

paying training expenses for EMS.

Stormy Vaughn made a motion to table items 1, 2, and 3, which is considering executing annual renewal of employee benefits coverage, an ordinance amending the Fiscal Year 2019-2020 approved budget for municipal purposes respect with the General, Water, and Sanitation Fund to transfer budget, and consider paying EMS training expenses. She was seconded by Ron Cooper and the motion passed with a vote of 5 - 0.

Discussion was held extending the emergency declaration. Mayor Gohman via telephone explained that it can only be extended for 30 days. He recommends extending the declaration until April 15 and reissue if necessary at the regular city council meeting on April 16, 2020. Stormy Vaughn made a motion to extend the emergency declaration by the mayor to April 15 and was seconded by Steve Hines. The motion passed with a vote of 5 - 0.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:39 pm.

**April 16, 2020.**

The Bronte City Council met in regular session via Zoom on Thursday, April 16, 2020, at 6:30 pm. An audio recording can be requested through the Public Information Act through City Hall.

The meeting was called to order via Zoom video conference at 6:30 pm by Mayor Paul Gohman and a quorum was established. In attendance were City Council members Lee Wommack, Ron Cooper, Stormy Vaughn, Santiago Rodriguez, and Steve Hines. Also in attendance via Zoom were Utilities Director Ricky Royall and City Secretary Teresa Ballard.

Prayer was led by Mayor Paul Gohman.

There were no written citizen comments sent in by the deadline date, however some citizens participated in the meeting via Zoom.

Mayor Gohman read the ordinance to amend Fiscal Year 2019-2020 budget for municipal purposes, a budget amendment for Sanitation Fund Sales Tax. Stormy Vaughn made the motion to approve the amendment and was seconded by Ron Cooper. Mayor Gohman took a roll call vote and the motion passed.

Mayor Gohman reported that the emergency declaration by the mayor expired at midnight on April 15. His recommendation is to extend the declaration. Santiago Rodriguez made the motion to extend the declaration from April 16 through May 21 and was seconded by Stormy Vaughn. Mayor Gohman took a roll call vote and the motion passed.

Mayor Gohman read the resolution to postpone the

2020 general election from May 2, 2020, until November 3, 2020. The reason for postponing the general election considered two factors: 1) the governor's declaration and 2) the county was ordering new voting machines and needed an answer. So the decision was made to postpone the election. Ron Cooper made a motion to postpone the election and was seconded by Stormy Vaughn. Mayor Gohman took a roll call vote and the motion passed.

Mayor Gohman discussed with the council to consider waiving utility late fees and disconnects for the duration of the COVID-19 emergency declaration. Ron Cooper made the motion to waive utility late fees and disconnects through the duration of COVID-19 and was seconded by Stormy Vaughn. Mayor Gohman took a roll call vote and the motion passed.

Mayor Gohmann addressed concerns from Matt Basquez working the Convenience Center and recommends closing the center for the duration of COVID-19. The Council discussed options and Stormy Vaughn made the motion to close the Convenience Center for the duration of COVID-19 and was seconded by Steve Hines. Mayor Gohman took a roll call vote and the motion passed.

The Council reviewed minutes of previous meetings. Lee Wommack made the motion to approve the minutes from the following meetings: February 4, 2020 Town Hall meeting, February 11, 2020 special meeting, February 20, 2020, regular meeting, and March 23, 2020, special meeting. He was seconded by Stormy Vaughn and Mayor Gohman took a roll call vote. The motion passed. Mayor's Report

Mayor Gohman said that they are looking at possibly offering an incentive for people that pay their bill on time but thinks that there are possible legal issues there. He has a conference call with Governor Abbott coming up. Task Force is being formed to get simplicity and normalcy. Mayor Gohman is hoping that things will be somewhat normal by the May meeting. Mayor Gohman addressed Lee Wommack's concerns regarding livestock permit issues, but that all backlog business and pending items will be gotten to. He also said that he believes that there

will be a better idea of what the financial situation looks like with the city. He said he is aware that sales taxes are down and that people may not be able to pay their bill but hopefully in the next 30 days, have a better idea of where the city stands.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:02 pm.



**Independence for All**

by James M. Decker

On June 19, 1865, General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas. Granger was a West Point graduate and veteran of the Mexican-American War who had distinguished himself in the American Civil War commanding Union troops at the Battle of Chickamauga. On this day, Gen. Granger arrived to assume command of U.S. Army forces in the Department of Texas. Shortly after Gen. Granger's arrival in Texas, he stood on the balcony of the historic Ashton Villa home (new Texas headquarters of the U.S. Army) and read aloud General Order No. 3:

*The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of personal rights and rights of property, between former masters and slaves and the connection heretofore existing between them, becomes that between employer and hired labor. The Freedmen are advised to remain at their present homes and work for wages. They are informed that they will not be allowed to collect at military posts; and they will not be supported in idleness either there or elsewhere.*

The effect of this famed order was to transmit the Emancipation Proclamation to Texas. Even though President Abraham Lincoln had freed enslaved persons with this proclamation on September 22,

1862, the proclamation did not receive immediate effect across the South. Enslaved persons were only set free as Union forces began to occupy more Confederate territory. For that reason, June 19, 1865, marked something enormous in American history.

Growing up, I knew about June 19, 1865. I knew that it was the emancipation date in Texas. I knew that it was celebrated as "Juneteenth." However, when I was younger, I never fully appreciated the nationwide significance of Juneteenth as a holiday. Texas was the far western outpost of the Confederacy and was thus somewhat disconnected from the war in the eastern states. This also meant that Texas was the last Confederate state in which postwar U.S. Army forces arrived to secure peace. When Gen. Granger announced General Order No. 3, he did more than emancipate the enslaved persons living in Texas. The people emancipated on June 19, 1865 were the last people held in slavery in our country. You see, on that beautiful day in Galveston, Texas, General Granger ended American slavery forever.

As you might have seen, U.S. Representative Sheila Jackson Lee and U.S. Senator John Cornyn, both Texans, have recently introduced legislation in Congress to make Juneteenth an official national holiday. When I heard that news, my immediate reaction was "it should have happened a long time ago." As I have grown to understand the significance of Juneteenth on a

national level, it is hard to say that it should not be a national holiday.

On July 4, 1776, the United States' Declaration of Independence was adopted by the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia. In that Declaration, Thomas Jefferson wrote "*we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.*"

Jefferson's words were beautiful, but aspirational. Due to the presence of slavery, Jefferson's words were not possible for all persons in America. On June 19, 1865, the words of General Granger made Jefferson's words finally possible for everyone.

155 years later, our equality is far from perfect. The American experiment is less of a story of perfection and more of a story of people striving for perfection, sometimes failing and sometimes making progress towards success. If we are to get closer to perfection, we must work to understand and learn from our history. In that respect, I hope that our U.S. Congress makes Juneteenth an official national observance - so that we may honor the day when equality became possible for everyone and when true independence for all was finally won.

*James Decker is a lawyer, farmer, and mayor in Stamford, and the creator of the forthcoming "West of 98" podcast and website. He may be contacted through Facebook at facebook.com/james.decker.*

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