

Minutes of March 24, 2026, Called City Council Meeting at Heritage Hall, 6:00 PM.

The Merkel City Council met for a Called City Council Meeting on March 24, 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, Lexi Smith 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.

Collin Jacobs asked to pull the staff reports from the Consent agenda to review. Questions were brought up regarding the water usage, billing, and new meter installations. Concerns for high traffic areas, patrol hours, and shift coverage. Elaine Chaney motioned to approve Consent Agenda and was seconded by Matthew Riggan. Approved 5-0.

Presentation by Robert Hanna from Zactax on the Water Rate Study requested by the council. He spoke on the decline in population, capital improvements suggested by Jacob & Martin, bond calculations, outside City limit water rates, and estimated costs for both water and sewer line replacement. Public Works Director Russell stated that 70% or higher of the lines need replacement. The discussion continued on cost of water from Abilene and what rates could be with bond issuance.

Motion to approve Certification of Unopposed Candidates was made by Matthew Riggan and seconded by Elaine Chaney. Approved 5-0.

Motion to approve Order of Cancellation of elections was made by Collin Jacobs and seconded by Tyler Newberry. Approved 5-0.

Discussion of the request from the Merkel Housing Authority to waive the accrued payments in lieu of taxes (PILOT) and requiring a written breakdown for this going forward for approval. Motion was made by Collin Jacobs to approve the request to waive the accrued payments in lieu of taxes (PILOT) in the amount of \$16,076.41 from the Housing Authority of the City of Merkel. Matthew Riggan seconded the motion. Approved 5-0.

The council discussed the Special Event Permit Application request Merkel Chamber of Commerce for the annual car show and how it attracts people to the downtown area. Elaine Chaney motioned to approve the Special Event Permit and Tyler Newberry seconded the motion. Approved 5-0.

City Manager Hitt started the discussion on the Salary Survey for the Police Department stating that the patrol position pay is under average of city's similar in size of Merkel. Currently officers are on duty from 6:00 AM – 6:00 PM with no overtime unless emergency. Hitt suggests adding one more patrol officer to budget have coverage of 24/7. Discussion to continue next meeting with amendment to budget with new pay rate for patrol officers.

City Manager Hitt discussed potential temporary summer hours for the city employees, suggesting four 10 hour days on Monday – Thursday, with no change for patrol officers.

The council discussed the Rebrand Strategic Framework from Ryan Feerer. The motion from Elaine Chaney to approve the Rebrand Strategic Framework was seconded by Matthew Riggan. Approved 5-0.

Discussion of the Comprehensive Plan Proposal from Jacob & Martin and the benefit of working with company that knows the city system. Tyler Newberry motioned to approve the Comprehensive Plan Proposal and was seconded by Elaine Chaney. Approved 5-0.

City Manager Hitt gave the council an update on the EDC property next to 1400 N 1st Street. The property is under contract for the EDC to purchase it. Hitt also mentioned that the EDC is interested in the Old Merkel Motel property.

Lexi Smith motioned to adjourn and was seconded by Collin Jacobs. Approved 5-0.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:25 PM.



Evelyn Morse, City Secretary



Ray Cobb, Mayor