



CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION MINUTES

Monday, December 15, 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 15th day of December 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
Councilmember Arnetta Murray
Councilmember Nikki Brooks (Arrived at 6:07 P.M.)
Councilmember Tim Varlack
Councilmember Kareem Boyce
Councilmember Sydney Hargroder

And Mayor Pro Tem Marquette Greene-Scott being absent, constituting a quorum at which time the following business was transacted.

CALL TO ORDER

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

CITIZEN COMMENTS

There were no comments from the public.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Discussion on the preparation of an Economic Development Strategy, including but not limited to identifying overall strategic approaches, determining effective outreach methods to attract targeted commercial development, and evaluating the potential use of third-party services.

Councilmember Varlack stated that the City needs a discussion on developing a formal economic development strategy, including consideration of potential staff support or committee roles to guide this effort. The objective is to begin with the City's Comprehensive Plan and address two fundamental questions: What are the City's guiding principles, and what amenities or services do we want in our community that are currently lacking? Councilmember Varlack explained that there are several economic development models. One is a developer-centric model, in which a developer proposes a project for a specific property and determines the mix of uses based on their own interests, resulting in developments such as lagoons or storage facilities. Another approach is an opportunity-centric model, where individuals with discretionary capital invest in low-risk, high-return businesses such as donut shops, liquor stores, or pizza restaurants. Referencing prior discussions, Councilmember Varlack noted that in November, Starwood proposed a development concept that included a lagoon with restaurants, approximately 130,000

square feet of retail space, duplex rental units, and a hotel associated with Sports Illustrated. Since that time, the Sports Illustrated component has been canceled, and the City has not received an updated proposal from the developer. When Council raised concerns about density, the developer indicated they were pursuing a different “feel” for the project, which differed from the vision expressed by Council and residents. The developer also stated that the City lacked sufficient density to support a grocery store, citing conversations with the National Grocers Association and suggesting a threshold of approximately 8,000 residents. However, the City surpassed this population level in 2020 and now exceeds the threshold necessary to support at least two grocery stores. For comparison, the City of Alvin currently has three grocery stores. Councilmember Varlack emphasized the importance of considering commercial affordability and the need for a clear plan to help guide development. While the City is zoned and has designated commercial areas, additional direction is needed to determine what types of businesses should be encouraged in those locations. Without a guiding strategy, development decisions may result in a repetition of existing business types rather than diversification. He further noted that the City currently does not have a city planner and observed that the most successful boards and committees in the City benefit from having a dedicated staff member providing leadership. He concluded by comparing commercial retail development approaches in Irvine, California with those in Iowa Colony to illustrate differing outcomes when strategic planning is applied. There are challenges that need to be looked at by staff. Councilmember Brooks asked what responsibilities the council expects the new City Manager to have towards economic development. She also asked that Councilmember Varlack explain what they are asking staff to do and specifically what members of staff. Councilmember Varlack responded that council should ask staff to look at what the job description of an economic developer look like. He would ask what the cost and timeline is of developing the strategy. He also asks that staff look at different cities and what should the abatement strategies look like. Councilmember Murray stated that the developer made a lot of broken promises to the council in regard to this. She is intrigued to understand what the overall strategy looks like. Councilmember Hargroder thinks whoever is brought in or chosen needs to understand where we are and that we set them up for success. Dinh Ho stated there is a firm that was procured to look at the comprehensive plan and this project will kick off in January. This is through the Resilient Communities Planning Grant. Councilmember Brooks stated that she thinks the new City Manager needs to be inclusive of this as he has taken part of this in his previous city of DeSoto.

2. Discussion on the exploration of outreach to Amazon concerning a potential Amazon Grocery project.

Councilmember Varlack stated that the question before the Council is whether this is an initiative the Council would like to direct staff to further evaluate or pursue. Councilmember Brooks expressed appreciation for the packet prepared by Mr. Hayes and asked, if staff were directed to move forward, what that process would look like. Mr. Hayes clarified that his work on the project was not undertaken for personal benefit or on behalf of his firm. He stated that Iowa Colony is considered a food desert and that, through his independent research, he determined that Amazon would be willing to build a store in the City and that Iowa Colony meets the necessary requirements. Mr. Hayes indicated that his intent was for the project to be city-led, with the City serving as the developer. He conducted the research and provided it to the City to allow Council and staff to evaluate the concept and determine next steps. Councilmember Boyce stated that he would love something like this in the city.

3. Discussion on Budget Amendment No. 1. to the FY2025-26 City Budget.

Kendra Murphy provided an overview of the budget amendment and the rationale for the proposed changes, including a review of departmental allocations. She explained that an error occurred during data entry, which caused the figures to be misaligned, and that this issue has

been corrected. She also commended the finance staff for identifying a negative revenue figure, noting that revenues should not be negative. That error has likewise been corrected.


ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:52 P.M.

APPROVED THIS 26TH DAY OF JANUARY 2026



Kayleen Rosser, City Secretary



Wil Kennedy, Mayor

