CITY OF ALVARADO
County of Johnson
State of Texas
09/04/2025
City Council Minutes

The City Council of the City of Alvarado met in a Special Called Budget Workshop on Thursday, September 04, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. The following members of the council were in attendance.

Name	Title	Present	Absent	Excused
Jacob Wheat	Mayor	✓		
Carrie Keeton	Council Ward 1	✓		
Beverly Short	Council Ward 1	✓		
Lydia Moon	Council Ward 2	✓		
Cherry Bryant	Council Ward 2	✓		
Scott Arthur	Council Ward 3	✓		
Kevin Thomas	Mayor Pro-Tem Ward 3	✓		

Others Present:

Paul DeBuff	City Manager
Bobbie Jo Taylor	City Secretary
Beth Walls	Director of Human Resources
Jennifer Drysdale	City Attorney
Donielle Suber	Director of Administrative Services
Laura Cox	Chief Financial Officer
Hillary Cromer	Director of Economic Development
Justin French	Community Development Director
John Rodgers	Fire Chief
Anthony Tucker	Park Superintendent
Ben Moore	Assistant Police Chief
Michael Dwiggins	Public Works Director
Gus Chavarria	City Engineer
Ryan Edgar	Finance Manager
Anthony Tucker	Park's Superintendent

Mayor Jacob Wheat called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Fire Chief Rodgers led the led the invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND PUBLIC INPUT

- Jameye Jones – Upcoming community events.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

- No comments at this time

NEW BUSINESS

1. City of Alvarado 2025/2026 Fiscal Year Budget Workshop.

City Manager Paul DeBuff opened the budget presentation by addressing the City Council with an overview of the current economic climate, describing it as challenging. He noted that appraised property values within the City of Alvarado are projected to remain flat through the Fiscal Year 2026. As a result, any increase in property tax revenue will rely solely on new construction and development.

Mr. DeBuff provided a brief analysis of current interest rates, highlighting a significant increase—now more than 17 times higher than in 2022. Despite these financial pressures, Mr. DeBuff informed the Council that staff is recommending no tax increase for the upcoming fiscal year.

To support the adoption of the No New Revenue Tax Rate of $0.806010, Mr. DeBuff outlined proposed budget reductions developed by administrative staff and department heads. These include the elimination of the Streets Superintendent position and reductions in departmental maintenance budgets, among other cost-saving measures.

Mr. DeBuff emphasized that the primary objective of the Budget Workshop is to reach consensus on a proposed tax rate. This decision is critical, as it will initiate the required legal posting notices and set the framework for the final budget presentation and adoption.

The final Fisal Year 2025-2026 budget is scheduled to be presented and approved during the City Council Meeting on September 15, 2025. Mr. DeBuff then turned the workshop over to department directors for detailed budget discussions.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Administrative Services Director Donielle Suber presented the proposed budget for her department, highlighting key priorities and funding allocations for the upcoming fiscal year.

Ms. Suber noted that the draft budget includes $33,500 for engineering services and $25,000 for professional services. Additionally, the budget allocates $8,750 for LED lighting upgrades at the Library, includes maintenance costs associated with Senior Services, and provides funding for upcoming city events. These allocations reflect the department's continued commitment to improving city facilities, supporting community programming, and maintaining essential services.

As part of ongoing efforts to reduce costs in line with the No New Revenue Tax Rate, Ms. Suber advised that the department is recommending the elimination of the Communications Manager position. The responsibilities of this role would be absorbed by other members of the administrative staff, ensuring continued communications support without the need for additional personnel.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Director of Human Resources Beth Walls presented the proposed budget for the Human Resources Department. She began by expressing her gratitude for the opportunity to serve the City of Alvarado over the past three years and formally announced her retirement at the end of the current fiscal year.

Ms. Walls discussed the department's staffing structure and recommended reclassifying the Director of Human Resources position to a Human Resources Manager. She explained that the updated title would more accurately reflect the current scope of responsibilities and would also result in cost savings for the upcoming budget.

The City Council engaged in discussion regarding the proposed change and the associated salary expectations. There was a general consensus among the Council to move forward with the reclassification to a Human Resources Manager position.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community Development Director Justin French began his departmental presentation by highlighting the ongoing and projected residential growth in Alvarado. He noted that the city is expected to see continued expansion over the coming years, with population growth since 2020 exceeding 65%. This rapid growth has significantly increased demand in key areas such as permits, inspections, code enforcement, registrations, and other community development functions.

To address the rising workload and support the city's growth, Mr. French proposed the promotion of the current Code Enforcement Officer to Neighborhood Services Manager and approval of a new fulltime employee as Code Enforcement Officer. The

Neighborhood Services Manager will be responsible for launching and overseeing a variety of community-focused programs, including a Tool Library, Team Up to Clean-Up Program, Dump Trailer Rental Program, and other grant-supported initiatives aimed at assisting residents with property maintenance.

In addition, Mr. French recommended the addition of a Permit Technician position. This role would handle permit application processing, coordinate third-party health inspections, provide customer service support, prepare agendas and meeting minutes, and perform other administrative tasks essential to the department's operations.

CITY SECRETARY

City Secretary Bobbie Jo Taylor provided the City Council with an overview of the City Secretary's Office and its core responsibilities, which include managing agendas and minutes, processing public information requests, overseeing records management, administering elections, and other related functions.

Ms. Taylor discussed the budgetary changes related to software expenses, noting that the previous fiscal year included the implementation of Laserfiche for records management. The updated budget now reflects the ongoing costs for annual maintenance and hosting of the program.

She also emphasized the need for an intern to assist with digitizing and categorizing existing records. During the discussion, councilmembers raised concerns about whether the proposed hours would be sufficient to complete the project. Ms. Taylor responded that following the intern program, staff would be in a better position to evaluate whether additional hours or personnel would be necessary to complete the initiative.

Additionally, Ms. Taylor briefed the council on the importance of allocating funding for staff training and tuition to support continued professional development within the department.

FINANCE DEPARTMENT AND MUNICPAL COURT

Chief Financial Officer Laura Cox presented an overview of the Finance Department and Municipal Court budgets. Ms. Cox noted that staff is diligently working to implement new programs resulting from continued development in Alvarado, including the Public Improvement Development District (PID) and Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones (TIRZ).

Ms. Cox also addressed ongoing financial cleanup efforts, which include completing past-due audits, ensuring timely disbursement for goods and services, establishing procedures to improve departmental efficiency, and holding ongoing discussions to ensure proper financial handling of emerging matters.

In regard to the Municipal Court, Ms. Cox highlighted the expectation of an increase in citations. This is anticipated due to the Police Department now being fully staffed, a growing population, and the presence of more experienced court administration personnel.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Chief of Police Teddy May presented the proposed Fiscal Year 2025–2026 budget to the City Council, noting a projected increase of 1.2% over the previous fiscal year when adjusted for expected employment and capital expenditures.

Chief May emphasized the need to implement a new pay plan for the Alvarado Police Department to remain competitive with surrounding agencies in both salary and benefits. He noted that recruitment and retention continue to be challenges within law enforcement, and that a revised pay structure would support the department's ability to attract and retain qualified officers while promoting career longevity.

Chief May also requested the addition of a Police Administrative Assistant position. He informed the council that no civilian staff had been added to the department since 2016. The request is supported by factors such as population growth, increased calls for service, expanded sworn staffing, and additional state mandates.

In regard to capital outlay, Chief May outlined several budgeted projects including the replacement of computers, upgrades to radios, the purchase of camera trailers, and new vehicle upfits.

Chief May also highlighted the Commercial Vehicle Enforcement (CVE) Division, which is projected to see an expenditure increase of up to 12.3% in the upcoming fiscal year. Primary drivers of this increase include salaries, insurance, and retirement costs. However, Chief May noted that 100% of the revenue generated from CVE violations is retained by the City, and he anticipates the CVE Division will be self-sustaining in the FY 2025–2026 budget.

Chief May continued his departmental report by reviewing the City Marshal Division. He explained that the City Marshal is responsible for tracking individuals who fail to comply with citations, serving warrants, compelling court appearances, ensuring the collection of assessed fines, and serving as the Court Bailiff. Chief May relayed to the council that while there is a connection between the City Marshal and revenues, his objective as Police Chief is not revenue, but safety.

Chief May noted that the City Marshal position had previously been eliminated, which contributed to a significant decline in court revenue collections, dropping to approximately 40%. He stated that reinstating the position could potentially restore revenue levels and have a direct impact on warrant execution, defendant location efforts, and overall court enforcement.

In closing, Chief May presented the budget request for Animal Control, advising the council of a proposed 2.6% increase in funding for the upcoming fiscal year.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

Fire Chief John Rodgers presented the proposed Fire Department budget to the City Council, beginning with a request for three additional firefighter positions. Chief Rodgers explained that the added personnel would allow for one additional firefighter per shift, a need driven by continued population growth in Alvarado and expanded service responsibilities within the area covered by Johnson County Emergency Services District #1 Furthermore, this will also help in better staffing the new Aerial Ladder Truck..

Chief Rodgers also provided an update on capital equipment, highlighting the need to upfit the department’s new brush truck and the Fire Marshal’s vehicle. He noted that the newly ordered fire engine would soon be placed into service, which will require preparations and readiness adjustments before deployment.

In addition, Chief Rodgers addressed the engagement of an architect to assist in securing the Valor Fire Station property. Councilmembers and Chief Rodgers discussed the logistics and planning involved in housing the department’s new equipment once it is received, including the use of current facilities and potential space constraints.

STREETS

City Engineer Gus Chavarria presented an update to the City Council on the “Fix the Dang Roads” infrastructure improvement program. He provided a detailed review of the roadway projects completed during the current fiscal year and discussed anticipated roadway improvements for the upcoming FY 2025–2026 budget year, as well as projected needs for subsequent years.

Mr. Chavarria presented the prioritized list of streets identified for rehabilitation, noting that the total estimated cost for all identified repairs exceeds $4.6 million. For the FY 2025–2026 budget, approximately $1,954,036 has been allocated toward road improvements.

Council engaged in discussion regarding long-term planning and funding strategies to continue addressing the city's critical infrastructure needs.

PUBLIC WORKS

Director of Public Works Mike Dwiggins opened his presentation to the City Council with a five-year overview of departmental work orders. He highlighted a steady increase in work orders over the period, indicating a growing demand on Public Works resources as the city continues to expand.

Mr. Dwiggins and the Council also discussed the volume of direct calls received by the department that may not result in a formal work order, noting that these additional service requests contribute significantly to the department's workload but are not always reflected in the work order data.

PARKS DEPARTMENT

Parks Superintendent Anthony Tucker presented the Parks Department budget and outlined key priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. Mr. Tucker began by discussing planned enhancements to Carver Park, which will include updated playground equipment, improved parking, installation of an awning, resurfacing of existing features, and upgraded lighting.

Further improvements discussed included the addition of restrooms at Parkway Park as well as a proposed ADA complaint ramp to provide accessibility from the parking lot. After reviewing available options, both staff and City Council reached a consensus to move forward with the purchase of a semi-permanent restroom structure at an estimated cost of $20,000. This option allows for the installation of necessary infrastructure in advance of a permanent future solution.

Mr. Tucker also highlighted the urgent need for a new landscaping trailer, which is used to transport essential maintenance equipment such as lawnmowers and weed eaters. The department's current trailers are outdated and beyond repair. Additionally, Mr. Tucker discussed the benefits of acquiring a dump trailer, which would provide a cost-effective and efficient alternative when the city’s shared dump truck is unavailable due to use by other departments.

To conclude his presentation, Mr. Tucker requested additional funding for staff training. Proposed training programs include those offered by the Texas Department of Agriculture, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), and the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), which would enhance departmental knowledge and compliance with industry standards.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Director of Economic Development Hillary Cromer presented the Fiscal Year 2025–2026 Economic Development Corporation (EDC) budget to the City Council. She noted that the EDC Board had already reviewed and approved the budget during its most recent meeting.

Ms. Cromer explained that the upcoming budget includes funding for the demolition of dilapidated structures throughout the city. These efforts are intended to enhance Alvarado's overall visual identity and improve the appearance of key areas. She also discussed the planned addition of a public art mural in the downtown area, which will contribute to community engagement and aesthetic improvement.

The budget allocates $150,000 to support economic development initiatives through various grant programs. These grants will assist local businesses with storefront improvements and promotional partnership opportunities that aim to drive commercial activity and revitalization.

Ms. Cromer highlighted a $250,000 budget allocation to support infrastructure development at the Pecan Orchard project, which includes plans for a food truck park. She clarified that the Pecan Orchard project is being funded through a three-way matching grant involving contributions from the EDC, Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) funds, and the City's General Fund.

Additionally, the budget includes funding to assist with sewer improvements along Parkway, as well as the installation of a monument sign and landscaping enhancements at the entrance to Downtown Alvarado. Ms. Cromer concluded by emphasizing that these projects are strategically designed to foster economic growth, attract investment, and enhance the city's character and livability.

CITY COUNCIL

At the conclusion of the departmental budget presentations, City Manager Paul DeBuff provided a summary of staff needs and presented the City Council with a detailed chart outlining the Capital Outlay requests submitted by each department, along with potential funding sources for each item.

Mr. DeBuff also introduced a "wish list" of projects previously identified by the City Council for consideration in the upcoming fiscal year. He requested that the Council review the list, discuss priorities, and provide direction on which projects they would like to implement within the available budget.

The City Council engaged in discussion regarding several proposed initiatives, including the development of a dog park, rehabilitation of the boat ramp at Alvarado Lake, construction of a basketball court at Parkway Park, implementation of video streaming and storage services for city meetings, installation of outdoor exercise equipment at Pecan Orchard, acquisition of a budgeting system for improved financial reporting, and the establishment of scholarship funding in partnership with Alvarado ISD.

Following deliberation, the Council advised staff to proceed with funding for the following projects: rehabilitation of the boat ramp at Alvarado Lake, video streaming and storage services, construction of a basketball court at Parkway Park, implementation of a budgeting system to support financial reporting, and scholarship funding for Alvarado ISD students.

The City Council concluded the budget discussions by reviewing the proposed property tax rate for the upcoming fiscal year. After evaluating funding needs and potential revenue impacts, the consensus of the Council was to direct city staff to prepare a budget based on the No-New-Revenue Tax Rate of $0.806010 per $100 of assessed valuation. This rate is intended to fund the upcoming budget year while maintaining the same level of revenue generated in the previous year, adjusted for changes in property values to new residential and commercial development.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

No Executive Session.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mayor Wheat adjourned the meeting at 9:10 p.m.

Approved:

Mayor Jacob Wheat

Bobbie Jo Taylor, City Secretary