



**STATE OF TEXAS
COUNTIES OF KAUFMAN AND HUNT
CITY OF POETRY, TEXAS**

BE IT REMEMBERED THAT ON THIS DAY OF THE 19th of June 2025 at 5:30 pm, the Town Council of Poetry, Texas, held a Regular Town Council Meeting at Poetry Community Christian School, 18688 FM 986 Poetry, Texas 75160 with the following present:

- A. Mayor Jaffe** called the public meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. Roll call was taken by Mayor Jaffe. Present were Councilmembers Terry Fowler, Tom Anderson, Doug Kendrick, Tracie Hibbs and Dale Bryant.

Section 38.13 - Hindering Proceedings By Disorderly Conduct

(a) A person commits an offense if he intentionally hinders an official proceeding by noise or violent or tumultuous behavior or disturbance

(b) A person commits an offense if he recklessly hinders an official proceeding by noise or violent or tumultuous behavior or disturbance and continues after explicit official request to desist.

(c) An offense under this section is a Class A misdemeanor.

Tex. Pen. Code § 38.13

- B. Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation:** Councilmember Terry Fowler

- C. Executive Session—** At 5:35 pm Mayor Jaffe closed session in chambers to discuss legal matters according to Texas Government Code, Chapter 551, including Sec. 551.071 (private consultation with the town attorney) to provide new member training, updates on pending litigation, West v. Poetry and discussion regarding the town map.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: NOTE: *The Town Council reserves the right to meet in Executive Session closed to the public at any time in the course of this meeting to discuss matters listed on the agenda, as authorized by the Texas Open Meetings Act, Texas Government Code, Chapter 551, including Sec. 551.071 (private consultation with the attorney for the Town); Sec. 551.072 (purchase, exchange, lease, or value of real property); Sec. 551.074 (personnel or to hear complaints against personnel); Sec. 551.076 (deployment, or specific occasions for implementation of security personnel or devices); and Sec. 551.087 (economic development negotiations). Any decision held on such matters will be taken or conducted in Open Session following the conclusion of the Executive Session.*

- Executive session began at 5:35 pm
- Executive session adjourned at 6:49 pm
- Mayor Jaffe reconvened the public meeting at 6:49 pm and provided a brief overview of items discussed during the closed session:
 - **Training for New Mayor and Council:** Covered legal responsibilities including open meetings compliance, conflicts of interest, and parliamentary procedures. This is standard training provided at the start of each new council term.
 - **Lawsuit Against the Town:** Council received a brief update on the status of an ongoing court case involving the Town.
 - **Town Map Concerns:** Some council members raised general questions regarding the Town map; no specific issues or decisions were addressed.

No decisions or actions were taken during the session, in accordance with legal requirements.

D. Items of Community Interests:

Pursuant to Section 551.0415 of the Texas Government Code, the Town Council may report of the following items: 1) expression of thanks, congratulations, or condolences; 2) information about holiday schedules; 3) recognition of individuals; 4) reminders of upcoming Town Council events; 5) about community events, and 6) announcements involving an imminent threat to public health and safety.

1. Thank you to all who contributed to our 3rd Annual Poetry Agricultural Scholarship.
2. Thank you to CM Kendrick and CM Bryant for clearing tree debris from the roadway after a recent storm.
3. Thank you to CM Anderson, the Kirby Family and Bill Carter for clearing tree debris from CR 2434 roadway after a recent storm.
4. Thank you to our Hunt and Kaufman County Commissioners and their teams for their willingness to help us with our road repairs.

E. Reports:

1. Financial
 - a. May End 2025
 - b. May Sales & Use Report

F. Consent Agenda:

1. Approve minutes from May 22, 2025 Special Meeting: CM Anderson made a motion to approve, with a second by CM Fowler. ***Motion passed unanimously 5:0***
2. Approve Minutes from May 29, 2025 Town Hall Meeting: CM Anderson made a motion to approve, with a second by CM Fowler. ***Motion passed unanimously 5:0***
3. Approve Hunt County Election Total Election Cost invoice 5/29/25 - \$2,283.00: CM Anderson made a motion to approve, with a second by CM Fowler. ***Motion passed unanimously 5:0***
4. Approve Hunt County Elections Annual License & Support Fee 5/15/25 - \$752.00: CM Anderson made a motion to approve, with a second by CM Fowler. ***Motion passed unanimously 5:0***
5. **Approve Nichols Jackson 5/31/25 legal bill (\$215.00 lawsuit, \$752.20 other) - \$967.50:** Request by CM Kendrick to move to the regular agenda. Motion by CM Hibbs to move to the regular agenda, with a second by CM Anderson. ***Motion passed unanimously 5:0***
6. **Approve BHC Engineering 6/3/25 invoice - \$2,125.02:** Request by CM Kendrick to move to the regular agenda. Motion by CM Hibbs to move to the regular agenda, with a second by CM Anderson. ***Motion passed unanimously 5:0***

F. Regular Agenda:

- 0-5 (Moved from consent agenda) Approve Nichols Jackson 5/31/25 legal bill (\$215.00 lawsuit, \$752.20 other) - \$967.50:** Mayor Jaffe cleared up invoice totals confusion for new council members. Motion by CM Hibbs to pay invoice in the amount of \$967.50, with a second by CM Anderson. ***Motion passed unanimously 5:0***
- 0-6 (Moved from consent agenda) Approve BHC Engineering 6/3/25 invoice - \$2,125.02:** Questions were asked/answered about this invoice amount and how it may pertain/affect the upcoming 2025-2026 Town budget. Motion by CM Anderson to pay invoice in the amount of \$2,125.02, with a second by CM Kendrick. ***Motion passed unanimously 5:0***

1. **Nominate and elect a Mayor Pro-Tem (Mayor):** Nominations were presented for both CM Fowler and CM Kendrick for Mayor Pro Tem by council. A motion was made by CM Bryant with a second by CM Hibbs to nominate CM Fowler as the Mayor Pro Tem. ***Motion passed unanimously 5:0***
 - **Citizen Robin Followell:** Voiced her support for CM Fowler attributing to his council experience.
2. **Announce and Award Poetry 3rd Annual Agricultural Scholarship finalist (Anderson/Fowler):** Shaylee Reed is the recipient of the 2025 Agricultural Scholarship.
Discussion Item – no vote needed
3. **Update on Town of Poetry signage project (Bryant):** CM Bryant provided progress on the Town signage project approved last year. New and missing road signs have been purchased and are ready to install. CM Bryant reached out to TXDOT to discover that they will step in to assist with installation—potentially at no cost—sometime in the fall, after the mowing season is complete. This item will be brought back as a formal agenda item when a commitment is needed to move forward with TXDOT. **Discussion Item – no vote needed**
 - **Citizen Tara Senkevich:** thanked Dale Bryant and noted that TxDOT has been great to work with. She added that, after consulting with the town's attorney, she confirmed that signs for some private roads within town boundaries were permissible and have already been included in the existing sign inventory.
4. **Discuss and take action as necessary on updated Town of Poetry Decorum and Procedures Policy (Mayor):** Council discussed updates to the Town of Poetry's Decorum and Procedures Policy, sponsored by Mayor Jaffe. Revisions focused on clarifying language, aligning with state law and Robert's Rules of Order, and improving transparency.
Key changes included:
 - Clarification between public comments on agenda items and general public comments at the end of meetings.
 - Standardizing terminology to "general public comments."
 - Noting that some items may require a supermajority vote, as determined by law.
 - In compliance with new state law, the policy was amended to require:
 - Council members receive agenda packets five (5) business days prior to meetings.
 - Public posting of agendas no later than three (3) business days before meetings.CM Bryant made a motion to approve the Town of Poetry Decorum and Procedures Policy as amended with a second by CM Hibbs. ***Motion passed with a vote of 4:1 with CM Anderson opposed.***
 - **Citizen Jonathan Blake:** commented that the October 17, 2024, update to the Town's Decorum and Procedures Policy is not currently reflected on the website and requested it be added to the official resolutions for transparency and historical record. He also raised concern about language in the policy that appears to shift the council's authority to determine meeting locations to the mayor, suggesting the council consider whether they intend to delegate that power. Additionally, he recommended adjusting the council's

internal review timeline to align with the new state requirement of three business days for public notice, ensuring members have sufficient time to review materials before posting.

- **Citizen Tara Senkevich:** expressed appreciation for Mayor Jaffe's professionalism and supported the addition of a certified agenda. She raised concerns about the mayor unilaterally changing the public comment policy before a council vote, arguing that such changes should be made only with council approval. She advocated for public comments at the beginning of meetings to allow broader participation, noted disappointment over the removal of language encouraging community service by council members, and emphasized the importance of maintaining such standards to promote volunteerism and servant leadership.
- **Citizen Robin Followell:** clarified that the issue with the outdated policy not being on the website was not the council's fault, acknowledging that it hadn't been updated since October. She emphasized that the council members are committed to volunteering and serving the town, even if that commitment wasn't explicitly listed in the current document.

5. **Discuss and take action as necessary on placing \$3,000 in escrow with Hunt County for road repair work, Project Agreement H25 (Mayor):** The Mayor presented a proposal to establish escrow accounts with Hunt County and Kaufman County to expedite road repair work. The current process requires council approval followed by commissioner's court approval, creating approximately 60-day delays during which road conditions deteriorate significantly.

Current Road Conditions

Multiple roads are in critical condition requiring immediate attention:

- Tar Road 2326: Falling apart
- CR 2434: Deteriorating and becoming dangerous, especially at night
- FM 249: Has dangerous potholes and is becoming unsafe
- FM 2458: Contains large potholes

Proposed Solution

- The Mayor requested authority to place funds in escrow with both counties, allowing for:
- Immediate work orders between council meetings
- Shortened repair cycle times
- Better utilization of seasonal repair opportunities (hot asphalt weather)
- Accountability through monthly reporting to council

Financial Discussion

- **Initial Proposal:** Council Member Hibbs suggested \$33,000 total (\$11,000 per county plus \$11,000 in interest-bearing account)

Concerns Raised:

- Need for accountability beyond just the Mayor's discretion
- Different cost structures between counties:
- Hunt County ILA: Charges only for fuel and asphalt
- Kaufman County ILA: Charges for fuel, asphalt, labor, and equipment

- Current road fund balance: \$65,583 (as of May 25th)
- Monthly sales tax revenue: Approximately \$8,600

Revised Proposal: Council Member Anderson motioned for \$5,000 discretionary spending subject to Mayor Pro Tem review and approval, with a resolution to be drafted for next month's discussion.

County Agreements

- **Hunt County:** Commissioner David Monroe willing to provide favorable rates, charging only for materials on some projects.
- **Kaufman County:** Commissioner Kelly Lane has discretion to contribute labor and equipment, with judge approval. Specific example cited: 3.67-mile stretch of FM 249 repair for \$2,100 (asphalt only).

Public Input

- **Jonathan Blake:** Supported \$5,000 amount and recommended Council Member Anderson co-approve expenditures due to his experience.
- **Tara Senkevich:** Supported concept with two council member approval requirement. Suggested limiting discretionary spending to pothole/shoulder repair only, not major refurbishments. Noted volunteer road crew still has approximately \$600 remaining in approved funds.
- **Obie Rooker:** Raised concern about buried culverts on FM 249 causing flooding and accelerated road deterioration. Mayor agreed to coordinate site visit to identify problem areas.
- **Robin Followell:** Supported the district concept where each council member would be responsible for specific roads, similar to larger cities. Raised concerns about road marking procedures and who would be responsible for spray painting sections needing repair. Reported that her section of CR 2400 was the only one not repaired during previous work - approximately 3.5-4 feet of shoulder missing. Noted that Hunt County acknowledged this was the only section not spray painted and therefore not fixed, but promised follow-up never occurred. Recommended Terry Fowler and Dale Bryant as the two-person approval team for road expenditures, citing Bryant's extensive construction and road experience and the existing working relationship with Kaufman County Commissioner Kelly Lane.

Council Action Taken

- **Motion Approved (Unanimous):** Council Member Anderson motioned to approve Agenda Item 5 with the following modifications:
 - A. Increase escrow amount from \$3,000 to \$5,000 for Hunt County
 - B. Require approval from Mayor AND Council Member Fowler AND Council Member Anderson (three-person approval process)
 - C. Restrict expenditures to edge/shoulder repair, pothole repair, and culvert repair only
- Council Member Hibbs seconded the motion

Key Clarifications Made:

- This authorization is strictly for road repairs, NOT road rebuilding or major reconstruction

- All three designated council members must agree before issuing work orders
- Monthly reporting back to full council required
- Emergency repairs only during summer construction season

Budget Discussion

Council Member Bryant noted upcoming budget process and suggested:

- Creating separate capital line item for major road projects
- Operational expense category for routine pothole repairs
- Better tracking and transparency of road expenditures
- No budget changes made during this meeting - all budget modifications will go through proper public hearing process

Outstanding Issues

- Need to identify and address buried culverts contributing to road damage (coordinate with Obie Rooker)
- Resolve Robin Followell's unrepaired road section on CR 2400
- Implement objective road prioritization system
- Address Agenda Item 6 (Kaufman County escrow account)

Next Steps

- Begin coordinating road repairs with Hunt County using new \$5,000 escrow account
- Schedule site visits to identify problem culverts and unrepaired sections
- Report back to council next month on escrow account usage and effectiveness
- Consider similar escrow arrangement with Kaufman County (Agenda Item 6)

6. Discuss and take action as necessary on placing \$3,000 in escrow with Kaufman County for road repair work, Project Agreement (Mayor): Council discussed establishing identical escrow arrangement with Kaufman County as approved for Hunt County. Key points:

- **Commissioner Kelly Lane** willing to charge only for materials on some projects, similar to Hunt County arrangement
- **Road conditions** in Kaufman County also deteriorating but fewer total miles than Hunt County roads
- **Equipment testing opportunity** - Commissioner Lane has new equipment to test on 3.6-mile stretch for \$2,100
- **Seasonal urgency** emphasized - need to complete repairs before winter weather causes further damage

Public Input on Item 6

- **Jonathan Blake:** Supported identical escrow arrangement for Kaufman County. Noted that escrow account doesn't prevent additional work orders for specific projects or tree trimming as needed.
- **Tara Senkevech:** Suggested adding debris and tree trimming to allowable expenditures beyond culvert, pothole, and edge/shoulder repair.
- **Robin Followell:** Recommended increasing Kaufman County amount to \$7,000 instead of \$5,000, citing additional time between quotes and actual work completion, plus accelerated road deterioration in summer heat.

Council Action Taken

- **Motion Approved (Unanimous):** Council Member Anderson motioned to approve Agenda Item 6 with identical terms as Item 5:
 - \$5,000 escrow account with Kaufman County
 - Same three-person approval process (Mayor + Fowler + Anderson)
 - Limited to edge/shoulder repair, pothole repair, and culvert repair
 - Council Member Bryant seconded the motion

Note: Tree trimming and debris removal noted for future consideration but not included in current motion.

Next Steps

- Begin coordinating road repairs with Kaufman County using new \$5,000 escrow account
- Schedule site visits to identify problem culverts and unrepaired sections
- Report back to council next month on escrow account usage and effectiveness

7. **Discuss and take action as necessary on Texas Municipal League (TML) Cyber Liability Insurance lapse (Mayor):** Mayor Jaffe informed Council that the Town of Poetry is currently not covered under cyber liability insurance due to a recent change in Texas Municipal League (TML) policy, which now separates cyber liability into its own risk pool with a separate premium. While coverage was previously bundled and cost \$175, the new standalone premium is approximately \$1,000 annually, with prorated coverage available for the remainder of the current year.

- Council discussed the importance of protection against cyber threats such as ransomware. Although current town systems are considered low risk, members agreed that potential future costs justify coverage.
- Council authorized the Mayor to sign the required interlocal agreement (ILA) to request a quote and initiate coverage for the remainder of the year. Full-year coverage will be reconsidered during the upcoming budget cycle.

CM Kendrick made a motion to allow the Mayor to sign the ILA with TML and pay the prorated amount for liability cyber insurance for the balance of the year, with a second by CM Anderson.

Motion passed unanimously with a vote of 5:0.

8. **Update on Town Emergency Management Preparedness (Kendrick):** CM Kendrick provided an update on the Town's emergency management planning. Because Town Hall is located in Kaufman County, Kaufman County serves as Poetry's primary emergency management partner, though Hunt County also remains a willing and cooperative resource. Emergency Management Coordinator, CM Kendrick, reported on efforts to strengthen emergency preparedness, including:

- Coordination with both Kaufman and Hunt Counties, who are open to mutual aid.
- Plans to implement Kaufman County's emergency notification system, allowing residents to receive alerts about weather events, road closures, and other hazards.
- Outreach to East Texas Regional CERT (Citizens Emergency Response Team) to explore local CERT training for interested residents, which would allow citizens to assist during emergencies or events.

- Emphasis on NIMS (National Incident Management System) training compliance for town officials, with certificates to be retained by the Town.

The Council emphasized the importance of proactive planning, community involvement, and inter-county collaboration to ensure a prepared and responsive emergency framework for Poetry.

Discussion item – no vote needed

Council broke for short recess at 8:51 pm. Council resumed at 8:55 pm

G. General Public Comments

Comments are limited to three (3) minutes. If a translator is needed, the speaker may be given up to four (4) minutes. Sign up is required in advance either in-person prior to the start of the meeting or by emailing your comments to speak@poetrytexas.org at least 24 hours prior to the start of the meeting. The Texas Open Meetings Act restricts council members from discussing items not posted on the agenda. Action or responses to your remarks by council members (if not a posted agenda item) are limited to either a statement of fact or recitation of an existing policy or a proposal to place the subject on the agenda for a future meeting.

- **Citizen Chad McFarlan:** shared his experience serving on the Terrell Chamber of Commerce Board, noting his recent appointment as Chairman for 2025. Highlighting the valuable networking opportunities offered by the Chamber, he mentioned inviting Mayor Jaffe to recent luncheon meetings, which have already yielded positive results for the Town. To support continued engagement, Mr. McFarlan donated a \$300 check to cover a one-year Chamber membership for the Town of Poetry, along with the application and contact information for the Chamber's membership coordinator.
- **Jonathan Blake:** asked if the town newsletter was going to continue.
- **Stella Walker:** raised concerns about drainage and road conditions near County Roads 2454–2456, noting that damaged culverts and unmaintained bar ditches are causing water to overflow onto roads, leading to potholes. She emphasized that without addressing drainage issues, pothole repairs will be ineffective. On behalf of Carol Lee (CR 2458), she also asked about the status of the *Poetry Post* newsletter, approved by council in prior years, which provided updates on town events, finances, and other news.
- **Shelley Smith:** thanked the council for returning to earlier practices and made three suggestions: establish a reimbursement process for councilmembers' expenses; consider a "dark sky" ordinance to reduce light pollution; and add a "New Business" section to agendas so councilmembers can share ideas for future discussion in advance.
- **Rose Ingram:** suggested the council consider adding language to clarify that members serve as volunteers, noting that many new or less-engaged residents may not be aware. She also expressed support for reinstating the *Poetry Post*, the town's official newsletter approved in 2021, highlighting its value for residents who lack reliable internet access and prefer printed communication.
- **Kevin Senkevech:** supported the additional funding for pothole repairs, noting the town is now dealing with significantly larger ones. He mentioned that the county's road crews must work through a queue, but the town may receive quicker service due to urgent road conditions. He also shared helpful information from Hunt County: if a culvert originally purchased by a citizen collapses, the county is responsible for replacing it at no cost. He pointed out several collapsed

culverts on Lon Akens drive and offered to send photos to assist with repairs. He reminded the council that funding for asphalt has already been approved in previous motions and at least one trailer of asphalt remains unused. He also recommended the council take advantage of Hunt County's low-cost services for bar ditch maintenance and tree trimming, which only require fuel reimbursement.

- **Tara Senkevech:** noted that while reimbursing council members for expenses is a valid idea, donated supplies like paper and ink have been helpful in the past. She recalled only being reimbursed once, for gas during a trip to Austin. She again emphasized the value of the *Poetry Post* as the town's official newsletter—approved in 2021—and encouraged its continuation, especially for residents without reliable internet access. The paper newsletter not only informs citizens but also serves as a historical record of town activity. Additionally, she pointed out a misspelling of Representative Brent Money's name in the May 29th meeting minutes and asked for a correction to a prior statement regarding zoning. Specifically, she clarified that in the event of a home loss on a non-conforming lot, the current ordinance allows homeowners to rebuild up to 150% of the previous home's value.
- **Dennis Jenkins:** presented a petition from 16 neighbors on County Road 249, raising urgent safety concerns about excessive speeding and heavy truck traffic. Despite the posted 35 mph speed limit, vehicles are regularly clocked going 50–84 mph, creating a dangerous situation for children, pets, and pedestrians. He reported speaking with DPS and county law enforcement and shared that even commercial trucks like Bud Light semis use the road as a GPS shortcut between major highways, worsening the issue. He requested additional signage—such as weight limits, no through trucks, and no passing signs—and emphasized the need for actual enforcement with real monetary consequences, not just symbolic signs. He also urged council members to visit the area firsthand to witness the traffic patterns. Mayor Jaffe responded that the issue is a priority and could present a revenue opportunity for the town by fining violators.
- **Robin Followell:** praised CM Bryant's efforts to implement real-time notifications, such as alerts for road closures like FM 1565, stating that timely updates are more helpful than a once-a-month letter. While supportive of the *Poetry Post* newsletter, she emphasized the importance of having both forms of communication. She shared past issues with not receiving town mail but believe it's now resolved. She closed by thanking the council for the smooth, respectful tone of the meeting, expressing appreciation for the open dialogue and a renewed interest in attending future meetings and volunteering.
- **Robin Bowles:** expressed appreciation for both the new and previous councils, acknowledging their efforts despite past struggles. She urged the council to prioritize fixing a badly damaged road that's affecting their vehicle. She also emphasized a desire to stay positive and supportive rather than critical and offered prayers for the council's success moving forward. She asked to be included in any safety-related volunteer efforts.

H. Adjournment

The Town Council meeting was adjourned at 9:29 pm