

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE TRINIDAD CITY COUNCIL
WEDNESDAY, JULY 23, 2008

I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Mayor Lin called the meeting to order at 7:00PM. Council members in attendance: Lin, Binnie, Ratzlaff, Bhardwaj. Fulkerson was absent.

City Staff in attendance: City Manager Steve Albright, City Clerk Gabriel Adams, and City Attorney Paul Hagen, Police Chief Ken Thrailkill.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. ADJOURN TO CLOSED SESSION – *No Closed Session*

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

City Manager Steve Albright suggested moving Agenda Item #2 to first as the topic pertains to the Sales Tax item, and in acknowledgement of the TVFD members' time. He also requested the addition of two emergency items to the agenda, an action requiring a 4/5 vote by the Council.

The first, Resolution 2008-17, is a resolution to combine the local November election with the County November election. The second, Resolution 2008-18, is a resolution opposing fiscally irresponsible budget practices at the State level.

Motion (Fulkerson/Binnie) to approve the agenda and emergency agenda items. Passed unanimously.

V. ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR – *There were no items from the floor.*

VI. CONSENT AGENDA – *None*

VII. DISCUSSION/ACTION AGENDA ITEMS

1. Resolution 2008-17 Requesting election consolidation with the County at the November 2008 General Election.

Motion (Binnie/Ratzlaff) to approve Resolution 2008-17. Passed unanimously.

2. Resolution 2008-18 regarding the State borrowing Cities' monies for redevelopment projects.

Motion (Fulkerson/Bhardwaj) to approve Resolution 2008-18. Passed unanimously.

3. Report from the Trinidad Volunteer Fire Department.

Trinidad Volunteer Fire Department Chief Tom Marquette explained that the Trinidad Volunteer Fire Department (TVFD) has 10 members. The majority are First Responders. A few are EMT's, and some have haz/mat training. The department averages about 50 calls per year, though this year there have been 40 calls in just half of the year. He also explained the following department information:

- Mutual aid relationship with other aid agencies in terms of coverage and budget.
- The process of dispatch, the training levels and responsibilities of responders, timeline of care, and patient choice in relation to EMS regulations and scope of practice.
- ISO ratings: The City of Trinidad has level 6/9. Insurance companies look at that rating in setting fees. Our level has improved in recent years.
- Budget and regulatory requirements for upgrades on personal protective equipment.

Public comment included:

Pat Morales – Trinidad

Suggested a written description of EMT scope of practice be available at Town Hall. Asked about EMT levels. Morgan responded about the process of licensing. Morales asked about how many TVFD members are certified at each level. Requested that copies of all members' certifications be available at Town Hall. Confirmed that Mad River is the coordinating hospital. Morgan clarified the relationship between the Emergency Services.

Council comments included:

Binnie and Bhardwaj: Asked about the status of rescue vehicle, level of training for Cal-Fire, and about and the relationship with the Rancheria in terms of budget and personnel.

TVFD Captain Mike Morgan clarified the mutual aid response relations for fire and medical calls. He noted that the Rancheria has trained personnel but no equipment. He also pointed out that Cal Fire is not required to cover the Trinidad station during fire season, which highlights the importance of having the TVFD.

Fulkerson: Commended the TVFD.

Presentation only. No decision was made.

4. Resolution 2008-16 Placing a Sales Tax Increase on the November 4, 2008 General Election Ballot.

City Manager Albright explained that the Council has four options:

1. Approve the previously presented petition
2. Approve the new petition
3. Approve a compromise on percentage, length, and/or direction between the two
4. Do nothing.

Albright did not present a staff recommendation, but did explain the difference between petitions and initiatives and the inability to put multiple conflicting proposals on the ballot. At the City level a resolution is required to put such proposals on the ballot. He urged the Council to come to a conclusion this evening.

Mayor Lin noted the importance of the issue, the potential for conflict, and expressed hope for a civil, focused discussion. He invited resident Mike Morgan to present his proposal, and allowed resident Pat Morales to present hers.

Morgan briefly spoke on behalf of the ½% directed tax. Morales presented the second petition on a 1% non-directed tax.

Public comment included:

Tom Odom - Trinidad

Tom Odom read a letter from Jim Gould who could not attend, and spoke in favor of the ½% sales tax. He also asked about staffing in City Hall and Public Works and criticized Council for hiring a City Manger without knowing about the budgetary future. He also suggested a ¾% tax, halfway directed to public safety and half to reserves.

Brad Twoomey – Trinidad

Spoke in favor of all other expenditures in the City Budget as being important and worthwhile. The City needs capital improvements. Gave his support to the 1% tax.

Sam Merryman - Westhaven

Criticized the second petition. Expressed opposition to the zip code implications of any sales tax proposal.

CM Albright responded that the issue of the zip code would affect any resolution passed by Council. Reminded Council that the agencies collecting the tax incorrectly are doing so illegally.

Mark Chester - Westhaven

Expressed frustration with the process of reimbursement for sales tax funds. Suggested other options for public safety other than hiring more officers. Suggested selling ad space for funds to beautify the City. Expressed need for checks and balances on the collection of the tax.

Council comment included:

Fulkerson: Asked for more detail regarding the accusation of wasted City funds. She also expressed interest in focusing on the needs of the Community, not on personal issues. Reiterated the benefit to non-City residents. Either proposal is for the City's benefit. No one on the Council has a personal or economic agenda. She also noted that the numbers for a ¾% tax were in the realm of the current budget levels for public safety. Commended the present members of the public for their participation

Bhardwaj: Presented budgetary information and recommended a non-directed tax for ease of passage, and less than 1% in support of compromise. She noted the lack of public participation in the budget hearings, and suggested an abbreviated, accessible budget publication for public knowledge, and brought examples from other cities. Volunteered to work on a public information campaign before the election. **Fulkerson** agreed.

Ratzlaff: Expressed interest in continued efforts to ease the difficulty of residents of the greater Trinidad area in reimbursement efforts.

Mayor Lin: Explained the purpose of directed versus non-directed taxes and budgetary implications.

Binnie: Asked the City Manager about designating funds under a non-directed tax that may stay in effect with future Councils, and expressed hope for a compromise. He also expressed appreciation to Morgan for bringing the tax issue forward.

Staff comments included:

CM Albright: Explained that the Council still has budgetary discretion on how funds are distributed. He also responded that the resolution would only be effective as long as it had three votes. A dedicated tax would not have the same vulnerability. Council can set as policy a division of funds, which would be up for review at budget hearings.

Council and staff discussed the need for improved communication with the public regarding any tax. Bhardwaj volunteered to head it up.

Motion (Ratzlaff/Fulkerson) to pass a resolution placing a ¾%, four-year general use tax on the November ballot.
Passed unanimously.

Several council members commented that just because this is a 4-year tax, it may be proposed for renewal based on future budgetary needs.

VIII. COUNCIL or STAFF REQUESTS FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Submitted by:

Approved by:

Robin Fraser
Assistant City Clerk

Chi-Wei Lin
Mayor

A full audio recording is available upon request at Town Hall.