

City Council Regular Meeting Minutes

September 03, 2026 at 6:00 PM

Keene City Hall - Robert G. Cooper Council Chamber
1000 N. Old Betsy Rd., Cleburne, Texas 76031

Recorded Live Stream at <https://www.youtube.com/@cityofkeenetexas>

Members present: Samantha Gillin, Mayor Pro Tem; and Council Members Bob Chapman, Chuck Easley, Rob Foster, Jonny Shaw, and Troy Smith.

Members Absent: none

City Staff present: Jonathan Seitz, City Manager; Holly Russell, City Secretary; Don Martin, Director of Development & Neighborhood Services; Mira Lam, Director of Finance; Chief James Kidd, Keene Police Department; Chief Dan Warner; Keene Fire & Rescue; Cari Warwick, Management Assistant; and Keith Barrow, Digital Marketing Coordinator.

1. Call to Order, Invocation, Pledge of Allegiance, Pledge to Texas Flag

Mayor Pro Tem Gillin called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and Council Member Smith gave the invocation.

2. Mayor Announcements

Ms. Gillin shared the funeral date and time for Yddo Ortiz.

3. Public Comments

Helen Kerwin, State Representative, gave an update on the topic of Data Centers in Johnson County. It is one of the biggest concerns she receives from citizens, even though most of the projects are outside of Keene. Earlier this year, the County passed a resolution to pause decisions on these projects until more research can be conducted. She plans to file two pieces of legislation this next session, one that will guardrail the datacenters and the other is to establish a buffer zone around state parks.

Troy Smith, Council Member, spoke about his belief that the city is under good leadership and action. Together, we can all move forward for the good of the city.

Holly Russell, City Secretary, spoke to a letter received from resident Joann Baynes regarding concerns over a Council Member's eligibility to hold office because his residence is also rented out on AirBnB. Ms. Russell explained that when the city receives an application for a place on the ballot, it takes the information filed on face value, but is compared to their driver's license and voter registration. Candidates also are required to sign a sworn affidavit that the information they are providing on the application is accurate. However, the question of residency is for the courts to decide. The City Charter does give Council the power to make a judgement on a Council Member's forfeiture of office, but there is no ordinance, policy, or procedure in place for this process or to allow for an investigation.

4. Reports

Informational reports only; no action to be taken.

- A. Receive a report from Dr. Stephens, Keene ISD Superintendent, on the public schools; topics covering summer activities and the beginning of the school year.**

Dr. Stephens was unable to attend due to a scheduling conflict that arose and kept him away. This report is rescheduled for the October regular meeting.

B. Receive the Quarterly Financial Report for the months of April 1 through June 30, 2026.

Mira Lam, Director of Finance, gave the Quarterly Financial Report. Revenue was 17 percent higher for this quarter than it was for this quarter last fiscal year. Contributing factors was property tax revenue received, permits issued, and Fire Department revenue. Sales tax revenue collected is also higher for the quarter this fiscal year than this quarter last fiscal year. Expenses year-to-date are almost 12 percent higher than year-to-date last fiscal year, however it is almost eight percent below budget. She reviewed the Money Market and Pooled Cash account balances and interest earned. The Water/Sewer Fund revenue is over 16 percent more than compared to this time last fiscal year. It is only seven percent below budget at this point, but more meters are still being swapped out with working meters which contributes to capturing accurate revenue and water usage. Year-to-date, revenue was higher than expenses for this fund. Expenditures were 25 percent higher than this time last fiscal year, but is still under budget for the current fiscal year.

C. City Manager's Comments – City Development Updates, State of the City Presentation, CR 317, Loss of Yddo Ortiz

Jonathan Seitz, City Manager, shared that Metalplate is moving forward and looking to be open about April or May of next year. He thanked the EDC Type A Board for assisting with the improvements of CR 317, set to start this month. Funds are covered by the sale of the Industrial Park land, and is not funded by taxpayer money. Mr. Seitz spoke about the loss of longtime Keene resident Yddo Ortiz, and his impact on the community. He and his friends were responsible for the start of the US Flags on Old Betsy program.

5. Consent Agenda

All items listed below have been previously discussed, require no deliberation, or are routine by the City Council and will be enacted with one motion. There will be no separate discussion of the items. Items to be withdrawn from the Consent Agenda for separate discussion by the City Council. If discussion is desired, the item will be removed from the consent agenda and considered separately. Otherwise, approval of the consent agenda authorizes the City Manager to implement each item in accordance with the staff's recommendation.

- A. Consider approval of the minutes of the regular Keene City Council meeting held on August 06, 2026.**
- B. Consider approval of an agreement between Johnson County and the Keene Police Department for Dispatching Services for Fiscal Year 2026-2027.**
- C. Consider approval of the Interlocal Agreement (ILA) between Johnson County and the City of Keene for housing the City's Class C Misdemeanor Prisoners for Fiscal Year 2026-2027 (FY27).**

A motion was made to approve the Consent Agenda as presented, and seconded. The motion carried.

Motion made by Foster, Seconded by Shaw.

Voting Yea: Mayor Pro Tem Gillin, Chapman, Easley, Foster, Shaw, Smith

6. Public Hearing Items

There was no public hearing scheduled for this meeting.

7. General

A. Review, discuss, and consider action on offering Medical Access & Service Advantage (MASA) elective memberships to residents of Keene that help cover out-of-pocket costs for emergency ground and air ambulances.

Will Winter, representative from MASA, was present to take further questions from Council on their services. He gave a recap of the program as to how it helps save residents on their emergency transport bills, and is a \$7.75 membership cost on their utility bill for the household, and it will also assist the city in capturing revenue for EMS services that Keene Fire Rescue provides. Citizens may opt out at anytime. The program covers all services providers in all fifty states. There were questions about how residents may opt out or back in, and the workload on city staff. Thomas Gutwa, resident, voiced concern about the automatic enrollment. Paul Gnadt, Keene resident, spoke about CareFlight's similar program and asked if it could be offered to opt-in instead. Mr. Winter mentioned they are set up for opt-out for cost-saving reasons. Ms. Debbie Singer, resident, spoke in favor of the program. A motion was made to approve offering Medical Access & Service Advantage (MASA) elective memberships to residents of Keene, with the cost of membership to be added to the city utility bill beginning February 1, 2027, with a flier in every water bill for three consecutive months prior; and seconded. The motion carried.

Motion made by Smith, Seconded by Shaw.

Voting Yea: Mayor Pro Tem Gillin, Chapman, Easley, Foster, Shaw, Smith

B. Review and discuss the no-new-revenue tax rate (NNR), the voter-approval tax rate (VATR) and the City's proposed tax rate for Fiscal Year 2026-2027 (FY27). Following discussion of the proposed tax rates, the City Council will consider approving a proposed tax rate for FY27, which requires a record vote, and shall schedule the public hearing date for adoption of the proposed budget, and to consider adoption of the tax rate.

Mr. Seitz explained to Council that the vote is routine for the Budget process, and the City is required to pass the No New Revenue rate (NNR) for Fiscal Year 2026-2027 (FY27) due to the audits not being completed on time. Even with the NNR, the city will still see an increase in revenue due to the new housing coming in. A motion was made to approve the proposed tax rate at the No New Revenue rate of \$0.810641 per \$100 of taxable assessed value for Fiscal Year 2027, and set the date for a vote to adopt a tax rate as September 17, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.; and seconded. Mayor Pro Tem Gillin took a record vote, calling on each Council Member individually. The motion carried.

Motion made by Smith, Seconded by Foster.

Voting Yea: Mayor Pro Tem Gillin, Chapman, Easley, Foster, Shaw, Smith

Voting Against: None

Abstaining: None

C. Review, discuss, and take action on a resolution to approve or disapprove of the Central Appraisal District of Johnson County's (JCAD) plans to purchase and renovate an existing office building located at 240 N. Burleson Blvd., Burleson, Texas, for an appraisal office.

Mr. Seitz explained the request from the Central Appraisal District of Johnson County (JCAD) and explained that the City could vote by resolution on the matter. No action on a resolution is considered approval of the request. He explained that the building is projected to be about a 12 percent increase in cost to each city. The cities understand JCAD's need for a bigger facility, but are concerned since there was no collaboration or input from the cities on this decision. If seven entities do not approve the request, then it could pause the process. A motion was made to approve Resolution No. 2026-505 to state the City's disapproval of the Central Appraisal District of Johnson County's (JCAD) building acquisition proposal, and seconded. The motion carried.

Motion made by Easley, Seconded by Smith.

Voting Yea: Mayor Pro Tem Gillin, Chapman, Easley, Foster, Shaw, Smith

- D. Review, hold a discussion regarding a majority vote versus a plurality vote, and consider possible action on establishing a Charter Review Commission to review Section 4.09 CANVASSING OF ELECTION AND DECLARATION OF RESULTS of the Keene City Charter, which requires a candidate to be elected by a majority of the votes in an election.**

Paul Gnadt, resident, spoke on the topic, mentioning the high percentage of votes in favor of the amendment. Mr. Gutwa, resident, spoke to Council not needing a commission to present an amendment to the Charter for an election. Council Member Smith spoke to the possibility of holding a Charter Review Commission to possibly consider changing Council terms to three year terms, and to get citizen feedback. There was concern expressed about changing the Charter within two years. There was a motion to take no action, and seconded. The motion carried.

Motion made by Foster, Seconded by Smith.

Voting Yea: Mayor Pro Tem Gillin, Chapman, Easley, Foster, Shaw, Smith

- E. Review, discuss, and possible action to provide direction to staff regarding the Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2026-2027, and to set the date of the public hearing and vote to adopt the budget on Thursday, September 17, 2026.**

Mr. Seitz asked Council if they were any questions or concerns about the proposed budget, to which there were none. A motion was made for Council to set the special meeting date of Thursday, September 17, 2026, at 6:00 PM, as the date for the public hearing on the FY2027 Budget and to hold a vote on adopting the budget, and seconded. The motion carried.

Motion made by Foster, Seconded by Smith.

Voting Yea: Mayor Pro Tem Gillin, Chapman, Easley, Foster, Shaw, Smith

**** In accordance with Section 551.043 of the Texas Government Code, the City of Keene provides the following Taxpayer Impact Statement for the upcoming fiscal year budget:** For the median-valued homestead property a comparison of the current property tax bill in dollars pertaining to the property for the current fiscal year ("FY"), an estimate if the proposed budget is adopted for the upcoming FY, and an estimate of a balanced budget at the no-new-revenue tax rate for the upcoming FY is below:

Taxpayer Impact Statement			
Property Tax Due on Median Valued Homestead			
2025 Rate vs 2026 Proposed Rate vs 2026 No New Revenue Rate			
	Rate per \$100 of Value	Median-Valued Homestead Property	Tax Due
2025 Adopted Tax Rate	\$ 0.828978	\$ 260,293	\$ 2,157.77
2026 Proposed Tax Rate	\$ 0.810641	\$ 248,834	\$ 2,017.15
2026 No New Revenue Rate	\$ 0.810641	\$ 248,834	\$ 2,017.15

8. Executive Session

There was no recess for an Executive session at this meeting.

9. Reconvene into Open Session

There were no items requiring action.

10. Requests for Future Agenda Items

Council Member Easley asked for discussion on the speed limit on FM 3048 at CR 308-B.

Mayor Pro Tem Gillin asked to place a report from a market organizer on the agenda.

11. Adjourn

There being no further business to discuss, Mayor Pro Tem Gillin adjourned the meeting at 8:07 p.m.

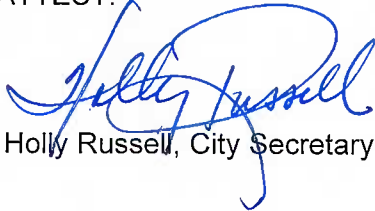
Approved on this the 1st day of October 2026.

APPROVED:



Samantha Gillin, Mayor Pro Tem

ATTEST:



Holly Russell, City Secretary