CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, AUGUST 21, 2012

The City Council of the City of Bellaire, Texas, met in Special Session (Budget) on Tuesday, August 21, 2012, in the Council Chamber, First Floor of City Hall, 7008 South Rice Avenue, Bellaire, Texas 77401, for the following purpose(s):

A. CALL TO ORDER – Mayor Philip L. Nauert.

Mayor Pro Tem Amanda B. Nathan called the City Council of the City of Bellaire, Texas, to order at 6:03 p.m. on Tuesday, August 21, 2012.

B. ANNOUNCEMENT OF A QUORUM – Mayor Philip L. Nauert.

Mayor Pro Tem Amanda B. Nathan announced that a quorum was present consisting of herself and the following members of the City Council: Councilmen Roman F. Reed, James P. Avioli, Sr., Corbett Daniel Parker, Pat B. McLaughlan and Andrew S. Friedberg. Also present were City Manager Bernard M. Satterwhite, Jr., Assistant City Manager Diane K. White and City Clerk Tracy L. Dutton.

Mayor Philip L. Nauert was absent.

C. DISCUSSION and possible action regarding various items within the proposed budget for the City of Bellaire, Texas, for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2012, and ending September 30, 2013 (fiscal year 2013), including input received from citizens and/or other interested parties during the public hearing on the fiscal year 2013 budget scheduled to be held on August 20, 2012 – Members of City Council and City Staff.

Mayor Pro Tem Amanda B. Nathan asked City Manager Satterwhite if he would like to address comments received from the public, as well as questions presented by City Council yesterday and/or in previous meetings.

City Manager Bernard M. Satterwhite, Jr., referred first to a citizen comment related to garbage bags in connection with the City’s budget. City Manager Satterwhite noted that the number of garbage bags to be picked up was primarily a policy issue. He reminded City Council that there was quite a bit of discussion on the entire policy before it was implemented last March. The four bag limit was based on a lengthy survey conducted by the City that showed that approximately 97% of residents on any given day were placing four bags or less at the curb, with an average of two bags, on garbage collection days.
He noted, also, that the number of residents placing four bags or fewer at the curb had risen to 99% on any given garbage day since the implementation of the four-bag limit policy in March.

With respect to the budget, the solid waste budget had decreased slightly despite the fact that operational costs had increased. If everyone placed ten bags of garbage at the curb, the City would not be able to collect all of the garbage in one day. The budget could not be decreased by 60% because the City was still collecting garbage five days each week and needed the same number of employees to collect the garbage. The four-bag limit had reduced the amount of garbage taken to the landfill and had saved a little on overtime.

Another citizen talked about the looks or aesthetics of the City. City Manager Satterwhite indicated that he certainly understood the citizen's perspective. He reminded City Council that the budget for landscaping was consciously decreased during the economic downturn. City Staff was trying to reverse that this year. He noted that $35,000 had been set aside for a beautification study to be performed by a landscaping firm. The mowing, litter pickup, and tree trimming budgetary amount had been increased by over three times in the proposed budget.

City Manager Satterwhite indicated, too, that the City had fired its mower a few months ago (as of June 3, 2012) as the company was not performing under the contract that was entered into with the City. The second lowest bidder was temporarily filling in until the City had a new budget and new specifications in place.

As an aside, City Manager Satterwhite advised that the Director of Public Works had been able to get the Texas Department of Transportation ("TXDOT") to remove many of the dead trees and shrubbery along the Loop 610 service roads. Under the City's agreement with them, TXDOT was not required to maintain the landscaping along the service roads.

Another citizen inquired as to where funding for a lobbyist was located in the City's budget. City Manager Satterwhite indicated that funds for the lobbyist were within the City's legal budget.

An inquiry was also made as to where the purchase of the Jessamine property next to the Bellaire City Library appeared in the budget. If the City did close on the property, there would be an impact. City Staff would update the 2012 projected budget, which might or might not impact the 2013 budget. The purchase would impact the Capital Improvement Program fund bottom line.

With respect to the Great Lawn Capital Improvement Program line item, City Manager Satterwhite indicated that the item had not been presented as good as it should have been. The project included the Great Lawn and a Pavilion. The Pavilion, itself, would cost approximately $211,000. The project also
included paving (walkways), aesthetic lighting, shrubs, trees, irrigation, grading, drainage, utilities, site furniture, tree protection and permits.

City Manager Satterwhite next addressed items that were brought up by members of City Council. He outlined the major sources of the increase from the 2012 projected budget to the 2013 proposed budget. In the General Fund, the increase was approximately $340,000 or 2.3% greater than the 2012 projected budget. For example, personnel and benefits accounted for approximately $98,000 (i.e., the step increase to be implemented in 2013). Ground maintenance increased $63,900 over the previous year. Other increases related to a proposed contract city engineer, communications technology services contracts, education and training, legal and audit (i.e., single audit was required due to the City’s receipt of a federal grant) and park and pool maintenance.

In the Enterprise Fund, the increase from the 2012 projected budget to the 2013 proposed budget was $232,169 or 4%. The majority of the increase was related to water purchases and the remainder was related to water maintenance, building maintenance and sanitary sewer maintenance.

The Debt Service Fund increase from the 2012 projected budget to the 2013 proposed budget was due to an increase in the debt service fund requirements.

City Manager Satterwhite advised that the total increase over the three funds was $699,000 or 2.6% over the 2012 projected budget.

With respect to professional services, City Staff reviewed the line item and suggested that the title of the account should, perhaps, be changed to “contracted services.” Most of the City’s consultants, such as engineers, were approved by City Council. Examples of items included in the "professional services” budget were tax assessing and collecting (performed by the Harris County Tax Assessor-Collector) in an amount of $12,500, fees for the Harris County Appraisal District, election services (contracted through the Harris County Elections Division), employee hiring and pay plan review, instructor pay, legal and audit, medical aid, engineers, architects, arborists, planners, broadcast of meetings, codification, employee assistance program, copy fees, real property filings, lobbyist, online document storage, title searches, police reporting, translation and transcription, polygraphs, judge and prosecutor pay, council compensation (which was currently $0), computer-aided dispatch, fingerprinting, law enforcement assessment centers, Houston Area Library network technology support, citywide website, city scanning system, 911 archival, digital video traffic stops, citywide email service, webcasting and trash hauls.
Comments/Questions from Members of City Council:

Councilman Roman F. Reed referred to his top three concerns, which were safety, high quality of City services and economic development. He advised that his concerns were addressed with the 2013 proposed budget; however, he would like to see the economic development line item increased to or over $100,000.

Also of concern were the City employees. Councilman Reed indicated that he wanted to be sure that the employees were compensated adequately across the board, including the City Manager, Assistant City Manager, and City Clerk. Councilman Reed stated that the employees had done a really good job and that he was proud of all of them.

With respect to beautification of the City, Councilman Reed stated that he felt the budget should be increased to enhance the looks of the City and to clean up existing areas that had been overgrown by weeds.

Councilman Reed advised that he did not believe that the Great Lawn/Pavilion project needed to be undertaken this year. He noted that the City was coming out of an economic downturn, but things could change drastically at the beginning of the year (i.e., national election in November).

In closing, Councilman Reed indicated that he hoped funds to repair the library’s fence were contained within the budget.

Councilman Corbett Daniel Parker inquired as to the cost to repair the library’s fence.

Councilman Reed advised that he was not sure, but indicated that the cost to fence a normal residential lot was approximately $4,000.

MOTION TO AMEND THE PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2013 BUDGET:

Councilman Roman F. Reed moved to remove the construction of the Great Lawn and Pavilion (Bellaire Town Square) from the proposed 2013 budget and defer the project until the 2014 budget. Councilman James P. Avioli, Sr., seconded the motion to amend.

Councilman Reed advised that he was not against the project, but felt that having this commitment on the books right now was not a good idea economically. He suggested postponing the project until fiscal year 2014.

Councilman Parker referred to prior statements by City Manager Satterwhite that even if an item were budgeted, the City did not necessarily expend funds for such items immediately. He asked if the Great Lawn/Pavilion could be budgeted, but held until after the first of the year.

City Manager Satterwhite indicated that this particular project would be brought back to City Council for approval of a designer and engineer. Once the design was completed, the project would be presented to City Council again.
Then, City Council would have a third opportunity to review the project once the bidding process was completed and prior to the letting of a bid and contract for the project.

Councilman Parker referred to the possibility that a downturn in the City’s economic condition could occur after the project had been engineered and designed. If that occurred, he asked for confirmation that the design and engineering work would be usable the following year and the year thereafter.

City Manager Satterwhite advised that once the project was designed, the design would be fine; however, the costs might change.

Councilman Parker inquired of Councilman Reed as to whether his reluctance was related to spending the monies for the entire project versus just the design phase.

Councilman Reed advised that he was reluctant to start the design process and spend any monies. He felt that City Staff should be able to concentrate on other matters that were more important right now.

Councilman James P. Avioli, Sr., indicated that the reason he was in support of Councilman Reed’s motion was the fact that he, too, was very focused on City beautification. In looking at the proposed budget, he understood that the City’s intent was good, but he was not certain that enough money had been allocated for City beautification. He felt that the Great Lawn/Pavilion should be on the City’s list of things to do. He was not certain that the item should be pulled out of the budget, but felt that the City should move ahead toward beautification before focusing on the Great Lawn/Pavilion project.

Councilman Andrew S. Friedberg asked for confirmation that any item costing $50,000 or more was essentially a “red tagged” item.

City Manager Satterwhite advised that Councilman Friedberg was correct.

Councilman Friedberg asked for confirmation that it would be easier to have a “red tagged” item in the budget rather than to try and add it back later with a budget amendment.

City Manager Satterwhite advised that Councilman Friedberg was correct.

Councilman Friedberg indicated that for those reasons, he was opposed to the amendment.

City Manager Satterwhite pointed out that beautification was included in the General Fund operational budget and the Great Lawn/Pavilion was included in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) fund budget, noting that these were two different funds that were not necessarily commingled.
He advised further that the operational budget was very, very tight. If City Council started adding any amount to the operational budget, then the budget would not work without a tax rate increase. Money could be pulled back from the CIP fund, but such an action would not look good to the City’s bond raters.

City Manager Satterwhite stated that there seemed to be some perception that there was wiggle room in the operational budget. He advised that there was no wiggle room, especially with the recent house purchase on Jessamine Street, without a tax rate increase. To add $100,000 to the operational budget would cause the City to have a deficit budget. Taking the Great Lawn/Pavilion out of the CIP budget would not change things, unless City Council took action to take monies from the CIP Fund balance to add to the General Fund.

Councilman Friedberg understood Councilman Avioli to be suggesting not to pull the Great Lawn/Pavilion out of the budget from a monetary priority perspective, but rather to have City Staff focused on other projects first. Councilman Friedberg’s overall point on the amendment was to simply leave the Great Lawn/Pavilion in the budget because it was effectively “red tagged” anyway.

City Manager Satterwhite indicated that whether the project were removed or retained in the CIP fund budget, the City could not necessarily add to beautification.

Councilman Pat B. McLaughlan asked for confirmation that the City’s operational budget was tight enough as presented that there were no monies beyond $35,000 for beautification.

City Manager Satterwhite advised that $35,000 was budgeted for a beautification survey. The budget included $300,000 for beautification in various areas of the budget between the Public Works and Parks and Recreation Departments.

Councilman McLaughlan stated that the increase for beautification was certainly an advantage; however, he still felt that amount was a little tight. He indicated that the City should move forward with the Great Lawn and Pavilion as soon as possible. The Bellaire Parks and Recreation Advisory Board had been proposing the project for several years now. The Patrons for Bellaire Parks had been working to that objective as well. He understood from City Manager Satterwhite’s comments that whether or not the expenditure for the Great Lawn and Pavilion was split between two fiscal years (2013 and 2014), splitting the project would not free additional monies to be spent on beautification.

City Manager Satterwhite advised that Councilman McLaughlan was correct.

Councilman McLaughlan inquired as to whether the CIP fund could be made available for beautification.

City Manager Satterwhite indicated that the monies to conduct the beautification survey (i.e., $35,000) had been included in the CIP fund because it led to a long-term capital improvement. Funds for the actual mowing, plantings,
tree trimming, etc., were included in the operations budget. He suggested that there might be a way to include a long-term beautification project(s) in the CIP fund.

Councilman McLaughlan advised that he would be supportive of Councilman Reed’s amendment on the basis that the City might be able to defer some work and find some money to go toward beautification.

Mayor Pro Tem Nathan advised that she was opposed to the amendment. At a minimum, she felt the City could proceed with the design and engineering phases. It was her hope that the entire project could be accomplished in 2013. The project had been in the CIP since 2005 and the City had not spent any funds on any of the features in Bellaire Town Square since early 2009 when the playground was done. She would like to move forward with that project.

**VOTE ON MOTION TO AMEND THE PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2013 BUDGET:**

The motion to amend failed on a 2-4 vote, as follows:

**FOR:** Councilmen Roman F. Reed and Pat B. McLaughlan

**OPPOSED:** Mayor Pro Tem Amanda B. Nathan and Councilmen James P. Avioli, Sr., Corbett Daniel Parker and Andrew S. Friedberg

**ABSENT:** Mayor Philip L. Nauert

Councilman Avioli inquired as to whether the City was adequately funded in the employee retirement plan.

City Manager Satterwhite advised that the City was well funded.

Councilman Avioli referred to a provision for police vests. He inquired as to whether the City had state-of-the-art equipment for the police department.

City Manager Satterwhite advised that the police department did have state-of-the-art equipment.

Councilman Avioli inquired as to whether the City was adequately funded in that particular area.

Chief of Police Byron Holloway referred to the department’s body armor replacement program. A new piece of body armor was warranted by the manufacturer for a period of five years (i.e., projected life of Kevlar material in the body armor). When a particular officer’s body armor expired, then a replacement was already scheduled for purchase and the armor was replaced. Officers did not wear old body armor. Chief Holloway advised that he appreciated Councilman Avioli’s concern, but noted that the City had always been good about ensuring that its officers had the proper protection.
Chief Holloway advised further that the cost of one body armor vest was approximately $750.00. He believed that the department was scheduled to replace seven of the vests during fiscal year 2013.

Councilman Avioli inquired as to whether Chief Holloway had enough funds for protection.

Chief Holloway advised that he would have adequate funds in the proposed budget.

Councilman Avioli referred to beautification and asked if there was adequate funding for Christmas decorations for the City.

City Manager Satterwhite advised that he believed the City had enough funding; however, the City needed to figure out what the citizens wanted. He hoped to get citizens together to assist the City in figuring out what an adequate Christmas decoration scheme was.

Councilman Avioli indicated that he had tried to get a feel for how the General Fund projected budget compared with the General Fund proposed budget. It appeared to him that the projected budget was $60,000 less than the proposed budget and asked if he were making a correct assumption.

Assistant City Manager Diane K. White advised that Councilman Avioli was correct.

Councilman Avioli advised that Councilman Reed mentioned a possible increase in the funding for economic development. He advised that was not in support of increasing the funding for economic development from $50,000 to $100,000. Councilman Avioli stated that if the City were beautified and made more attractive, he believed that businesses and homeowners would come to Bellaire.

Councilman Avioli continued and referred to page 18 of the proposed budget and inquired as to whether the CTS professional service contract was for an engineer.

Assistant City Manager White indicated that the CTS professional service contract represented services to be provided citywide for technology support, such as Incode support (City’s financial system) and the City’s website support.

Councilman Avioli referred to page 37 of the budget and inquired as to whether the engineer was included in that professional services line item (Public Works Department), as well as whether the engineer would be a full time employee. He also asked for additional information with regard to the services to be provided by the engineer.

City Manager Satterwhite indicated that the engineer would be a contractor, similar to the City Attorney. He advised that engineering services were provided to the City now (on-call services). City Staff was trying to get a firm to come in and provide more consistent engineering services for the entire year citywide (primarily for the following departments: Public Works, Community Development,
and Parks and Recreation) on a monthly basis rather than on an individually-billed basis. The reason City Manager Satterwhite had not proposed an on-site engineer was because the salary, benefits, equipment and training would cost more. He also believed that a contractual relationship would be more efficient and give the City better coverage at an overall less amount.

Councilman Avioli next referred to page 52 of the proposed budget. He referred to two line items, one of which dealt with solid waste garbage pickup and the other of which dealt with curbside recycling. He noted that approximately $215,000 was budgeted for curbside recycling and inquired as to whether the revenues associated with curbside recycling had been taken into account.

City Manager Satterwhite pointed Councilman Avioli to the revenue column at the top of page 52.

Councilman Avioli asked for confirmation that the projected revenues related to curbside recycling totaled $232,000.

City Manager Satterwhite advised that Councilman Avioli was correct.

Councilman Avioli indicated that he recalled previous financial summaries and reports that stated revenues from curbside recycling were approximately $4,000 per month.

City Manager Satterwhite stated that the monthly reports had not been broken down between solid waste and recycling. All of the revenues were lumped into solid waste. In the proposed budget and future financials, the revenues would be broken out.

Councilman Avioli stated that the direct cost for picking up curbside recycling was $215,000 and the revenue was $5,000 per month and not the fees that people paid.

City Manager Satterwhite advised that the Enterprise Fund was a pay-for-use fund.

Councilman Avioli advised that the amount paid in fees was a cost of service. He pointed out that it appeared to him that the City was spending $215,000 to get revenue of $36,000.

City Manager Satterwhite disagreed.

Councilman Avioli stated that he noticed that it did not seem like the garbage tariff was going down any at all. He thought the City expected that the tariffs would go down on the City’s waste with the increase in curbside recycling.

City Manager Satterwhite advised that the tariff had not gone down because the City still used the same amount of people four days per week. He advised further that costs had gone up with respect to the collection of solid waste;
however, the City had not increased the rates charged to its customers for the service. He agreed that the solid waste budget had not been decreased much.

**Councilman Avioli** inquired as to whether the City was adequately covered in the budget if City Council decided to modify or change the ordinance that set a four-bag limit on garbage collection.

**City Manager Satterwhite** indicated that he did not know for sure, but believed that the budget might cover it. He advised that it depended on how much garbage the City collected in a given time, as overtime might be required in order to get all of the garbage out.

**Councilman Avioli** inquired as to whether the City was already in an overtime situation with respect to the collection of curbside recycling.

**City Manager Satterwhite** stated that the City was in an overtime situation periodically.

**Councilman Avioli** referred to the vehicle replacement program with respect to the police department and inquired as to the number of cars to be replaced and whether the City would purchase Dodge models.

**City Manager Satterwhite** stated that there were three cars to be replaced in the Bellaire Police Department and that the department planned to purchase Dodge models.

**Councilman Avioli** stated that the overall budget was good and that City Staff had done a good job.

**Councilman Parker** noted that he understood that Councilman Reed would need to leave the meeting shortly and advised that he wished to get a feel as to where everyone stood with respect to certain items. Councilman Parker referred to comments made during an earlier workshop by Councilman Reed related to street lighting, the need for two additional police officers, including four extra officers on the street, and a full-time economic coordinator. He inquired as to whether Councilman Reed was still in support of those items.

**Councilman Reed** advised that he was still in favor of the items mentioned by **Councilman Parker**.

{Councilman Reed left the Special Session (Budget) at 7:01 p.m. to attend to a personal matter}

**Councilman Friedberg** referred to the adoption by City Council of their budget parameters, which occurred on May 21, 2012. City Council then met in a Pre-Budget Workshop Session, which included the City’s directors, on June 25, 2012, followed by a Workshop Session on the budget on July 17, 2012. At each of those times, as well as subsequent exchanges, he had the opportunity to say what he had to say. At each of those sessions, parameters were established and reviewed in detail as to the City’s needs.
Councilman Friedberg advised that he was very satisfied and noted if ever there was a year that the City had hit the right balance, that year was 2013. Councilman Friedberg noted that, in recognition of the City’s modestly improving financial picture, the City was restoring services that had been reduced somewhat and frozen in recent years, including employee compensation.

In closing, Councilman Friedberg thanked Assistant City Manager White, City Manager Satterwhite, and all Department Heads for the work that was put into the proposed budget document.

Councilman McLaughlan echoed the comments that had just been made by Councilman Friedberg. He agreed that a great deal of work had gone into the budget and that it was a strong document that supported the citizens’ needs across the board.

Councilman McLaughlan referred to surrounding cities, such as Sugar Land, and cities around the world, that had or were considering a video or digital recording within certain areas of their City. He referred to Bellaire’s video display capabilities at certain key intersections and asked if it were the City’s position that nothing would be gained by recording those images.

City Manager Satterwhite indicated that he believed that the recording of images within the City was largely a policy issue. He believed that some political discussions needed to be held with respect to recording people on a regular basis. City Manager Satterwhite indicated further that the existing cameras served primarily as optical sensors for the traffic signals. The image was fed to the Police Department so that they could see if there were any traffic issues.

Chief Holloway stated that the cameras were in and of themselves not of the quality that would be needed to accomplish Councilman McLaughlan’s objective. He indicated that an entire new system would more than likely have to be built. Other cities were using a camera system to capture license plates. The storage space needed for capturing license plates versus capturing video was an entirely different matter. Additionally, all such images would be subject to the Texas Public Information Act.

Chief Holloway advised that he believed the City would have to expend a great deal of money on servers just to save the information that would be captured. He understood that Sugar Land was only capturing stills of license plates in particular areas and not streaming video.

Councilman McLaughlan indicated that he could not help but think that if the City had some strategically placed video recording capabilities and a crime went down in the surrounding area at the time, that the capability might in some way be useful.

Chief Holloway advised that mobile systems could be used and/or specific areas could be targeted. With respect to using the existing cameras on the traffic signals, Chief Holloway did not believe it was feasible to try to retrofit that system to capture streaming video.
Councilman McLaughlan referred to the images and indicated that the images he had seen in the police dispatch area looked pretty good.

Chief Holloway advised that the images might appear to look good; however, the images were not good. One might be able to tell that a particular truck was “red,” but would not be able to get any detail on the license plate or driver.

Councilman McLaughlan referred to a friend of his who was knowledgeable about law enforcement and advised that the friend had mentioned the value of a police dog with respect to drug enforcement. If bounties were received, the dog might be able to earn enough funding for his upkeep.

Chief Holloway indicated that it was possible; however, he would not budget that way. If he were to budget for a canine (K-9) unit, he would budget for the K-9 unit and any seizures would be “icing on the cake” so to speak. He noted that a K-9 unit was a time-consuming, expensive process. The City was fortunate to have had Officer Oglesby and Lucy. He advised further that there were some agencies that had a dedicated K-9 unit that were available for interdiction on major thoroughfares and highways. Chief Holloway suggested that City Council would have to decide if that were the way they wished to use police resources.

Councilman McLaughlan asked if there would be any advantage to spending the necessary funding for a dog.

Chief Holloway advised that he would love to have a K-9 unit, but the police department had other needs right now. He stated that some of the police department’s infrastructure and their staff needed to be taken care of first. At this point in time, a K-9 unit was not a priority with Chief Holloway.

Councilman McLaughlan stated that public safety was a key issue for him as well and asked if the 2013 budget was making progress in meeting the other needs mentioned by Chief Holloway.

Chief Holloway advised that he did believe so. He stated that there was more to a safe and secure community than the police department, such as libraries, parks, streets, and other things. Resources were limited and had to be appropriately distributed. He closed and stated that the police department could accomplish their mission with the 2013 proposed budget.

Councilman McLaughlan referred to Bellaire Town Square and inquired as to the possibility of a sidewalk to be constructed along the south side of the pool from the South Rice Avenue side.

City Manager Satterwhite indicated, by a nod of his head, that the sidewalk Councilman McLaughlan referred to was included in the Great Lawn/Pavilion project for Bellaire Town Square.

Councilman McLaughlan asked if the work to be done in Bellaire Town Square would also encompass the north end of City Hall, which was a bit unattractive in terms of the entrance from the pedestrian crossing to the Family Aquatic Center.
City Manager Satterwhite noted that the work referenced by Councilman McLaughlan with respect to the entrance was a separate project. It was anticipated that the cost for that separate project, which would include work on the parking lot, storm drainage, lighting and sidewalks, could total $500,000.

Councilman McLaughlan inquired as to when the project might be implemented.

City Manager Satterwhite indicated that funding had not yet been set aside for that particular project. He indicated further that the Patrons for Bellaire Parks had emailed him earlier in the day and committed $100,000 for the Great Lawn/Pavilion project by the end of the year.

Councilman McLaughlan referred back to beautification and asked if the $300,000 mentioned earlier by City Manager Satterwhite was the total amount of money that the City had for the "beautification project."

City Manager Satterwhite advised that there were funds in the budget for beautification, but those funds were related to an increase in landscaping.

Councilman McLaughlan asked for confirmation that the $300,000 was additional funding above and beyond the basic funding that the City had operated with for the last few years.

City Manager Satterwhite advised that Councilman McLaughlan was correct.

Councilman McLaughlan stated that the reason he seemed to be harping on the issue was that in terms of beautification, he saw landscaping along the esplanade and other places; he saw a small plaza in Paseo Park and entry markers at the City's main thoroughfares. Accomplishing those tasks at a minimal effort sounded like a positive start.

City Manager Satterwhite advised that he did not know if all of the items mentioned by Councilman McLaughlan could be accomplished, but the City was going to work towards it. He also did not know if $35,000 for way finding signs and $35,000 for a beautification study would be enough with respect to funding.

Councilman McLaughlan asked if the $300,000 that City Manager Satterwhite referred to appeared in the budget as a separate line item.

City Manager Satterwhite indicated that the monies were contained in several line items, primarily in parks maintenance and ground maintenance in the public works budget.

Councilman McLaughlan asked for confirmation that if City Council looked at parks maintenance and ground maintenance in a prior year, those amounts would be lower than the proposed budget for 2013.

City Manager Satterwhite advised that Councilman McLaughlan was correct. It was higher, but not $300,000 higher.
Councilman McLaughlan asked what line items needed to be added together to come up with the total of $300,000.

City Manager Satterwhite indicated that, for example, $95,000 had been budgeted in ground maintenance for 2013 whereas the previous year’s budget was $26,000. He advised that the amounts for those two line items had increased by approximately $85,000.

Councilman McLaughlan advised that he thought the $300,000 that was referred to by City Manager Satterwhite was an additional amount above and beyond what the City had been spending previously.

City Manager Satterwhite indicated that he had never made that statement.

Councilman McLaughlan asked for confirmation that the proposed amount for 2013 was somewhat greater than the previous year’s budget.

City Manager Satterwhite agreed and mentioned that there was also $35,000 for a beautification survey and another $35,000 for way finding signage.

Councilman McLaughlan inquired as to the total increase and asked if it were approximately $90,000.

Assistant City Manager White advised that the increases in the parks maintenance budget and the public works ground maintenance budget totaled $85,000. Then, in the CIP budget, $35,000 had been included for streetscapes and $35,000 was included for way finding signage. If all the increases were added together, the total increase in beautification would be $154,900.

Councilman McLaughlan asked for confirmation that this was not as bold a step as he had previously thought.

City Manager Satterwhite indicated that he thought the City was taking a pretty bold step with respect to where the City stood with total available resources.

Councilman McLaughlan stated that he was hopeful that the City might be able to increase the funding that had been dedicated for beautification.

Mayor Pro Tem Amanda B. Nathan noted that no funding had been included in the Rebuild Bellaire Program for facilities. She inquired as to whether City Manager Satterwhite could give City Council the status of the ongoing assessment what was envisioned would follow.

City Manager Satterwhite stated that he believed that the City needed to receive the assessment before moving forward. He did not believe that a decision would be made during the 2013 fiscal year, as more work would be required once the assessment was received with respect to the police department and municipal court. He did not want to put something in the budget without really knowing what direction the City was going.
Councilman Parker noted that the Chief of Police had indicated that there was nearly $1 million of work to be done with respect to the police department. He did not wish to jump in a predetermined lane without the results of the facilities assessment; however, he felt that the City should consider funding for planning. He did not want to wait a year, and noted that City Council was told in June that the assessment would be ready in four months, which was the end of October. Councilman Parker did not think it would take the City an entire year to determine that the City needed to start planning. He suggested budgeting for an estimate based, perhaps, on the planning costs associated with the Bellaire City Library and/or the Bellaire Fire Station.

City Manager Satterwhite stated that the budget was about balancing resources across a wide spectrum of needs or perceived needs. He felt that the most pressing needs were addressed in the proposed budget. The City could continue to address needs as those needs arose. The issue or future project was not dead for this year. The resources that City Manager Satterwhite had to spread were spread.

Councilman Parker referred the Metro General Mobility Plan and inquired as to the effect of the plan, noting that he believed the plan had been extended another three years.

City Manager Satterwhite advised that the City was basically using the Metro funding for street and sidewalk rehabilitation. If those funds were to go away and/or were decreased, the City would have to look into that. Since the City had some funds left, the City could continue to operate as it had for the next three to five years without a huge impact. In other words, the City had still some time to plan.

Councilman Parker asked for confirmation that the only budgetary impact associated with the Metro General Mobility Plan were the legal services that the signed on for.

City Manager Satterwhite advised that Councilman Parker was correct.

Councilman Parker referred to the increase in the street condition and sidewalks, which he would argue was also beautification, and inquired as to whether a list of streets and sidewalks to be repaired or rehabilitated had been prepared.

City Manager Satterwhite advised that a list was prepared for the Rebuild Bellaire Program and that Phase Four of that program would be brought forward for City Council consideration soon. In conjunction with that phase, the City would try to give the priorities for the remainder of streets.

As for the street rehabilitation project under the Metro Fund, the City did not really have everything worked out yet. City Manager Satterwhite advised that a street and sidewalk assessment was slated to be performed. Once that assessment was returned, the City would publish the list.
Councilman Parker referred to Bellaire Town Square and inquired as to whether the City had heard from the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and/or the Patrons for Bellaire Parks in regard to finishing Bellaire Town Square and Paseo Park.

City Manager Satterwhite advised that the Patrons for Bellaire Parks had committed $100,000 to the Great Lawn and Pavilion project to be paid by the end of the year. According the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, their main focus or priority was Bellaire Town Square; however, they would like to see some action on Paseo Park in the foreseeable future.

Councilman Parker referred to an updated CIP plan that the City Manager had provided to City Council. That plan referred to a Master Plan to be created for a year-round pool at Evergreen Park, along with a pavilion and tables and signage, for a cost of $25,000, for fiscal year 2014. He wished to know, for planning purposes, if that project had been approved by a prior City Council.

Director of Parks and Recreation Jane L. Dembski advised that a typographical error must have occurred. The funding was for a Parks Master Plan for Evergreen Park. This had been on the books for some time. The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board was interested in moving forward with that at some point as there was a possibility that the Evergreen Water Plant would be demolished, thereby opening up some space in the park.

Councilman Parker inquired as to whether there had been any specific programming requests that the current budget would not allow the Parks and Recreation Department to meet.

Director Dembski advised that there were some specific requests that the department was not able to do due to space requirements, such as a spin class, which would require a number of equipment purchases (bicycles), as well as a place to store the equipment. She stated that some people would like a bigger fitness room; however, the center was space limited.

Councilman Parker referred to the $35,000 expenditure budgeted for way finding signage. He asked if the funds were for planning or if the funds would allow for the City to actually purchase some signage.

City Manager Satterwhite indicated that the funding would be utilized for planning, as well as to implement what the City could.

Councilman Parker asked if the City had any discussions with the Evelyn’s Park Conservancy as to working in concert with them on putting together a pallet. In other words, what was the plan to make it happen?

City Manager Satterwhite advised that the Bellaire Cultural Arts Board was looking at way finding signage currently. He stated that Assistant City Manager White would continue to work with the Bellaire Cultural Arts Board and that it was probably time for them to get with the Evelyn’s Park Conservancy.
Councilman Parker asked for confirmation that the body to push forth the effort was the Bellaire Cultural Arts Board.

City Manager Satterwhite advised that Councilman Park was correct.

Councilman Parker referred to a project to repaint the City’s water tower located in the Central Water Plant. He referred to funding in the amount of $784,000 and inquired as to whether the repainting project was included in that funding.

City Manager Satterwhite advised that it was—the project was a total rehabilitation project similar to the project undertaken at the Feld Water Plant.

Councilman Parker referred to a concern raised by Director of Public Works Joe Keene with respect to his employees riding on the backs of the City’s garbage trucks. He inquired as to how the City could put together a plan that would allow the City to continue to pick up trash.

Director of Public Works Joe Keene advised that there were many ways to pick up household trash and curbside recycling. City Staff would take the City’s current plan and build upon it in order to ensure that the City always had a five-year plan with respect to solid waste.

Councilman Parker indicated that he understood that the City did not really have a plan and that Director Keene was concerned about trying to replace trucks. He recalled Mayor Pro Tem Nathan making suggestions, such as utilizing larger trash containers.

Director Keene indicated that there was a plan for the replacement of vehicles. The City had gotten off of the plan a bit due to the economic downturn, but could get back on the plan. He did not have a five-year plan with respect to solid waste operations. He would be working on one to present to the City Manager and City Council in the future.

Councilman Parker stated that he was trying to spur City Council into making a decision that would enable the Public Works Department to have the opportunity to plan.

City Manager Satterwhite advised that the City would continue on its current path for the foreseeable future because every time Staff came forward with an idea, the Council Chamber was packed with people who opposed the idea. As a result, City Staff did not really know where to go with a plan. If City Council wanted to give the City direction on where to go, the City would go there. The plan could range from the current situation to automated pick up to outsourcing and all things in-between. City Manager Satterwhite stated that the City of West University Place was looking at changing their process and closing down their recycling center.

Councilman Parker agreed and advised that City Council either needed to allocate more money for solid waste or the City needed to become more effective
in the way things were done. Councilman Parker also noted that a statement had been made that the City needed to adequately cut back trees to 14 feet. He asked if the proposed budget would give Director Keene the resources he would need to handle the tree trimming.

Director Keene advised that Councilman Parker was correct.

Councilman Parker asked if the proposed budget also gave Director Keene the resources he needed to cut back trees or shrubs in the residential rights-of-way with respect to safety concerns.

Director Keene advised that Councilman Parker was correct.

City Manager Satterwhite advised that he believed the City needed some help from residents with respect to cutting back residents’ landscaping on City rights-of-way as other cities got. The City of Houston had an ordinance that required residents to maintain the right-of-way to the curb.

Councilman Parker asked if the new solid waste ordinance had alleviated the late hours that had to be worked by Director Keene’s employees.

Director Keene stated that it depended upon the days and the traffic, noting that traffic had a tremendous effect on what the Public Works Department did. For example, if he had a truck leave for the landfill at 3:00 p.m., his drivers would not get back to the Public Works Service Center by 5:00 p.m. If a driver left for the landfill by 1:00 p.m., that driver would return before 5:00 p.m.

Councilman Parker referred to the Fire Department’s budget, noting that City Council had been advised that the City was salvaging parts with respect to its self-containing breathing apparatuses. It sounded as if City Council had not given the department enough resources to meet their needs in the proposed budget.

Fire Chief Darryl Anderson indicated that the Fire Department was dependent on the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) passing a standard and the manufacturers being able to meet the demand of that standard. It was his hope that everything could be accomplished in 2013. If not, he would ask for that item to be carried forward to the 2014 budget.

Councilman Parker asked for confirmation that Chief Anderson had adequate funding to outfit the Fire Department if the NFPA standard was established and met in 2013.

Fire Chief Anderson advised that Councilman Parker was correct.

Councilman Parker referred to a want or need mentioned by the Human Resources Department for employee wellness programs. He stated that he wanted to make sure that the budget helped Director Yolanda Williams fully accomplish that want or need. He asked Director Williams to let him know if he needed to give her more money.
Director Yolanda Williams, Human Resources Department, advised that she believed the funding including in the budget for Human Resources was sufficient. She was currently talking with brokers about wellness programs that could be put in place for employees.

Councilman Parker advised that discussion had been held previously with respect to the removal of the water plant at Evergreen Park. He inquired as to whether any planning had been undertaken with respect to that site and/or if funding were needed to plan and/or develop the area.

City Manager Satterwhite referred to an earlier comment by Director Dembski. The area had been incorporated into an overall improvement plan for Evergreen Park, which was not included in the proposed budget. The area would be turned into green space once the plant was demolished. This would allow time for the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board to plan for what they would like to recommend be done with the area.

Councilman Parker referred to employee salaries and advised that he wanted to make sure that Bellaire was remaining competitive. He inquired as to how often salary comparisons were made. He referred to West University Place, for example.

City Manager Satterwhite stated that Bellaire was way behind West University Place.

Councilman Parker asked if Bellaire had lost a number of good employees to West University Place.

City Manager Satterwhite indicated that the City had not lost good employees to West University Place. He stated that salaries had not been checked recently due to the economic downturn. The City typically checked that on an annual basis. He indicated further that funding had been included in the budget for a salary review.

Councilman Parker referred to code enforcement and asked if anything else could be done that was cost-effective, such as residents needing to work with the City on landscaping/visibility issues. Clearly, on the warrant side, the City’s warrant officer was best served working through the system to clear warrants versus knocking on doors. He mentioned that he had heard a number of comments from residents who had offered to knock on doors for the City. Additionally, there had been many complaints with respect to people leaving their trash out.

City Manager Satterwhite agreed that it was time for the City to start being a little more aggressive. The City had changed "code enforcement" to "code compliance." It was difficult to penalize someone for a code violation, though not impossible. Repeat violators or those who simply did not want to comply, were processed by the City through municipal court. Most people would comply with the City’s ordinances once they understood the ordinances.
One of the City’s largest problems was with abandoned homes. He advised that the City wanted to encourage residents to help the City with those issues. The process involved in dealing with abandoned homes was lengthy and residents often felt that the City was not doing anything about those homes.

Councilman Parker indicated that he would like to bring up two things related to beautification—one was that City Council needed to distinguish what residents wanted versus what they were willing to pay for and the second was the need for City Council to define their goal for beautifying the City (i.e., to reduce crime, to improve blight, increase the commercial tax base, etc.).

As to Councilman McLaughlan’s discussion with respect to K-9 units, Councilman Parker indicated that he had a good friend who was involved with K9s4 COPs who had donated a number of dogs to Harris County Sheriff Garcia and the Houston Police Department. He would be happy to send his friend Bellaire’s way.

Councilman Parker next addressed Chief Financial Officer Linda Symank and inquired as to whether the proposed budget would meet her needs for Incode training for her staff.

Chief Financial Officer Linda Symank indicated, by a nod of her head, that her needs had been met.

Councilman Parker stated that he would not make his amendments to the budget this evening as two members of City Council were absent and their votes might be favorable. Councilman Parker advised that he believed that Council Members should have discretionary spending to do things such as surveys, town halls, maintain websites, and attend training. To the extent that members of City Council were willing to put their personal time into that, there should be some authority for them to stay responsive and educated on the issues facing the City.

He agreed with Councilman Avioli in that special events and decorations were the heart and soul of the Bellaire community. The events were well attended, and he would support an increase from the current $37,000.

Tree trimming was dangerous in the City’s rights-of-way. He was willing to be more aggressive and provide the monies necessary for the City to make the streets safer and to hold residents responsible when they were not neighborly.

With respect to Feld Park, Councilman Parker noted that the Bellaire Optimist Club had mentioned that they needed padding for the light poles. When he followed up a few weeks ago, they indicated that Director Dembski had worked out a solution, which was significantly less costly. He asked Director Dembski if that had been taken care of.

Director Dembski indicated, by a nod of her head, that the need had been taken care of.

Councilman Parker indicated that if City Council started their meetings at 6:00 p.m., he felt that it was completely appropriate that sandwiches or pizza be
provided for members of City Council. He understood that Councilman Reed agreed to that expenditure as well.

With respect to council compensation, he suggested putting those funds toward discretionary spending for City Council. He inquired as to the amount of compensation set out in the City’s Charter.

City Manager Satterwhite advised that the amount was $4,500.00.

Councilman Parker asked if City Staff could figure out what could be done at Mulberry Park with respect to the shed in the left field area. He advised that the roof was leaking and he was interested in obtaining a cost that could be added to the budget for that expenditure, as well as power washing the tennis courts.

Finally, Councilman Parker advised that he believed the City was doing many great things, but was not doing as good of a job as the City could in communicating with the residents.

Mayor Pro Tem Nathan indicated that she did not have anything to add this evening, but encouraged everyone to keep in mind what City Manager Satterwhite stated with respect to a need to possibly decrease funds in one area to add funds to another area of the budget. She advised that if members of City Council intended to suggest that additional items be included in the budget, to also give some thought as to where they would like to see money come out to make that possible.

D. ADJOURNMENT.

MOTION TO ADJOURN/ACTION:

Councilman Andrew S. Friedberg moved to adjourn the Special Session (Budget) of the City Council of the City of Bellaire, Texas, at 7:51 p.m. on Tuesday, August 21, 2012. Councilman James P. Avioli, Sr., seconded the motion.

The motion to adjourn carried unanimously on a 5-0 vote as follows:

FOR: Mayor Pro Tem Amanda B. Nathan and Councilmen James P. Avioli, Sr., Corbett Daniel Parker, Pat B. McLaughlin and Andrew S. Friedberg

OPPOSED: None
City of Bellaire
City Council

Minutes of Meeting
August 21, 2012

ABSENT: Mayor Philip L. Nauert and Councilman Roman F. Reed

Respectfully submitted,

Tracy L. Dutton, TRMC
City Clerk
City of Bellaire, Texas

Approved:
Amanda B. Nathan
Mayor Pro Tem
City of Bellaire, Texas