City of West Orange

City Hall
2700 Western Avenue
West Orange, TX 77630

City Council
Regular Session
Meeting Minutes

Monday, September 14, 2026	5:00 p.m.	Council Chambers

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Randy Branch	Meritta Kennedy	Jay Odom
Michael Shugart, Sr.	Lanie Brown	Gail Langton

APPOINTED OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Jon Sherwin	Christopher Leavins	Theresa Van Meter
Mike Stelly	Simmie Gibson	

OTHERS PRESENT:

Alan Bates	Crystal Bates	Jane Branch
Richard Bland	Wyman Ogden	Shannon Helton
Tremaine Wilson	Octavia Guzman	

Call to Order

Mayor Branch called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. Council Member Shugart gave the invocation followed by the Mayor leading the Pledges of Allegiance to both the United States and Texas flags.

Consent Agenda

Discussion and Possible Action on approval of the minutes of the August 10, 2026 Council Meeting and August 25, 2026 Budget Workshop - A motion was made by Council Member Brown to accept the August 10, 2026 Council Meeting and August 25, 2026 Budget Workshop minutes as presented, with one correction to the August 10th minutes (name correction on a motion). This motion received a second from Mayor Pro-Tem Kennedy. A vote was cast, with motion passing unanimously.

Staff Reports

Public Works – Jon Sherwin

Mr. Sherwin reported the following activities for the month of August, 2026:

- ***Construction Projects***
  - Waste Water Treatment Plant construction is 91% complete and on schedule.
  - No date scheduled for ribbon cutting
- ***Building Official***
  - 11 permits issued
  - 20 permits completed
- ***Sanitation***
  - 13 loads of green waste collected
- ***Animal Control***
  - 65 calls
  - 2 intakes
  - 0 claimed / 1 adopted / 1 rescued
  - 1 court filing
- ***Street***
  - Patching of Streets and driveways
- ***Parks***
  - Mowing
  - Debris pickup
- ***Shop***
  - Normal repairs and maintenance of City assets
  - Monthly 30-for-30 – all Police and Fire Vehicles in good working condition

Police Department – Mike Stelly

Chief Stelly reported the following Police Department activities for the month of August, 2026:

- Traffic contacts: 178
- Crashes reported: 7
- Arrests: 35
- Reports: 25
- Calls for service: 489
- Miles driven: 9,969

Code Enforcement
Violations Investigated: 103
Violations filed w/Court: 17

General Administration – City Secretary Theresa Van Meter

Mrs. Van Meter reported that booths were still available for the October 24, 2026 Holiday in the Park festival.

Fire Department – Asst. Chief Simmie Gibson

Asst. Chief Gibson reported the following activities for the month of August, 2026

- Outside rubbish or trash fire: 2
- Building fire 3
- Forest/woods fire 1
- Service calls 3
- Unintentional alarm 1
- Vicinity alarm: 1
- Alarm malfunction: 1

Regular Session

Discussion and Possible Action on an application for membership in the WOVFD submitted by Charles E. Lambert, Jr. – A motion was made by Council Member Brown, followed by a second from Council Member Langton, to approve the application for membership in the WOVFD submitted by Charles E. Lambert, Jr. With there being no discussion on the item, the mayor called for a vote on the motion, which passed unanimously.

Discussion and Possible Action on an application for membership in the WOVFD submitted by Nicholas Zerko - A motion was made by Council Member Brown, followed by a second from Council Member Shugart, to approve the application for membership in the WOVFD submitted by Nicholas Zerko. With there being no discussion on the item, the mayor called for a vote on the motion, which passed unanimously.

Discussion and Possible Action on a request for a variance to Ordinance No. 302-F to allow Mr. Shannon Helton to live in his RV on-site while repairing fire-damaged portions of residence at 2927 Western Avenue – Mr. Ogden stated that he is the owner of the property. Mr. Helton is his nephew. He is in the processing of putting the property into Mr. Helton's name. Mr. Helton requested permission to live in an RV on the property where his house burned while he tears it down and replaces it with something else. Mr. Ogden anticipated it taking six to nine months to complete everything. Mayor Branch asked what they have planned for the property. Mr. Ogden replied that they do not have any definite plans yet as to what they will put on the property, but it will be "pleasing to the eye."

Mr. Helton admitted that he is currently living in the RV. He was asked about utilities. He replied that he has an extension cord running to the neighbors' house for power, but does not have water or sewer. After a great deal of discussion, Council Member Odom made a motion to grant Mr. Helton two weeks to get all utilities connected. If, and only if, that is done will he then have six months to complete the demolition and replacement of the burned house. If utilities are not all connected within two weeks, he will have to appear before Council again in order to proceed. With there being no further discussion, Mayor Branch called for a vote on the motion. All voted in favor of the motion, with the exception of Mayor Pro-Tem Kennedy, who voted against it. With the majority in favor, the motion passed.

Discussion and Possible Action on extending variance to Ordinance No. 302-F issued to Alan and Crystal Bates *(1122 Albany)* on June 8, 2026 – Mr. and Mrs. Bates produced a notarized document signed by the property owner, Bryan Allen Wood, granting permission to the Bates to demolish the structure on the property. Mayor Pro-Tem Kennedy then made a motion to allow the Bates six months to get the structure demolished and get a tiny home placed on the property. Council Member Langton seconded her motion. A vote was cast; motion carried.

Discussion and Possible Action on a request for a variance to Ordinance No. 302-F submitted by Renee Cross to allow for the placement of a manufactured home at 1810 Houston Avenue – In the absence of Ms. Cross, this item was not addressed.

Discussion and Possible Action on reappointing the following individuals to the West Orange Economic Development Corporation Board of Directors:

- **Meritta Kennedy**
- **Jon Sherwin**
- **Charlotte Alford**

Council Member Brown made a motion, with a second by Council Member Shugart, to reappoint Mayor Pro-Tem Kennedy, Mr. Sherwin and Mrs. Alford to the Board of Directors of the West Orange Economic Development Corporation. A vote was cast, with the motion passing unanimously.

Discussion and Possible Action on Ordinance No. 500 *(by record vote),* levying taxes at the rate of $0.424515 per $100 assessed value for the maintenance and operation expenses of the City of West Orange, Texas for the fiscal year commencing October 1, 2026 and ending September 30, 2027 – Council Member Odom moved that "the property tax rate be increased by the adoption of a tax rate of $0.424515, which is effectively a 3.7% increase in the tax rate, as set forth in Ordinance No. 500." Mayor Pro-Tem Kennedy seconded the motion. With there being no comments or discussion, Mayor Branch called for a record vote on the motion:

Council Member Shugart	aye
Council Member Brown	aye
Mayor Branch	aye
Council Member Odom	aye
Council Member Langton	aye
Mayor Pro-Tem Kennedy	aye

A tax rate of $0.424515 per $100 assessed value was thereby unanimously approved by vote for the 2026 tax year.

Discussion and Possible Action on a Resolution ratifying a property tax rate that would increase the budget by $30,908, which is a 3.85% increase over last year's budget. The property tax revenue to be raised from new property added to the tax roll this year is $3,230. – Mayor Pro-Tem Kennedy moved "to approve this resolution ratifying the budget adopted for 2026-2027 that proposes to raise more revenue from taxes than was raised in 2025-2026, requiring a tax rate of $0.424515 per $100 assessed value." Her motion was seconded by Council Member Odom. With there being no discussion on the item, Mayor Branch called for a vote, with the motion passing unanimously.

Executive Session

The City Council entered into Executive Session at 5:42 p.m. to discuss the matters listed below, as authorized by the Texas Government Code, Section 551.071 (Consultation with Attorney), 551.074 (Personnel Matters), and/or 551.076 (Deliberations about Security Devices).

Return to Open Session

Mayor Branch re-convened Open Session at 5:55 p.m. Council Member Brown then moved "that the Police Department be allowed to participate in certain federal programs, as well as authorizing the Chief of Police to execute any required documents, and further authorize the City Secretary to open a bank account to receive funds from the program with the same authorized signors as other city accounts." Council Member Shugart seconded this motion.

With there being no further discussion on this item, the mayor called for a vote on the motion, which passed unanimously.

Announcements

Mayor Branch thanked Ms. Guzman for her attendance, in the event that anyone had questions about the tax rate adoption process.

He made note of the following:

- Council Meeting – Monday, October 12, 2026; 5:00 p.m.
- "Holiday in the Park" – Saturday, Oct. 24, 2026

Adjournment

With there being no further business before Council, Mayor Branch adjourned the meeting at 5:56 p.m.

R K Branch

Randy Branch, Mayor

ATTEST:

Theresa Van Meter

Theresa Van Meter, City Secretary

CITY OF WEST ORANGE Corporate SEAL ORANGE COUNTY, TEXAS