liked the overall concept of the project, the proposed location was unsuitable and ultimately a deal breaker. Council members raised concerns about placing the development in the middle of an existing residential neighborhood, which they felt was not appropriate. When asked about alternatives if the project were not approved, Mr. Crosby explained that the exit strategy would be the dissolution of the current golf course.

City staff also voiced concerns, noting that industrial development is not an approved use for this area and highlighting issues with topography and long-term project viability if construction is delayed. Staff stated that without more detailed information, they could not make a formal recommendation, though they agreed the concept itself was promising. Mayor Wallace concluded that both staff and City Council had clearly expressed their concerns and were not supportive of the proposed plan.

4. Discuss potential 7-11 on 287 Bypass

Moises Castro presented the Item. The proposed 7-11 will need approval of a Specific Use Permit for a convenience store with gasoline sales. The proposed location is at Highway 287 and Montclair Avenue, which is near the Montclair Development.

City Council held a discussion on drainage, floodplain concerns, and traffic impacts. James Gaertner, Executive Director of Public Works and Utilities, noted that additional details, including access points and sidewalks, will be provided in the forthcoming civil drawings.

The City Council generally agreed that this is an excellent location and recommended exploring the addition of more fueling pumps to accommodate anticipated growth.

5. Discuss plaque policy for City buildings

Senior Director of Administrative Services Dustin Deel presented the Item, introducing a draft plaque policy for City buildings. The proposed policy outlines guidelines for plaque content, an optional recognition clause, design standards, and the process and responsibility for approval.

Mayor Wallace expressed support for the policy, emphasizing the importance of consistency moving forward. It was the general consensus of the City Council to consider adoption of the plaque policy at a future meeting. Council also agreed that the policy should apply prospectively only, noting that retroactive application could be problematic and costly.

6. Discuss City contributions to non-profit agencies

Senior Director of Finance Chad Tustison presented the Item, introducing a sample application form for non-profit organizations seeking City funding. He explained that City Council could implement a formal application process requiring organizations to clearly describe their services, define measurable outcomes, and disclose other sources of funding. This would enhance accountability and transparency in the allocation of City funds.

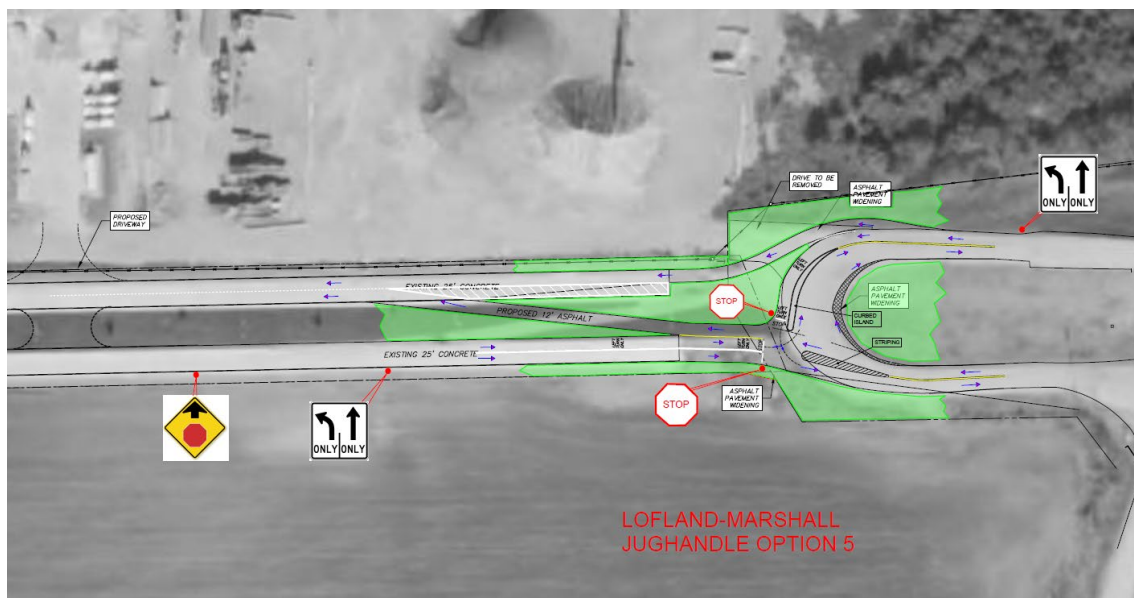
Mr. Tustison noted that once submitted, these requests could be presented to City Council as part of the annual budget process.

Interim City Manager Ricky Boyd shared that currently, approximately 0.285% of the General Fund budget, equating to \$214,200 or about \$4 per capita, is allocated to non-profit organizations. This figure does not include funding for the Sims Library, which is supported through a dedicated portion of the property tax as outlined in the City Charter.

Council discussed the possibility of establishing a donation cap for budgeting purposes, given potential future revenue constraints from state legislation. Council members expressed general support for implementing an application process, emphasizing the need to prioritize public health, safety, and welfare. It was the consensus of the City Council for the Finance Department to develop a formal application process to be reviewed during the upcoming budget cycle in the spring.

7. Discuss proposed reconfiguration of Marshal Road connection to I-35/Lofland

Mr. Gaertner presented the Item, explaining that Wynne Jackson is collaborating with the City to improve the Marshall Road connection to I-35/Lofland. City Council supported the proposed reconfiguration and emphasized the need for clear signage to alert drivers.



8. Discuss Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant

Mr. Gaertner presented the Item, explaining the City is considering applying for a Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant from the USDOT's Federal Railroad Administration, aimed at improving safety and mobility. The grant has three phases: planning, design, and construction. To apply for the Planning Grant, which requires 30% design plans, the City must identify a BNSF railroad crossing to eliminate but can change the crossing in later phases. Three potential crossings were reviewed, Sterrett Road, Flat Street, and College Street, with their pros and cons discussed.

The City Council agreed to identify the Flat Street crossing for the application, with the option to change it later if necessary.

9. Discuss compliance engine by a contracted provider

Fire Marshal Brent Fuller presented the Item. The Waxahachie Fire Department is requesting approval to use Brycer as its compliance engine provider to manage and monitor fire protection system inspections and maintenance, including alarms, sprinklers, suppression systems, and fire pumps. Brycer's Compliance Engine is nationally recognized and used by major U.S. fire departments. It identifies overdue inspections, unresolved deficiencies, and required follow-ups through automated notifications and enforcement workflows, improving safety and operational efficiency.

The system provides real-time tracking, reporting, and analytics, offering dashboards highlighting non-compliant properties, a full audit trail of all activities, and tools to generate detailed compliance reports. The Fire Department would have the capability to choose which inspections to track, and licensed third-party inspection companies would be required to submit those inspections to Brycer, providing accurate compliance data throughout the city. This ensures an up-to-date reporting system showing which businesses are due for inspections, in compliance, or need repairs, while reducing false alarms and saving inspector time.

The cost to the City is \$0, with fees applied per submitted report: \$20 each for fire sprinkler, fire alarm, vent hood, and fire extinguisher reports. Brycer handles logistics, drives compliance, and provides data showing increased compliance and reduced false alarms, ultimately enhancing firefighter safety and improving oversight of fire life safety systems across Waxahachie.

City Council expressed general consensus in supporting the adoption of Brycer as the City's compliance engine provider.

10. Discuss plan reviews by a contracted provider

Mr. Fuller presented the Item. The City of Waxahachie is considering third-party plan reviews to manage rapid growth, reduce permit wait times, and ensure all plans are reviewed by licensed engineers, improving public safety and departmental efficiency. This approach would allow staff to focus on core responsibilities while independent reviewers provide specialized, unbiased, and timely assessments. Several DFW cities already use this model, with typical turnaround within 10 business days and \$0 cost to the City. Benefits include faster reviews, enhanced code compliance, reduced liability, cost-effectiveness, and improved safety for occupants and property, making third-party plan reviews a practical and strategic solution for Waxahachie.

City Council expressed general consensus in supporting plan reviews by a contracted provider.

11. Discuss enforcement of Vacant Building Ordinance (Ordinance No. 3379)

Jason Watson, Senior Director of Building and Community Services, requested guidance from City Council regarding enforcement of the Vacant Building Ordinance. He explained that enforcement currently focuses solely on structural safety. Although the ordinance was adopted two years ago, it has not been implemented. While the ordinance is substantively sound, it has remained operationally dormant. The lack of prescribed forms, workflows, and notices has left the program unenforced, resulting in lost safety benefits, unrealized cost-recovery revenue, and limited leverage to encourage the rehabilitation and lawful reuse of vacant properties.

Mayor Pro Tem Patrick Souter noted that this initiative was originally led by Waxahachie Partnership, Inc. to address vacant buildings downtown. City Council expressed support for expanding enforcement city-wide.

It was the general consensus of City Council to proceed with updating the current ordinance and implementing enforcement. Mr. Watson noted that he will prepare draft forms, policies, and ordinance revisions for Council review and approval.

12. Discuss graffiti remediation

Gumaro Martinez, Executive Director of Parks and Leisure Services, presented the item and requested proposed changes to the ordinance to prioritize clean-up efforts and expedite graffiti removal.

It was the general consensus of City Council to proceed with revising the ordinance and bring it back for formal consideration.

13. Discuss proposed Panhandling Ordinance

City Attorney Terry Welch explained that he collaborated with Police Chief Joe Wiser on an ordinance aimed at addressing panhandling. Chief Wiser expressed concerns that the proposed ordinance might be overly strict and could have unintended negative effects on local non-profit organizations. He recommended maintaining the existing panhandling ordinance while implementing a zero-tolerance enforcement approach. Chief Wiser emphasized that enforcement would involve a comprehensive strategy through a joint effort between the Police Department and Code Enforcement, with staff prepared to assist individuals who are receptive to help.

City Council requested a system to track enforcement activities and measures to keep medians clear for safety purposes.

The general consensus of City Council was to allow the Police Department and Code Enforcement to continue enforcing the current ordinance and to reassess the effectiveness of the improved effort at a later date.

14. Discuss proposed Overnight Camping and Temporary Shelter Ordinance

Chief Wiser expressed support for the proposed Overnight Camping and Temporary Shelter Ordinance. It was the general consensus of City Council to consider the proposed ordinance at an upcoming meeting.

15. Discuss potential changes related to the composition and governance of City Council

City Council discussed potential changes to its composition and governance. Mr. Welch noted that any proposed changes would be presented to voters during a Charter Election in the general election. Council also considered reimbursing members for cell phone and mileage expenses to help attract younger candidates by offsetting time commitments.

Potential changes discussed included term limits, three-year staggered terms, an elected Mayor as a voting member, resignation if running for another office, expanding Council from five to seven members, and increasing the monthly car stipend.

The general consensus was to recommend the following Charter amendments for voters in May 2026:

- Elect a Mayor at Large
- Establish three-year Council terms
- Expand the Council from five to seven members
- Add a monthly meeting stipend for Council members

16. Discuss potential changes to public participation at City meetings

City Council discussed potential changes to public participation at meetings. The general consensus was to consider the following at an upcoming meeting: reducing speaking time to three minutes, limiting speakers to one appearance per item, requiring speaker cards submitted before the meeting, prohibiting time donation, and shortening time to one minute if there are many speakers. Mr. Welch confirmed that participation cannot be limited to Waxahachie residents only.

17. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Amber Villarreal
City Secretary