

## **Minutes of March 3, 2026, Called City Council Meeting at Heritage Hall, 6:00 PM.**

The Merkel City Council met for a Called City Council Meeting on March 3, 2026, at Heritage Hall, 6:00 PM. Mayor Cobb called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM and announced a quorum present. Council members present were Elaine Chaney, Collin Jacobs, Tyler Newberry and Matthew Riggan.

Prayer was led by Collin Jacobs.

Mayor Cobb led the Pledge of Allegiance and Texas Pledge.

Citizens were given an opportunity to comment.

Administer Oath of Office to Alexis Smith, City Council Place 4.

City Manager Hitt started the workshop with suggestions for a Joint meeting being:

- Potential Housing Development / TIRZ
- Water and Sewer Infrastructure – Water Rates
- Comprehensive Plan / Zoning
- Emergency Service District (ESD) / Fire Station
- Potential Economic Development Ideas and Priorities – Potential Hotel Framework, Property Purchases

The purpose of the meeting is to get input to prioritize topics of discussion for a Joint meeting with the Merkel EDC, Planning & Zoning Committee, Merkel ISD and possibly the County. Discussion started with the EDC board projects, and councilmembers on EDC board. The council discussed the Hotel Feasibility Study, cost for the study, how this could help the city, the previous study conducted and why it didn't work. Mayor Cobb spoke on bringing business/manufacturing company for more job availability. Councilman Jacobs spoke on advantages of a Hotel, events in area, and the housing shortage. City manager Hitt discussed the TIRZ for housing development, possibility of annexation of new developments, and Public Improvement Districts.

The council discussed creation of Emergency Service Districts (ESD), creating taxing entity, service region, professional fire station/ employees, Jones County area of 105 miles, and how it affects 11 other fire departments. City Manager Hitt explained the need for Taylor County Judge Crowley to approve or go to citizen vote.

City Manager Hitt discussed the Water Rate Study from zactax that will be in March packets. Estimate from Jacob and Martin was for approximately \$40 million to replace all non-pvc lines for water and sewer. City has applied for sidewalk grant and if approved will look at replacing water lines at the same time.

The council discussed the cost of a comprehensive plan, manufactured housing overlay, timelines of when to re-present these to the Planning and Zoning Committee, grandfathering properties and possible commercial zones on the south side of town.

A joint meeting will be called in April to continue the strategic planning process.

Lexi Smith motioned to adjourn and was seconded by Elaine Chaney. Approved 5-0.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:46 PM.

  
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Evelyn Morse, City Secretary

  
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Ray Cobb, Mayor