

A Work Session of the Mayor and City Council of the City of Waxahachie was held at the Waxahachie Police Department, Training Room, 630 Farley St., Waxahachie, Texas, on September 16, 2026 at 12:00 p.m.

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

Others Present: Ricky Boyd, City Manager
Shon Brooks, Assistant City Manager
Jeff Moore, City Attorney Representative
Amber Villarreal, City Secretary

1. Call to Order

Mayor Billie Wallace called the meeting to order.

2. Discussion on the following:

a. Update on Lake Parks opening for Labor Day

Gumaro Martinez, Parks & Recreation Director, reported that Labor Day weekend operations at the lake parks went smoothly, with no major incidents. Staff used parking-capacity monitoring and passes to control entry. Police, Parks and Recreation, and Fire provided additional staffing, and the parks never reached full capacity. The weekend saw nearly 1,100 vehicles and 2,900 visitors, primarily at Boat Dock Park, with operating costs close to projections.

For future weekends, staff said the temporary approach is not sustainable and discussed more permanent access controls, such as automated gates with license-plate readers, paid parking or registration passes, and QR codes. Council discussed a potential fee of around \$25 per vehicle, possibly varying by resident status and holidays. A detailed fee schedule will be presented later. Mayor Wallace noted positive feedback from lake residents and thanked the staff and emergency personnel who implemented the plan.

b. Potential Lions Park improvements

Mr. Martinez presented two options for the Lions Park project, with approximately \$11.4 million available. The natural grass option is estimated at \$10.4 million and would include 22.5 acres of lit flex fields, parking, sidewalks, a restroom, and access improvements. Construction documents are ready, with construction expected to take 12–15 months. Additional amenities could be added through bid alternates.

The artificial turf option is estimated at about \$11.2 million, including engineering, and would provide three large fields, two smaller fields, a pavilion, restroom, pickleball courts, picnic shelters, parking, and a new road. Design would take about six months, followed by roughly 6–8

months of construction. Staff also discussed optional turf features such as cooling systems and a football shock pad.

Over a 30-year period, staff estimates natural grass would cost about \$13.6 million compared with \$17.6–\$20.6 million for artificial turf, largely because turf would need to be replaced. Turf would also require additional staffing, while much of the grass maintenance could be handled in-house.

Council discussed whether the park should primarily serve as a practice facility or also support tournaments. Members raised concerns about grass maintenance, rainouts, irrigation, safety, and turf heat, while others supported turf because of its broader use and tournament potential. City Council will consider both options at the September 21st meeting.

c. Potential implementation of Scofflaw Program

Dustin Deel, Administrative Services Director, presented the Scofflaw Program, which would place a hold on vehicle registration for people with outstanding municipal warrants. In 2025, about 4,093 citations were issued and 3,286 were cleared, resulting in roughly an 80% compliance rate. More than 7,000 citation warrants remain outstanding, totaling approximately \$2.6 million, with only an 8% collection rate.

Under the program, the City would work with the County and State to place registration holds. When renewing their annual vehicle registration, individuals with a hold would have to contact Municipal Court and resolve their warrant before the hold could be released. The program would apply statewide in Texas, would not extend to neighboring states, and would use the City's existing collection agency at no additional cost. Council expressed support, and staff will draft an ordinance for future consideration.

d. Update on Animal Shelter, including potential partners and land

Mr. Deel presented a potential 20-acre site along U.S. Business 287 for a new animal shelter. The property is currently under an option period, allowing the City to complete due diligence with limited financial risk. Initial reviews were favorable, and the Animal Care Advisory Committee was enthusiastic about the location. The site offers water, sewer, electricity, nearby gas access, an existing house, good visibility, and potential access through a proposed road extension. Its proximity to schools was also identified as an opportunity to promote adoptions and responsible pet ownership.

The negotiated purchase price is \$3.125 million, reduced from the original asking price of \$3.925 million, representing an \$800,000 savings. Staff identified general fund reserves and previous bond savings as potential funding sources and planned to return to Council on September 21st, with a decision deadline of September 23rd. Council also discussed potential partnerships with Midlothian, Red Oak, Ellis County, and Ennis. Ennis expressed interest in continuing discussions, while Midlothian declined due to timing and other priorities, and the County has not committed at this point.

Several due-diligence and design issues remain unresolved. A wooded portion of the property lies in a floodplain and could potentially be used for outdoor dog exercise areas but not buildings. The proposed road could divide the property into two roughly 10-acre sections, although its alignment may be adjusted. Staff also planned additional research into possible cemetery-related zoning or historical use. Council requested more detailed construction estimates that separate legally required features from recommended improvements, as well as costs for veterinary and surgical services. The discussion also considered phased expansion, including reserving space for future veterinary facilities.

For veterinary care, staff is exploring a relationship with a nearby veterinarian that could include weekly visits, oversight, outside services, and spay/neuter events rather than hiring a full-time veterinarian. Council also discussed potentially building a surgical center immediately, pricing it separately, using an outside veterinary practice, or constructing a shell for future completion. Members emphasized that any governmental partners should commit early because partnership decisions would affect the shelter's design, funding, staffing, and long-term capacity.

e. Break

The break was held prior to discussing Item d.

f. EMS Budget Amendment for FY 27 to include Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone No. 1 (TIRZ) & Waxahachie Community Development Corporation (WCDC) funding options

Fire Chief Scott Safford presented the possibility of transitioning from the City's contracted EMS model to a City-operated, fire-based EMS system. Chief Safford compared the two approaches, reporting year-to-date average response times of 5 minutes, 11 seconds for the Fire Department versus 6 minutes, 26 seconds for the current contractor. The current contractor was reported to be meeting its contractual requirement of responding in under nine minutes 90% of the time, with year-to-date compliance of 90.83%. Council members also discussed ambulance availability during major incidents, on-scene treatment times, and the role firefighters currently play when ambulances are delayed.

The proposed City model would use two-paramedic ambulance crews, bring emergency medical dispatch and clinical oversight under city management, and provide greater control over training, staffing, medical direction, and quality assurance. Chief Safford also described potential surge capacity through reserve ambulances and strategies intended to address firefighter-paramedic burnout and retention. Council explored whether expanding the existing contracted service could provide similar improvements at a lower cost, but staff did not have a confirmed price for additional coverage and noted that a major contract change could potentially require a new procurement process.

A preliminary two-year transition scenario estimated a fiscal-year 2027 cost of about \$2.8 million, including additional firefighters, an EMS chief, vehicles, and other startup expenses. The scenario was presented as a workshop exercise rather than an approved implementation plan. Ambulance delivery was estimated to take 18 months to two years, and the existing EMS contract would need

to be renewed during the transition. Council also discussed staffing, paramedic training, promotional testing, and the need to protect existing employees and positions during any transition.

Council thoroughly discussed options on how to fund the recurring cost of City EMS. Finance Director Chad Tustison estimated that the \$2.8 million scenario could require roughly four cents on the property-tax rate, while another option would redirect one-eighth cent of WCDC's half-cent sales tax, potentially generating about \$2.1 million annually. Legal counsel explained that a sales-tax reallocation would require voter approval, with May identified as the earliest available election opportunity, and that Type B economic-development funds have restrictions that would prevent simply using them for EMS personnel and equipment. Staff emphasized that recurring revenue should be secured before hiring employees rather than relying indefinitely on reserves.

Council also explored whether WCDC could purchase the proposed 20-acre shelter property and later transfer or sell part of it to the city as a way to accelerate EMS startup funding. Legal and finance staff identified several restrictions involving fair-market-value requirements, bond proceeds, Type B funds, required approval processes, and the property's September 23rd option deadline. No EMS implementation plan, funding mechanism, or WCDC land-transfer arrangement was approved. Staff's stated preference was to establish recurring EMS revenue through an election first, potentially aligning implementation with the existing provider's October 2027 renewal, while continuing to evaluate alternatives for the shelter property and EMS transition.

Planning Director Trenton Robertson presented revised maps for Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone No. 1 (TIRZ) based on the Council's previous workshop. The revisions primarily remove single-family residential properties from the district, particularly in the west and northwest areas, while retaining parks and public amenities. Staff explained that State tax-law requirements may require certain parcels to remain in the district to maintain eligibility and avoid impermissible gaps. The discussion also addressed mixed-use properties, the North Hopkins apartments, and the potential for residential properties to be redeveloped for commercial purposes.

Council discussed whether removing downtown residential properties could limit future redevelopment opportunities or prevent properties that transition to commercial use from benefiting from TIRZ funding. Areas such as Hawkins Street and Water Street were specifically considered, along with properties that have potential for redevelopment or are part of the downtown corridor. Staff noted that some southern and eastern properties were retained because of their redevelopment potential, including possible future commercial or industrial development. Council generally favored a map that removes residential properties while avoiding unnecessary "donut holes" within the district.

The Council also discussed the long-term purpose and financial structure of the TIRZ. Staff reported that the district currently generates approximately \$1.5 million annually. Under the proposed boundaries, about \$700,000 could return to the General Fund, approximately \$500,000 would remain with the TIRZ, and the district has roughly \$300,000 in debt and \$200,000 in maintenance and operating obligations. Participants questioned whether the TIRZ should eventually be dissolved or given a defined end date and whether downtown revitalization could instead be funded through a dedicated General Fund allocation. Staff noted that the TIRZ remains intended to support downtown redevelopment and that a renewal decision is expected in 2030.

Finally, Council examined how existing TIRZ-related debt and bonds could affect future boundary changes. Staff explained that the bonds are technically City obligations, with TIRZ revenues being used for repayment, and the group discussed potentially paying down the remaining balance. Council also asked whether the boundaries could be expanded or otherwise modified before the debt is retired. Staff indicated that any boundary changes would require additional review, including coordination with the appraisal district, and would not take effect until a future budget year. No formal boundary change was approved during the discussion; the general direction was to bring the preferred revised map to Council for formal consideration and a vote.

g. City Hall 75% design estimate and 820 Ferris Guaranteed Maximum Pricing (GMP)

City Manager Ricky Boyd and contractors provided updates on 820 Ferris and City Hall. The revised GMP for 820 Ferris is \$11,773,333 after value engineering, including downsizing the generator, converting diesel versus natural gas, replacing windows, roof repair, and parking lot work. City Hall is at 75% design, with 100% drawings due October 14th and bids likely in November. They discussed historic remediation, pre-purchased HVAC/electrical equipment, finishes, funding, and construction schedule. Funding for both projects is sufficient. Council will consider the GMP for 820 Ferris at the September 21st meeting.

h. Potential Data Center zoning

Mr. Robertson Staff presented proposed data center ordinance changes. Currently, data centers are allowed by right in industrial districts; the proposal would eliminate by-right and add development standards for site design, architectural amenities, noise, lighting, pervious cover, decommissioning, water/utility infrastructure, and performance standards. Mr. Robertson discussed water usage, pushing projects toward Planned Development Zoning, and State law limitations on supermajority votes, including a 20% opposition threshold from surrounding property owners.

i. Potential implementation of Storm Water Fees

No discussion held.

j. Proposed designs for John Arden Drive & Highway 77 connection

James Gaertner, Director of CIP Engineering, discussed geotech recommendations for road condition due to fat, expansive soils that shrink and swell with moisture. He considered barrier walls, but shallow utilities make that difficult. The proposed alternative is a concrete ditch/liner to keep moisture consistent under the pavement, with periodic curb openings to let water out and curbs to keep cars from dropping into the ditch. Mr. Gaertner recommended concrete over asphalt.

k. Potential revisions of the Comprehensive Plan Throughfare Plan alignment along East Sterrett Road and Alliance Blvd.

{Councilman Souter left at 5:00 p.m.}

Mr. Gaertner reviewed the existing thoroughfare at Sterrett Road with sharp turns. Using the highest radius for 30 mph would require taking out three houses and a business, so staff recommends against buying that business and instead closing the road/railroad crossing and making an at-grade crossing through negotiation with the railroad. Costs include moving power poles at about \$500,000 each, a raw water line, and railroad constraints. Council discussed Cardinal/Lofland Overpass, traffic on 77, and a possible North Grove connection, and asked staff to talk to the railroad and bring findings back.

{Councilman Atkins left at 5:15 p.m.}

I. 216 N. College Building Proposal Presentations

Presentations were discussed before Item j.

City Council heard brief presentations from four proposals for the redevelopment of a 216 N. College, with each centered primarily on creating a restaurant or destination that would bring additional activity to the area.

Overall, the four proposals shared a common goal of restaurant-centered downtown redevelopment, but varied in their purchase offers, private investment commitments, financing approaches, requested city participation, and development details. Staff indicated that a scoring matrix would be presented later to help Council evaluate the proposals.

- 3. Convene into Executive Session to deliberate economic development incentives, as permitted by Texas Government Code Section 551.087; to deliberate the purchase, exchange, lease, or value of real property for municipal purposes, as permitted by Texas Government Code Section 551.072; to deliberate personnel matters, including the appointment, evaluation, duties or dismissal of any member of a City board or commission, as permitted by Texas Government Code Section 551.074; to consult with City Attorney regarding legal issues associated with City Code and Charter provisions and consultation with City Attorney regarding pending and anticipated litigation, as permitted by Texas Government Code Section 551.071, and all matters incident and related thereto**

City Council did not convene into Executive Session.

4. Reconvene

No action taken.

5. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Amber Villarreal, City Secretary