



CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION MINUTES

Monday, June 16, 2025
6:00 PM

Iowa Colony City Council Chambers, 3144 Meridiana Parkway Iowa Colony, Texas 77583

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STATE OF TEXAS
COUNTY OF BRAZORIA
CITY OF IOWA COLONY

BE IT REMEMBERED ON THIS, the 16th day of June 2025, the City Council of the City of Iowa Colony, Texas, held a worksession at 6:00 P.M. at the Iowa Colony City Council Chambers, there being present and in attendance the following members to wit:

Mayor Wil Kennedy
Mayor Pro Tem Marquette Greene-Scott
Councilmember Arnetta Murray
Councilmember Nikki Brooks
Councilmember Tim Varlack
Councilmember Kareem Boyce
Councilmember Sydney Hargroder

And none being absent, constituting a quorum at which time the following business was transacted.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Kennedy called the worksession to order at 6:00 P.M.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Robert Wall has lived in the area for 32 years and served as mayor for 16 of those years. His property has many oak trees, which frequently drop limbs. He expressed support for allowing burning, noting the significant amount he has spent to have limbs hauled away. He also pointed out that residents in subdivisions receive services.

Brenda Dillon is opposed to allowing burning, stating concerns for a family member with severe respiratory issues. She also raised environmental concerns and the potential impact on nearby residents. While she has paid to have limbs removed from her property, she stated she has no issue covering those costs. However, she questioned how the city would regulate what materials people are burning and emphasized the need for the city to consider all relevant factors.

Constantinos Dimakopoulos stated that he agrees with Councilmember Brooks on this matter and feels the current proposal is somewhat excessive. He expressed support for the idea of issuing a permit.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Discussion on FY2025-26 Budget Workshop.

The Interim City Manager thanked the City Council for their contributions to the presentation, noting that it was shaped around the priorities previously shared by council members. One of the

key priorities mentioned was staffing. She asked if there were any additional priorities council members would like to add after reviewing the presentation. She also explained that live streaming council meetings involves compliance with multiple legal requirements, which can be costly. She confirmed that the mayor's previously mentioned priority regarding updating the Unified Development Code (UDC), zoning, and subdivision ordinances would be added to the list.

Councilmember Brooks emphasized the need for council professional development and a dedicated budget for it. She expressed concern that the council is approaching a major decision; hiring a city manager and could benefit from external guidance and strategic oversight. She also asked about the city's current capabilities for live streaming meetings to improve transparency and accessibility for residents.

IT Director Bobby Hurman responded that the city does not currently have the technology to support live streaming. He explained that streaming requirements are based on population thresholds, and as the city grows, this may be something to explore further.

Contractor Kendra Murphy stated that there is a \$50,000 line item in the budget allocated specifically for city council professional development.

Mayor Pro Tem Greene -Scott shared that council members have already participated in professional development. She mentioned her own educational background and asked to not be disrespected, emphasizing that while she may not know everything, she asks questions and listens. She also noted that each city department has submitted its own set of priorities.

Councilmember Hargroder commended staff for the work they put into outlining department priorities and providing a strategic framework. She highlighted the City of Arlington's use of an AI platform on their website in preparation for the World Cup and suggested it could be a good model for this council to explore and engage with.

Councilmember Varlack inquired about the city's chatbot and its capabilities. He expressed interest in learning more about the technology and suggested engaging the community on their thoughts about AI.

Mayor Kennedy revisited the topic of updating the UDC, zoning, and subdivision ordinances. He acknowledged that the city is awaiting grant funding for the update and asked if that was the reason it had not initially appeared as a listed priority.

Mayor Kennedy called for a council recess at 7:00 P.M. The city council reconvened at 7:14 P.M.

2. Discussion on allowing burning within city limits on properties larger than three acres.

Fire Marshal Albert Cantu explained that the process involves staff presenting a recommendation, followed by Council providing feedback, which staff then uses to develop an ordinance for approval. He shared the initial proposal from staff regarding open burning, which includes the following regulations if allowed:

Minimum property size of 5 acres

Permit required

Pre-burn safety inspection

Burning limited to daylight hours

Burn pile dimensions limited to 10 feet by 3 feet

Fires must be extinguished before being left unattended

No burning of household trash or debris

No burning during city-issued burn bans or Red Flag Warnings

The individual conducting the burn is legally responsible for any resulting damages

He also provided information on surrounding cities that allow open burning, including Brookside Village, Alvin, Lake Jackson, and Manvel.

Additionally, he noted that the cities of Sweeny, Pearland, and Clute do not allow burning within their city limits.

Councilmember Brooks inquired about the origin of the request and how the item was placed on the agenda. Natasha explained that a resident had inquired about being allowed to burn on their property. She noted that items like this are added to the work session agenda to allow council to discuss and make informed decisions after reviewing all relevant information provided by staff. Councilmember Brooks recommended tabling the item to allow time for residents to give feedback, emphasizing multiple times the importance of hearing directly from constituents since the request originated from a resident. She responded to Councilmember Hargroder's comments regarding the various opportunities residents have to provide input on agenda items. She also acknowledged her communication style and addressed concerns regarding Councilmember Hargroder's tone.

Mayor Pro Tem Greene-Scott thanked Albert for compiling the information. She clarified that this discussion is not about implementing a burn ban, but rather addressing whether to allow burning at all within city limits. She appreciated that the proposal aligns with TCEQ requirements.

Councilmember Varlack echoed the Mayor Pro Tem's appreciation for Albert's work. He stated that the council had requested this information and asked staff to bring it back for discussion. He clarified that, per city code, burning is prohibited unless specifically allowed. He noted confusion with TCEQ regulations, which permit households without trash collection to burn household waste. However, under the proposed guidelines, household trash burning would not be permitted. He emphasized the need to establish a regulatory framework that protects the city.

Councilmember Hargroder raised concerns about smoke drifting onto neighboring properties and asked what legal options a resident would have if they experienced a medical issue as a result. She questioned whether the proposed permitting system would sufficiently limit the city's liability, especially since the language holds the person conducting the burn responsible for any resulting damage or injury, regardless of compliance. She addressed Councilmember Brooks by highlighting the various opportunities residents have to provide input on agenda items. She expressed concern about the manner in which Councilmember Brooks addressed her and requested that the meeting proceed to the next item on the agenda.

Councilmember Murray reminded the council that while members may disagree, it's important to maintain proper decorum and show respect during discussions.

Chief Bell added that, under the penal code, it constitutes arson if someone recklessly starts a fire that damages another person's property. However, obtaining a permit could serve as a legal defense.

Mayor Kennedy thanked Albert for his thorough research and efforts in preparing the proposal. The Mayor addressed the council to maintain order during the meeting.

3. Discussion on TXDOT landscaping on the State HWY 288 corridor.

Dinh Ho and Jeremy recently met with the TxDOT landscape architect for a preliminary discussion about potential landscape improvements included in the SH 288 overpass project

budget. TxDOT allocates approximately 0.5% of the total \$39 million budget to be roughly \$195,000 to \$200,000 for landscaping enhancements. This funding applies strictly to greenscape elements and cannot be used for monumentation. The area covered includes the stretch from Rodeo Palms to County Road 60.

During the council discussion, Dinh asked for feedback on whether there was interest in pursuing a landscaping project to enhance the SH 288 corridor.

Mayor Pro Tem Greene-Scott expressed ongoing concerns about the appearance of SH 288 exits, emphasizing how important first impressions are when entering the city. She stated that corridor beautification is one of her priorities and requested that staff present options for council consideration.

Mayor Kennedy acknowledged Dinh's previous mention of the topic in his staff report but asked for clarification on what the term "landscape architecture" encompasses specifically whether it includes landscape maintenance, such as mowing and tree trimming.

Dinh clarified that a landscape architect is a professional designer responsible for planning such improvements. Should the city decide to move forward with enhancements, it would also be responsible for ongoing maintenance, including medians and tree trimming. He explained the distinction between "landscape" and "hardscape" and noted that a study would be needed, requiring the hiring of a landscape architect.

Councilmember Varlack inquired whether TxDOT would remain responsible for maintaining landscaping within their easements. He expressed concern that if the city funded the design, it would inherit all future maintenance responsibilities. He asked what the most cost-effective way would be for the city to manage this, and whether Public Works could provide an estimate for maintenance costs and labor. He also questioned whether the city could currently afford to hire a landscape architect, given other priorities.

Councilmember Boyce asked whether there was any interest in pursuing hardscaping instead of or in addition to landscaping.

Councilmember Brooks asked about the origin of the work session item and the rationale for bringing it to council. She also asked whether there is any data available on the return on investment for such improvements.

Interim City Manager asked whether the council would like staff to move forward with obtaining proposals from landscape architects to explore beautification options. She stated staff would return to council with cost estimates for both maintaining the improvements in-house and contracting the services.

Councilmember Murray encouraged residents to reach out to TxDOT directly regarding mowing.

ADJOURNMENT

The worksession was adjourned at 7:33 P.M.

APPROVED THIS 21st DAY OF JULY 2025


Kayleen Rosser, City Secretary


Wil Kennedy, Mayor

