

## **Minutes of April 21, 2026, Regular City Council Meeting at Heritage Hall, 6:00 PM.**

The Merkel City Council met for a Regular City Council Meeting on April 21, 2026, at Heritage Hall, 6:00 PM. Councilman Jacobs called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM and announced a quorum present. Council members present were Elaine Chaney, Collin Jacobs, Tyler Newberry, and Lexi Smith. Matthew Riggan arrived late. Ray Cobb was absent.

Prayer was led by Collin Jacobs.

Councilman Jacobs led the Pledge of Allegiance and Texas Pledge.

Citizens were given an opportunity to comment.

Councilman Jacobs presented the Proclamation-National Peace Officers Memorial Day is May 15, 2026 and National Police Week is the week that May 15<sup>th</sup> falls in.

Tyler Newberry motioned to approve Consent Agenda and was seconded by Lexi Smith. Approved 4-0.

Councilman Jacobs opened a Public Hearing to allow for public input on amending City Zoning Ordinance regarding Recreational Vehicles at 6:07 PM.

Chris Kelly spoke during the public hearing stating the different issues he has with the changes and how they can affect citizens with multiple RV's, using city utility hook ups, setbacks and individuals living in RVs.

Public Hearing closed at 6:14 PM.

The council discussed Ordinance No. 04-21-2026-1 and the changes within the ordinance. City Manager Hitt explained the permitting process, maximum visitation days allowed, storage of RV and grandfather variance. Hitt also reported the recommendations that the Planning & Zoning requested. Tyler Newberry motioned to approve Ordinance No. 04-21-2026-1 An Ordinance of the City of Merkel, Texas amending Ordinance No. 0727-98, Article I "enactment and definitions", Section 2 "definitions" by adding definitions for recreational vehicles and recreational vehicle parks and removing definitions for vacation travel trailer and vacation travel trailer park; amending Article II "permitted uses and area regulations", Section 1 "permitted uses" to reflect the definition changes described above; revising Article II "permitted uses", Section 5 "special use regulations" to establish certain special regulations regarding the use and storage of recreational vehicles; providing a penalty; providing repealer and severability clauses; providing for publication and establishing an effective date with amendments to include; Grandfather variance, changes to the grace period and length of stay, removal of storage pad material required. Motion was seconded by Lexi Smith. Approved 5-0.

The council discussed the Water Rate Study that was presented at the last joint meeting. City Manager Hitt spoke on options that the city may pursue to see what the possible costs would be and if they are actually probable. The council discussed the estimated costs for both water and sewer line replacement along with bond cost breakdowns. The discussion continued on cost of water from Abilene and what rates

could be with bond issuance. The council instructed City Manager Hitt to continue researching options best for the city and bring them back to council next month.

City Manager Hitt started the discussion on the Salary Survey for the Patrol officers in Police Department showing the difference of cost the increase would be. Elaine Chaney motioned to approve the increase for the Patrol officers and motioned was seconded by Tyler Newberry. Approved 5-0.

Hitt suggested to the council removing the three SROs from the budget and creating a patrol position with the budgeted money to pay for this additional position. Elaine Chaney motioned to approve the additional patrol position with the budgeted money from the SROs was seconded by Lexi Smith. Approved 5-0.

City Manager Hitt discussed temporary summer hours for the city employees, suggesting four 10 hour days on Monday – Thursday starting May 25<sup>th</sup> through September 4<sup>th</sup>, stating there would be no change for patrol officers. Tyler Newberry motioned to approve the temporary hours and was seconded by Lexi Smith. Approved 5-0.

City Manager Hitt presented information for SAFEbuilt, a company that provides code enforcement and support to cities with remote or onsite services. Elaine Chaney motioned to approve contract with SAFEbuilt, and the motion was seconded by Matthew Riggan. Approved 5-0.

Hitt gave an update from the EDC meeting stating that the EDC is looking at property to develop in Merkel, the TIRZ feasibility study, the Rebranding designs shown at the joint meeting and the need for community input, possible food truck park/gathering place and closing on property next to 1400 N 1st.

The council discussed the EDC bylaws, Hitt showing the qualifications, tenure and council appointment, election of officers and executive session rules. EDC will determine terms to have reappointments in October.

Councilman Jacobs opened a Public Hearing to allow public input regarding the Potentially Substandard Structure situated on the following property: West of Merkel, Block E, Lot 6&S1/2 LT 5, Acres 0.24, commonly known as 404 Lois at 7:52 PM.

No citizens spoke during the public hearing. The public hearing closed at 7:53 PM.

A.J. Short gave description of the property at 404 Lois. A motion from Tyler Newberry determining that the structure on 404 Lois is a substandard structure was seconded by Elaine Chaney. Approved 5-0.

A motion was made by Matthew Riggan to enter an order to remove or demolish the structure at 404 Lois within 10 days of the date of the order was seconded by Lexi Smith. Approved 5-0.

Councilman Jacobs opened a Public Hearing to allow public input regarding the Potentially Substandard Structure situated on the following property: College of Merkel, Block 9, Lot 12 & N1/2 LT11, Acres 0.24, commonly known as 412 Edwards at 7:57 PM.

The owner of the property at 412 Edwards asked the council for extra time to finish fencing around the property to prevent theft/vandalism of the property before demolishing the trailer. The public hearing closed at 8:07 PM.

A.J. Short gave description of the property at 412 Edwards . A motion from Tyler Newberry determining that the structure on 412 Edwards is a substandard structure was seconded by Elaine Chaney. Approved 5-0.

A motion was made by Tyler Newberry to enter an order to remove or demolish the structure at 412 Edwards within 60 days of the date of the order was seconded by Matthew Riggan. Approved 5-0.

Councilman Jacobs opened a Public Hearing to allow public input regarding the Potentially Substandard Structure situated on the following property: Original Town Merkel, Block 41, Lot E90 of LT 1, Acres 0.10, commonly known as 302 Locust at 8:13 PM.

An interested party of the property at 302 Locust asked the council for extra time to clear title/finish possible closing on property. The public hearing closed at 8:23 PM.

A motion from Elaine Chaney determining that the structure on 302 Locust is a substandard structure was seconded by Tyler Newberry. Approved 5-0.

A motion was made by Matthew Riggan to enter an order to remove or demolish the structure at 302 Locust within 60 days of the date of the order was seconded by Elaine Chaney. Approved 5-0.

Lexi Smith motioned to adjourn and was seconded by Matthew Riggan. Approved 5-0.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:26 PM.

  
Evelyn Morse, City Secretary

  
Ray Cobb, Mayor