

# Citizen's Focus Group Committee Meeting

## Friday, May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014

Kevin started the meeting at 9:30am in the Police Department Community Room. A sign in sheet was passed to members to record attendance.

### Present:

Andrea Gardner – City Manager  
Kevin Keller – Public Information Officer  
Marcie Lowery  
Timothy McGinnis  
Chris Mulvey  
Marc Payne  
Ray Torres  
Regina Vargas  
Marty Smith – Council Liaison

### Absent:

Ronnie Viss – Excused

Also present was Justine Mirabel (SA to City Manager) to record minutes.

## I. General Announcements

Members were advised the business cards for the “BeHeardCove” website have been ordered and are not in yet. Pictures were taken of the remaining members of the focus group members prior to the start of the meeting. Andrea advised the group she would be doing a budget presentation to the members of the Citizen's Focus Group and then open the meeting to questions.

## II. Committee Discussion / Business (Open Forum)

### *City of Copperas Cove Budget Presentation*

- **Andrea** presented the City of Copperas Cove Budget. This presentation is attached to the minutes for record. Various questions were asked during the presentation by the members of the group.
- **Discussion** took place regarding the sources of revenue for the City. It was noted the State of Texas relies on municipalities to provide revenue. There is no state tax collected, so there is no available state aid. Andrea advised the up side of this is Cities are able to govern themselves for the most part.

- **Discussion** took place regarding the property tax rate for the City. Andrea showed a slide noting the tax rate of \$0.7774 per \$100 – \$64.16/mo for a \$99,038 home. Another slide was shown regarding a \$0.01 raise in taxes would increase revenue \$111,948. Chris commented he would rather pay a \$0.01 increase than pay \$3 in transportation fees for sidewalks.
- **Marc** asked what the drainage fee was used for. Andrea explained to Marc about where the funds from the fee go (towards drainage projects).
- **Andrea** showed a slide regarding the percentage breakdown of collected tax revenues, advising the City only receives 30% of the total.
- **Andrea** advised the group each department must justify an open position or the position will be unfunded.
- **Andrea** reviewed revenue vs expenditures for 3 City funds.
- **Chris** asked about City annexation and if sewer services are included for the residents when annexed. Andrea explained the final deal decided on isn't always what is initially discussed in public meetings. Andrea told Chris the City Secretary has records of annexations.
- **Marc** asked about condemnation funds and how the process is working. Andrea explained laws changed and the City tries to work with home/property owners to save money on legal fees.
- **Discussion** ensued over the amount of revenue the county collects from Copperas Cove. The figure of 70% of total revenue for the county was mentioned. Andrea advised the group voters/citizens need to make their voices heard at the county level. Andrea gave examples of the revenue the county takes from the City and the changes put in place to get a small amount of that back when the City provides services.
- **Ray** commented on the fact most people are not from this area and so do not vote as a part of their local community. Andrea advised there are approximately 19,000 registered voters in Copperas Cove, but very few actually vote.
- **Chris** asked about the disabled and over 65 exemption/freeze for property tax. The group held a discussion regarding their own understanding and experience with this exemption. This "rule" only applies to the actual residence the person lives in. Several more minutes of discussion ensued regarding the "Homestead Rule" and how it applies to any exemptions, freezes or tax breaks a person may qualify for.
- **Andrea** advised the group it is important to educate citizens on the way the local government operates. General discussion took place regarding the belief cities have infinite amounts of money at their disposal to pay for anything that needs to be maintained, purchased, upgraded, etc.

### III. Conclusion of Meeting

Kevin advised he would notify via email the next meeting date. Andrea and Kevin asked the members of the group what they would like to discuss at the next meeting. Kevin advised the group they could email him any topics for discussion prior to the next meeting. Marcie asked specifically about the drainage on Oakhill. Andrea advised the project is a future project but

prior to the start, citizens will be given the opportunity to speak with the engineers tasked with completing the project. Marcie complimented the SW department for their quick response to removing debris from the culvert. Kevin provided information on the Unity program and link on the website to nominate an employee for the award. KCCB waterway cleanup on Saturday was mentioned. Kevin advised group members it is a great way to meet citizens and reach out to the community.