



City of Lorena
107-A S. Frontage Road
Lorena, Texas 76655
(254) 857-4641 Fax (254) 857-4118

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING
LORENA CITY COUNCIL
MONDAY, MAY 12, 2025 6:30 P.M.
LORENA CITY HALL
107-A S. FRONTAGE ROAD, LORENA TEXAS**

THE PUBLIC WILL BE ABLE TO JOIN THE MEETING BY VIDEOCONFERENCING
AT THE FOLLOWING LINK <https://meet.goto.com/529220605>
The City Council Meeting will be opened to the public.

Questions and comments on items listed on the agenda may be emailed no later than
NOON on the day of the meeting to the City Secretary Monica Hendrix via email to mhendrix@lorenatx.gov

MEETING MINUTES

1. Call to Order/Roll Call.

Mayor Ross called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Council members present were Mayor Tommy Ross, Mayor Protem Kelly Yarbrough, Jason Blaneck, Carla Pendergraft, Emily McKenzie and Brad Wetzel.

City Staff present were Monica Hendrix, Scott Holt, Linda Klump, Kevin Neal and Peter Rivas.

2. Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Ross led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Discussion and possible action on Resolution 2025-0512-01 canvassing and declaring the results of the May 3, 2025 General Election.

The votes for the Mayor position: Jonathan Guerra 38 votes and Russell Walizer 192 votes.

The votes for the Alderman positions: Malisa Spivey 41 votes, Chatel Spivey 16 votes, Jessica Montz 33 votes, Adam Montemayor 177 votes and Carla Pendergraft 151 votes.

Motion: Kelly Yarbrough motioned to approve the canvassing Resolution 2025-0512-01.

Second: Brad Wetzel

For: Jason Blaneck, Carla Pendergraft, Kelly Yarbrough, Emily McKenzie and Brad Wetzel

Against: None

Motion carried 5-0

4. Presentation of Certificates of Election and Oath of Office to elected Mayor and Council members.

City Secretary Monica Hendrix presented the Certificates of Election and gave the Oath of Office to the newly elected Mayor and council members Russell Walizer, Adam Montemayor and Carla Pendergraft.

5. Recognition of outgoing Mayor Tommy Ross and City Council Alderman Brad Wetzel.

Newly elected Mayor Russell Walizer read a statement to the citizens and council and said as your new Mayor he wanted to sincerely thank everyone for being here tonight. It is truly an honor to serve our great community and he looks forward to working with each of you to build an even brighter future together. Walizer also wanted to extend his heartfelt congratulations to newly elected council members Adam Montemayor and Carla Pendergraft and

thanked them both for their willingness to dedicate their time and talents and service to our city. Walizer is confident that we have a strong and committed city council that will lead with integrity, vision and deep commitment to representing the entire community.

Walizer also wanted to recognize and thank the outgoing Mayor Tommy Ross. Walizer says that serving as Mayor takes time, commitment and patience and Ross has exemplified all those qualities. Walizer thanked Ross for the strong foundation he helped build for the future of Lorena. Walizer also wanted to recognize Brad Wetzel for his dedicated service to the city. Brad has served not only on the city council but also various boards, always contributing thoroughly, thoughtfully and consistently. Walizer has been a valuable asset for our community and Walizer wished him the best in his future endeavors.

City Manager Kevin Neal presented outgoing councilman Brad Wetzel with a plaque and thanked him for serving the city from June of 2018 through May of 2025. Wetzel served on the Board of Adjustments, Planning and Zoning Commission, Economic Development Corporation and City Council. Wetzel also served on the TIRS committee. Neal says Wetzel has been a staple in this community and on behalf of the community and city staff, thank you for your hard work and dedication to the city.

Mr. Neal also presented a plaque to outgoing Mayor Tommy Ross. Mayor Ross has served the city since May 2019 as a city council alderman, and then as Mayor for two terms from May 2021 to May 2025. Neal says Ross has done great things and accomplished great things throughout the community with his and dedication to the community and staff of Lorena. On behalf of the staff and community of Lorena, thank you for your hard work and dedication to the city.

6. Public Comments.

At this time any person with business before the Council not scheduled on the agenda may speak to the Council. Comments are limited to three (3) minutes, and this time is not transferable. Under the Texas Open Meetings Act, the Council is prohibited from discussing, responding, or acting on any comments or items that have not been properly posted on the agenda. This forum is limited to a total of 30 minutes.

Malisa Spivey, 109 E. Center Street, Lorena spoke and stated that it is clear this council does not operate in the interest of the public. Spivey says what we have is a closed circle where friends protect friends and law enforcement shields allies and anyone who dares to question that order gets punished, berated and publicly shamed. Spivey said before last month's council meeting, she lawfully requested a sign interpreter not for herself but because the public meetings should be accessible to everyone. Spivey spoke about Mayor Tommy Ross dismissing the interpreters when the meeting began, saying they were not needed and claimed that Facebook captions were enough. Spivey says the captions do not meet the ADA standards and don't provide equity and they don't hide your intent. Spivey stated the meeting wasn't about city business it was about her, a public ambush wrapped in formality, hours spent attacking a citizen while ignoring the law, dodging real issues and proving that this council is more interested in control than service. Spivey also said the police department continues to protect its own while targeting those outside their circle. Spivey spoke about her sister being arrested last month for criminal trespassing on a five acre lot with one sign. Spivey says the DA rejected the case and in his words "problem proving notice." Spivey says for one sign on five acres with a for sale sign is not enforcement it is theatre. Spivey spoke of the cost for the case to citizens that didn't deserve a first glance but yet doxing, a Class B misdemeanor with malicious intent by our new incoming councilman's wife fails to be investigated. Spivey questioned what are we getting for our money, cases thrown out by the DA, ADA violations, selective enforcement and a council that either approves of it or refuses to ask questions. Spivey stated that is not leadership, that is complicity and yet you complain about your bottom line for ASL interpreters, is sickening. Spivey wanted to make it crystal clear to the council that they work for the citizens and that citizens don't report to council, council reports to the public. The citizens are at the top of the organizational chart and every act of silence, retaliation and exclusion council attempts only proves how far the cities leadership has drifted from that basic truth. Spivey says she is watching and documenting and she will not forget.

Gary Cox, 102 Walter Street, Lorena spoke and says that elections have consequences. Cox says that less than 200 people voted in the recent election. Cox said that the council members who voted for the Texan, have changed the

very fabric of Lorena forever. Cox says that several years ago the same bunch that voted for the Texan, fought tooth and nail to prevent another travel center similar to the Texan from coming across the interstate behind Raymonds restaurant because it was going to be close to them. Cox says voting for the Texan to be built next to 140 year old neighborhood will affect 1/3 of Lorena citizens. Cox showed council what 560 signatures look like on paper and says the reason he doesn't have more is because he stopped to go on a cruise with his wife. Cox said the citizens were very eager to sign the petition against the Texan. Cox says 200 people elected the council and 4 people. Cox also pointed out that the very last signature was the most poignant one, Elizabeth Marvel, the owner of the home on Bordon Street. Cox said they sold their home and moved out over the weekend. Cox says the first casualty of their decision and there will be more.

James Hays, 150 Sunflower Lane, Lorena spoke and thanked the newly elected council members, Carla, Adam and Russell and said it has been a pleasure getting to know them, and he knows they will look out for the whole Lorena community. Hays says he gets that the three houses that are close to the Texan have a legitimate beef but that land the Texan will be built on set vacant for 15 years and they could have bought it. Hays feels it was always going to be a gas station and he is surprised it took this long because of the location being on a hard corner. Hays says it will take a lot of courage and leadership for the new council and it is their job to look out for the whole of Lorena. Hays says that I-35 will lead the way for Lorena and hopefully make the small businesses better.

Alexandria Blanton, 2911 Colcord Avenue, Waco, spoke and is an interpreter for the deaf. Blanton spoke and said she found out about Lorena from the 2 or 3 deaf people that live here. First she wanted to talk about logistics and these meeting and how to improve them for accessibility. Blanton says you cannot see the interpreters on the Facebook feed and asked to move the camera or have the interpreters stand behind the council. Blanton says that Facebook is horrible with captions and there are many other services that we can use that are better and clearer. Blanton says the punctuation is not correct, it doesn't say who is speaking, and there is a 30 second lag time. Blanton suggested using zoom and she thinks package is about \$25. Blanton says that deaf people really do live in Lorena and even if they don't come to the meetings now, they would if there were interpreters at the meetings. Blanton says there are many businesses, including the Boujee Bean that are taking the initiative to learn sign language because of deaf people that live here. Blanton says that just because it is one person, or a million, they will just flock. Blanton says just because it is one, it doesn't mean they shouldn't have the same access to the same things, communication and information that we have. Blanton says if the deaf person can't make it to the meeting and want to watch the live stream and they can't see the interpreters and the captions are horrible or you dismiss them ten minutes in because you are wasting your bottom dollar. Blanton says what if these people show up late or they feel guilty about how the money controls their access. Blanton says these are simple things that will enhance accessibility and inclusion for all and stressed to the council that deaf people do live here. Blanton says that Hewit and Waco have interpreters on standby every single meeting even if someone doesn't request them and stressed it doesn't cost that much money. Blanton says there shouldn't be any discourse about it and she sees the discourse from many different towns, Dallas, Houston and there are interpreters that have reposted the video from the last meeting and how horrible it is. Blanton says all access to all and it shouldn't be a debate. It shouldn't be talking to the interpreters in front of the crowd and mentioning the bottom dollar in the same sentence. Blanton say that these are deaf people and these are people.

Bill Coleman, 606 Ver-lo Drive, Lorena spoke and wanted for the record to say he is the Bill Coleman from Lorena and not the Bill Coleman from Waco and that he is still gainfully employed and he just wanted to pass that along.

7. Approval of Minutes:

a. April 21, 2025 Regular Meeting

Motion: Emily McKenzie moved to approve the April 21st meeting minutes.

Second: Carla Pendergraft

For: Jason Blaneck, Carla Pendergraft, Kelly Yarbrough, Emily McKenzie and Adam Montemayor.

Against: None

Motion carried 5-0

8. Committee and Corporation Reports:

a. Lorena Economic Development Corporation

Kelly Yarbrough reported the board met and continue to work on the strategic plan. Yarbrough says everyone is welcome to attend the meetings and the next meeting is May 20th at 6:00 p.m. here at city hall. There was a short presentation by a potential commercial developer for the TIRZ #1 East location and EDC is looking forward to hearing more about the development. Yarbrough says hopefully it will bring fruition for the hard earned dollars that have been invested and the project will help grow Lorena. The board also elected Ryan Weave as the Vice Chairman of the board. There are still two positions open on the board and they are looking for more applicants. The board also change the meeting date from the first Tuesday of the month to the third Tuesday of the month. The board usually doesn't meet in June and December and October is the election of officers and that meeting is always the first Tuesday in October.

9. Discussion and possible action appointing a Mayor Pro Tempore for a one-year term.

Emily McKenzie asked if Kelly was still interested in serving as Mayor Pro-tem and she said yes. Kelly reminded council this is something that is done annually at this meeting.

Motion: Emily McKenzie moved to appoint Kelly Yarbrough as Mayor Protem for a one-year term.

Second: Carla Pendergraft

For: Jason Blane, Carla Pendergraft, Kelly Yarbrough, Emily McKenzie and Adam Montemayor.

Against: None

Motion carried 5-0

10. Discussion and possible action appointing members to the Lorena Zoning Board of Adjustment for a two year term.

There was discussion on how many spots are vacant. Monica Hendrix explained there are three vacancies at this time. Five local residents, Gary Cox, Hazel Fore, James Hays, Sara Oliver and Kevin Pendergraft volunteered to serve. Kelly Yarbrough spoke and wanted to hear from the applicants that were attending the council meeting and hear why they want to serve. Kevin Pendergraft and James Hays spoke and informed council of their backgrounds and why they are willing to serve. There was further discussion about alternates for the board and it was decided that all the members would be appointed and the board could draw for alternates at the next meeting of the board. Just a reminder that the board only meets as needed.

Motion: Jason Blane motioned to appoint all five candidates.

Second: Adam Montemayor

For: Jason Blane, Carla Pendergraft, Kelly Yarbrough, Emily McKenzie and Adam Montemayor.

Against: None

Motion carried 5-0

11. Discussion and possible action appointing members to the Lorena Planning and Zoning Commission for a two year term.

City Secretary Monica Hendrix informed council what P&Z does and when they meet. Kelly Yarbrough asked if Tony Chaffin would like to speak. Mr. Chaffin spoke and informed council of his background and that he would like to give him back to the community. Yarbrough asked who is currently on the commission and was told Don Bagby, Austin Montgomery, Gary Payne and Allison Vrana.

Motion: Kelly Yarbrough moved to appoint Tony Chaffin and Joe Gomez to the Lorena Planning and Zoning Commission.

Second: Emily McKenzie

For: Jason Blane, Carla Pendergraft, Kelly Yarbrough, Emily McKenzie and Adam Montemayor.

Against: None

Motion carried 5-0

12. Discussion and possible action to appoint/reappoint Board Members to the Lorena TIRZ #1 East Board for the remainder of the existing :

Seat 2 – expires November 2025, Seat 3 – November 2026

City Manager Kevin Neal explained the board positions to the council. The vacant positions are for the city council representatives that are now vacant due to Tommy Ross and Brad Wetzel no longer serving on the council. Neal explained there are seven total positions on the board that

consist of three council members, two EDC members and one major landowner and one county member.

Motion: Emily McKenzie moved to appoint Jason BlaneK to seat 2 and Kelly Yarbrough to seat 3 of the Lorena TIRZ Board for the remainder of the terms listed for each seat.

Second: Carla Pendergraft

For: Jason BlaneK, Carla Pendergraft, Kelly Yarbrough, Emily McKenzie and Adam Montemayor.

Against: None

Motion carried 5-0

13. Police Department Report.

Chief Scott Holt spoke and wanted to ensure everyone that the Lorena Police Department will not arrest someone without probable cause. Once an arrest is made the defendant is taken to the McLennan County Jail where a judge reviews the affidavit that is filled out. If there is not probable cause, the judge will release that defendant on site. Last week Chief Holt received a call from the McLennan County District Attorney's office saying that a case had been dismissed in error on their part. That case will be refiled this week and we will be moving forward. He only brings this up because it was mentioned earlier in the meeting and he wanted council to have clarification on the issue.

Holt answered question about the monthly police activity report.

Carla Pendergraft was concerned about the PD picking up debris on the interstate.

Adam Montemayor asked what foot patrol is and Holt explained this is when the officer checks out to dispatch to check on a business such as the bank or Roadster for example.

Kelly Yarbrough thanked the police for all they do.

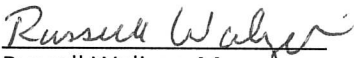
Chief Holt says if anyone sees something that the department is not doing to please have a conversation with him.

14. Future Agenda Items.

15. Adjourn

Due to no further business the meeting adjourned at 7:23 p.m.

These minutes were approved this 16th day of June 2025.


Russell Walizer, Mayor

Attest:


Monica Hendrix, City Secretary

