

**MINUTES FOR THE REGULAR  
APRIL 9, 2024  
CITY COUNCIL MEETING**

**1. Call to Order and Recording of Quorum**

The meeting was called to order at 4:00pm and a quorum was established.

**Council Members Present**

Mayor John Low  
Emmy Ballantyne  
Bill Mitchell  
Peter Mako  
Kate Lanfear

**City Staff Present**

City Manager William Foley  
Asst. City Manager Michelle Pack  
Fire Chief William Knupp  
Asst. Fire Chief Justin Seibert  
Police Chief Gail Baham  
Asst. Police Chief Gabriel Ortiz  
Director Rick Baldarrama

**Others Present**

Rhonda Low  
Megan Rodriguez  
Salgu Wissmath (photographer)  
Reed Williams  
Rita Schimpff  
Fred Schimpff  
Cathy Carroll  
Michael Knott  
Suzzie Thomas  
Collier Bashara  
Ron Arbetter  
Rick Schimpff  
Kim Roach (Armstrong, Vaughan)  
Buddy Rosene  
Kay Rosene  
Lisa Davis  
Frank Burney  
Allison Gates  
Bob Newman  
Peter McGanity  
Renee Bailey  
Brad Camp  
Anne Ballantyne  
Linda Camp  
Wilbur Matthews  
Jane Hegeler  
Cheryl McMullan – via zoom  
Daryl – via zoom  
Brandon Cook – via zoom  
David Dannunzio – via zoom  
Mary Wigodsky - via zoom  
Shane Applegate - via zoom  
Kori Howell – via zoom  
Unknown (phone number 210-946-\*\*\*\*) - via zoom  
Leslie Helene – via zoom  
\*\*\*There were four unknown attendees who did not sign in

**2. Review/Action of minutes from:**

**a. March 11<sup>th</sup> Regular Meeting**

The minutes were reviewed, Ballantyne motioned to approve, Mako seconded, all voted in favor and the minutes were approved as submitted.

**3. Comments by Citizens**

There were no comments.

**4. Discussion on the special election to be held on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024.**

Reed Williams spoke to the council first. He thanked city staff for their efficiency in putting the petition on the ballot. He also thanked everyone who signed the petition because he believes it is important for people to have their voice heard and can vote on matters meaningful to them. Williams said that he originally signed the petition in favor of the freeze but after reviewing the financial numbers he cannot support the freeze. He provided his own financial figures by noting that the average appraised home value was just over \$1,000,000 and that the city has been fiscally responsible for providing services without having to constantly raise taxes year after year. Williams compared Terrell Hills to other surrounding cities and stated that the other cities have higher taxes. He mentioned that the City of San Antonio has a 50% higher tax rate than Terrell Hills, and Olmos Park, who just went through a senior tax freeze, is 30% higher. He commented on how Alamo Heights gets sales tax revenue from businesses such as Central Market HEB and that Terrell Hills has a small market for revenue. Williams also mentioned that his daughter, who lives in Olmos Park, is having to vote on charging for trash services after the city adopted a senior tax freeze. Williams also said that with a 30% reduction in revenue the city's future will

change. Williams closed by stating that there are state and federal funded services such as Medicare and Social Security to help aid senior citizens and that they shouldn't need help from the city.

Rick Schimpff began his comments by stating that the city was very brave for having all "these people here". Schimpff said his taxes are with his accountant so he doesn't have his exact numbers, he listed all the other entities that provided a senior tax break and said he doesn't understand why Terrell Hills cannot. Schimpff referred to Terrell Hills as being a small city with big city problems and that the fiscal perception is that the city is "blowing through some money" on new city vehicles. He provided the amount of money he paid in taxes in 2022 and said that the city will continue to receive money from seniors but at a frozen rate. He said that he believes seniors should get a break because they have paid and supported the city for many years. Schimpff demanded the factual numbers not "what if scenarios". He supported the "pay to play" options but said that he would need to know the actual figures of what the city would charge for those services. Schimpff said that the people he has spoken with support the "pay to play" option apart from medical services. Schimpff further added that he wants the city to "stop sending first responders to get cats out of trees" and that he supports the senior tax freeze.

Frank Burney began by stating that he has lived in Terrell Hills for 20 years and he is worried about the effect on city services, especially the Police and Fire Departments. He said nobody can deny there will be revenue loss if passed and the question is what will be done about it. Burney told how the efficient emergency services saved his home from a garage fire and his daughter's life from choking on a small object. Burney expressed that essential city services are more important than freezing taxes for people his age. He said that the council has effectively managed the city and provided their recommendations on the outcome of losing a third of their revenue. Burney explained that he knows the "debilitating effects" of revenue loss due to his work with the San Antonio Fire Department and that he is worried what services will be lost with the 30% revenue decrease. Burney said that the Terrell Hills Police and Fire Departments have been recognized as one of the best in the state and doesn't understand why anyone would vote on something that would jeopardize the quality of services they are currently getting. Burney stated that he will be turning seventy this year and he doesn't mind continuing to pay taxes as is moving forward because of the services citizens receive. He also said that Terrell Hills does not have other revenue sources like Alamo Heights does with the "Gucci HEB" or Olmos Park businesses. Burney expressed his fears of trying to sell his home in 10 years to a younger generation if the city is forced to raise taxes because there is no other source of revenue. He closed by urging all the senior citizens to think twice about voting for the tax freeze.

Mayor Low provided early voting information.

Bob Newman began by saying that his understanding is that the purpose of a ballot initiative or referendum is to solve a problem, and he hasn't heard a problem yet that this ballot initiative would address. He said the only problem he has heard was people's opinions that the taxes are too high, and this ballot initiative does not lower taxes. He explained that the tax freeze just shifts the burden to a different portion of citizens in Terrell Hills by freezing taxes on another portion. Newman said if the problem was taxes being too high then you do a vote on the tax rate, not to freeze taxes. He said one speaker admitted that the city will need to find more money if it passes, and the only way to do that would be to raise taxes on the citizens without the freeze or to charge for city services. Newman said he cannot understand why citizens would want to pay for the bureaucratic hassle of billing people for services if they are currently being successfully managed. Newman said that not one person has expressed that they cannot afford to pay for their taxes or that seniors cannot afford their taxes. Newman said the city and staff are well managed and trained. He listed several services the city provides that are funded by property taxes. He also acknowledged that he is over 65 years old and said that he can't understand why people want to shift the tax burden to the younger generations, it won't be fair to the 45-year-olds and the rest of the community. Newman again asked "What is the problem we are trying to solve here? This piece of legislation, this ballot initiative doesn't solve any problems, it only potentially and almost certainly creates problems".

Brad Camp began by saying he loves Terrell Hills because it is a vibrant multigenerational city. Camp mentioned how he served on the city council and was a previous mayor for 12 years. He said even though he is a senior, he is opposed to the freeze because it comes with a cost as pointed out by Mr. Newman. He said if it passes, it will force the council and staff to figure out how to provide services without the same revenue. Camp said if the tax freeze passes, the only options will be to either shift the tax burden to those under 65 years old, charge for services or reduce the services currently provided. He pointed out that passing the tax burden to younger families will make Terrell Hills less vibrant because it will raise taxes and lose the appeal for those looking to purchase homes here. Camp admired how staff currently go above and beyond, often working to provide services outside of their job descriptions. Camp also noted that seniors could end up paying more for services than they would save on frozen tax rates. He also mentioned that it is an administrative nightmare to try and keep track of paying for those services, additional staff would need to be hired to manage it and the system currently in place is working very well. Camp closed by saying that the city has done an excellent job at being fiscally responsible and running the city the way they do without having a large sales tax income.

Anne Ballantyne introduced herself by stating that she served on the city council and as mayor for over 18 years, so she understands how the city's government is run. She said that the city is very fiscally responsible and commented on how great it is that staff and council can create and manage funds for new equipment versus spending money on paying maintenance fees for run down equipment. Ballantyne praised Brad Camp's comment on Terrell Hills being a multigenerational city. She said she has lived here her whole life and that there is no part of Terrell hills that isn't great. Ballantyne addressed her fears of "pricing out" the younger generations, making it unaffordable for them to live in Terrell Hills. She said that she used to serve on the Alamo Heights school board and agreed that seniors should have an exemption because they are most likely not using those school services. Ballantyne then pointed out that for city services, many of our senior citizens use the services more so than the younger generations. Ballantyne also gave an example of how efficient the city emergency services were when they had EMS show up at her home within 3 minutes this past December. She closed her comments by saying that she is against the tax freeze and desires to keep things the way they are.

Wilbur Matthews spoke to advocate for the "younger crowd". He said it seems logical for people to want to sign the petition to freeze senior taxes. Matthews said that the council has done a fantastic job of illustrating the effects of a potential freeze. He said the freeze "undermines our community" and that the "Mayberry community" is what he loves about living in Terrell Hills. He made a comment about how great it is to see the face of the police getting cats out of trees versus being associated with arresting people. Matthews is worried that the appraised home values will "be in the tax assessor crosshairs" and they will be forced to raise taxes on homeowners under the age of sixty-five. Matthews continued by saying that he respects seniors and believes that everyone should pay their fair share. He said Terrell Hills is all about fairness and a "giveaway does not seem fair" if it comes at expense to others. He closed by encouraging people to vote in opposition to the freeze to avoid a city revenue loss of over 30%.

Peter McGanity addressed the council because he wanted to get a better understanding of the financial report that was sent out. He asked how much money the city had left over at the end of the year. Mayor Low responded by telling him that city staff will give him the information. Low also informed him that all budget figures are transparent, and the proposed budget gets discussed in open meetings which citizens are encouraged to attend.

Rick Schimpff asked why Alamo Heights charges for medical services that occurred in Terrell Hills. Foley replied by saying that Alamo Heights and Terrell Hills are contracted for EMS and ambulance services. Terrell Hills pays for EMS services to Alamo Heights annually and the City of Terrell Hills does not currently charge citizens for services rendered. It was noted that Alamo Heights does charge citizens when their services are used.

Knupp went through the list of Zoom attendees to ask if anyone would like to speak, only Brandon Cook chose to speak. Cook introduced himself as a 34-year-old who has lived in Terrell Hills for 7 years. He said he is against the tax freeze for many of the reasons already discussed and that he doesn't want the tax burden to unfairly shift to the younger generations.

Mayor Low thanked everyone for attending and said that the purpose of the meeting was for everyone to be heard so that an informed decision can be made when it comes time to vote.

**5. Discussion from monthly reports as submitted in the council packets.**

There was no discussion about the monthly reports, but the mayor did remind attendees that the May council meeting would be held on Tuesday, May 7<sup>th</sup> versus the typical Monday.

**5. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 4:41pm.

---

MAYOR

ATTEST:

---

SECRETARY-MANAGER