



STATE OF TEXAS
COUNTIES OF KAUFMAN AND HUNT
TOWN OF POETRY, TEXAS

BE IT REMEMBERED THAT ON THIS DAY OF THE 16th of October 2025 at 6:30 pm, the Town Council of Poetry, Texas, held a Workshop and Regular Town Council Meeting at Poetry Town Hall, 5671 County Road 323 Poetry, Texas 75160 with the following present:

- A. **Mayor Jaffe** called the public meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Roll call was taken by Mayor Jaffe. Present were Mayor Pro Tem Terry Fowler, Council Members Tom Anderson, Doug Kendrick, Tracie Hibbs and Dale Bryant.

Pledge of Allegiance: Mayor Pro Tem Terry Fowler

Invocation: Mayor Pro Tem Terry Fowler

B. Workshop Agenda (*approx. 1 hr. – citizen comments welcome*)

1. Discussion about Long-Range Planning for the Town of Poetry (Mayor): **Mayor Jaffe** opened the workshop by introducing the topic of long-range planning and vision-setting for the Town of Poetry. He emphasized the need for the council to move beyond day-to-day operational decisions and begin defining what the town should look like in 5, 10, and 20 years. The mayor noted that this process could take several months and should begin with developing a **vision statement, guiding principles, and core values**, leading toward a framework for managing growth, infrastructure, public services, environmental preservation, and community character. He also suggested possibly involving citizens and subject matter experts in future discussions.

Councilmember Dale Bryant recommended that the council first develop a general framework or outline before holding public hearings to gather citizen input, noting that long and technical meetings could discourage participation.

Councilmember Tom Anderson proposed simplifying the process into three phases:

- **Vision and Objectives** – defining what Poetry aspires to be.
- **Short-Term Priorities** – focusing on near-term actions such as zoning and roads.
- **Long-Term Considerations** – identifying future infrastructure and regional issues, including the Outer Loop project.

Councilmember Doug Kendrick stressed the importance of strengthening internal organization and documentation—such as ordinances, permits, and board procedures—to ensure consistency and transparency in planning and zoning efforts.

Mayor Pro Tem Terry Fowler agreed on starting with a clear vision and objectives, emphasizing the town’s long-held goal to “keep Poetry rural.” He suggested incorporating an honest assessment of the town’s weaknesses, including fiscal constraints, limited boundaries, and lack of revenue streams, while developing short-, mid-, and long-term goals.

Councilmember Tracie Hibbs expressed concern that the town was not adequately protecting the health, safety, and welfare of its residents. She highlighted financial realities, noting the high cost of road maintenance and limited revenue sources. She urged the council to confront issues of growth management,

zoning flaws, and the need to plan where higher-density development and revenue-generating areas should be located.

The council generally agreed that the town must shift from a reactive to a proactive approach—developing a strategic roadmap to guide future decisions, manage growth responsibly, and preserve Poetry’s rural identity while addressing fiscal sustainability. Mayor Jaffe summarized by emphasizing that the process should begin with defining the town’s mission and goals, followed by identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis). The council will continue the discussion over the coming months with the intent of producing a foundational long-range planning document before the end of the current council term.

- **Citizen Robin Followell:** said she supported Councilmember Hibbs’ concerns about health, safety, and welfare, urging the town to adopt a unified building code to ensure consistent construction standards across all three counties. She suggested using developer impact and permit fees to fund local improvements—such as roads and parks—rather than raising taxes. While expressing her love for Poetry’s rural character, she emphasized that the town could remain country while still improving safety, fairness, and quality of life.
- **Citizen Shelley Smith:** expressed concern that citizens are being asked to pay fees and follow town regulations without seeing clear benefits in return. While acknowledging the town’s financial limits, she urged the council to include tangible community benefits in its long-range planning. She noted the town’s narrow jurisdiction along roadways makes amenities like parks or trails difficult to develop and cautioned that Poetry’s poor initial planning presents ongoing challenges that must be carefully addressed.
- **Citizen Tara Senkevech:** countered earlier remarks by noting that the town does provide meaningful benefits, such as the fall and spring cleanup events, which help keep the community clean and give residents a sense of involvement. She added that incorporation allows citizens to have a stronger voice in local decisions and protects them from neighboring cities’ annexation and higher property taxes. The resident also disagreed that the town was poorly planned, explaining that Poetry’s spread-out design helps meet basic needs without requiring a property tax, which she viewed as a major advantage.
- **Councilmember Doug Kendrick** noted that several positive initiatives are underway and emphasized the importance of continuing to share updates on individual council projects. He highlighted the town’s growing collaboration with county officials, explaining that this partnership positions Poetry to benefit from county grants available to incorporated cities—providing opportunities to reinvest in and improve the community.

Council Workshop ends at 7:26pm

C. Items of Community Interest

1. Thank you to Kaufman County Precinct #3 commissioner and road crew
2. Thank you to Hunt County Precinct #2 commissioner and road crew
3. Thank you to David Emard for helping with Sound and Video.
4. Thank you to Scott, Lora and Zoe Lehew for helping with meeting setup

Mayor Jaffe announced that Poetry Community Christian School would be holding a Bingo night on November 24th at 6:30pm and also announced that volunteers are needed to help organize the annual tree lighting and judging contest and that a sign-up sheet is available.

D. Reports

1. Financial

- a. Finalized 2025-2026 Budget
- b. P&L Budget vs Actual Sept 2025 - Fiscal Year End
- c. Account Quick Reports 6010 & 6100 - Sept 2025
- d. Bank Reconciliation Summary & Detail - Sept 2025
- e. Sales & Use Tax Report Sept 2025
- f. Hunt & Kaufman County Roads Escrow Reports Sept 2025

2. Roads & Traffic update

Mayor Jaffe reported that DPS, the sheriff's office, and constables are increasing patrols to address speeding on local roads, particularly during deer season, and urged drivers to use caution. He provided updates on extensive roadwork, noting that County Road 247 has been completely overhauled and that Green Meadow will be the next major project, with full reconstruction of about 1,000 feet and additional pothole repairs. The mayor explained that road, ditch, and culvert work are being done simultaneously, and that the town is testing several paving methods—including recycled asphalt—to find cost-effective solutions. He also thanked Kaufman County for their continued support and collaboration. Additionally, he shared updates from the Rockwall County Commissioners Court on the proposed Outer Loop, which currently appears to be routed west of Poetry, and announced that Poetry has joined both the North Central Texas Council of Governments and the Rockwall County Transportation Consortium to gain a stronger voice in regional infrastructure planning.

3. Mayor and Councilmember Activity Updates

- **Mayor Pro Tem Fowler:** reported meeting with both county commissioners and local engineers to strengthen relationships and coordinate ongoing projects. He noted that he and Councilmember Bryant met with engineers for productive discussions and that he has been working on drafting the proposed culvert ordinance for council review.
- **Councilmember Tom Anderson:** noted that navigating the town's complex zoning issues has been the main focus this month. He is working to interpret current regulations while tracking potential future changes, which has made the process challenging.
- **Councilmember Doug Kendrick:** has been coordinating with Kaufman County's Emergency Management Manager to improve local emergency preparedness. An emergency management tab on the town website was added with contact info and an ongoing plan to include a countywide notification system. He is also exploring ways to improve community communications and will present programs and updates to the council.
- **Councilmember Dale Bryant:** provided an update on the town's signage project. He met with TxDOT, which provided a resolution and contract template now under attorney review. A survey of T-intersections, curves, and culverts has been completed, identifying locations for new signage that meets TxDOT standards. The project could cost around \$50,000 but will be fully funded through federal and state grants. Once installed, the town will be responsible for maintenance. He also noted ongoing work on several Planning & Zoning variance requests, with a few still open until required work is completed.
- **Councilmember Hibbs:** said she has been working behind the scenes to ensure the town operates in compliance with state laws and new legislation. She is also coordinating with a company to update the town's code of ordinances, with several meetings already held and more scheduled.

E. Consent Agenda

1. Approve Minutes from Sept 18, 2025, Budget Public Hearing & Regular Meeting
2. Approve Nichols Jackson 9/30/25 legal bill - \$107.50

Motion to approve Consent Agenda made by Councilmember Anderson seconded by Councilmember Hibbs.

Motion passed unanimously 5:0

F. Regular Agenda (item sponsor)

1. **Discuss and take action as necessary on Ordinance to establish the Poetry Town Council as the Zoning Board of Adjustment (Mayor):** Council discussed establishing a Board of Adjustment so the town can consider variance requests. Under Texas law the council may serve as the board, and the council agreed to start simply with council members filling that role. The town attorney provided an ordinance and a comprehensive booklet on variances; materials will be distributed before the first hearing on the 27th. Members emphasized that variances are intended for true hardship (not convenience) and cautioned about setting precedents—encouraging careful, consistent decisions. Going forward the intent will be to include residents on the Board to deliberate on future variance requests. Motion to approve by Councilmember Anderson seconded by Councilmember Kendrick. *Motion passed 4:1 (CM Hibbs opposed)*
 - **Resident Tara Senkevech:** expressed support for the council serving as the Board of Adjustment, noting it is important to establish strong precedents. She commended the council for being informed, working closely with the attorney, and taking a careful, legal approach to handling variances.
 - **Resident Shelley Smith:** expressed concern about too much control resting with the council and suggested adding advisors or forming a subcommittee to help with zoning and variance matters. She said involving more people would provide balance and continuity for future councils.
 - **Robin Followell:** agreed that the Board of Adjustment should include members beyond the council. She noted that in other cities, citizens often feel that decisions are fairer when outside members with relevant experiences such as in construction—are involved. She also emphasized the need to educate residents about what qualifies as a true hardship for a variance, since many may not understand the process or requirements.
2. **Discuss and take action as necessary on a Zoning Variance Application. (Mayor):** The mayor and council reviewed the proposed variance application process and fee structure. The mayor explained that the \$200 filing fee was suggested to help cover town expenses, based on input from the attorney, but was open to adjustments. Council members debated the appropriate amount, with concerns about balancing costs and fairness to citizens. After discussion, it was agreed to set the fee at \$75. The application will be updated to include:
 - The town's contact information and office hours,
 - Allow site plans of any readable, scalable size (not limited to 8.5x11 paper),
 - Post the form online and accept submissions by email.

Council emphasized transparency, the need to avoid trespassing during site visits, and ensuring citizens know what information to provide. Overall, aiming to establish a fair, practical starting point for handling variance requests.

- **Resident Shelley Smith:** questioned whether the town secretaries would need to work overtime to process variance applications and why an additional fee would be needed if the work is done during normal hours. She suggested the fee should only cover actual administrative costs. The mayor acknowledged the point, explaining the fee is meant to offset hard costs and that current workloads can handle the tasks for now.
- **Robin Followell:** expressed support for the proposed \$75 fee, calling it a good starting point and she was glad to see progress being made.

3. Discuss and take action as necessary on the Resolution to Deny the Oncor Rate Increase. (Mayor):

Mayor Jaffe introduced the item regarding the resolution to deny Oncore's proposed rate increase, noting that the town's new local Oncore representative, Uriel de la Fuente from Terrell, was present to speak at the meeting. The mayor explained he had informed Uriel earlier that the council intended to vote on and deny the increase but welcomed him to speak or answer questions before the council proceeded.

- **Uriel de la Fuente:** explained that Oncore is regulated by the Texas Public Utility Commission (PUC), and the council's denial is part of a coordinated approach used by multiple cities. Denying the rate increase locally ensures consistency across communities and prevents Poetry from being charged a higher rate than neighboring areas. He emphasized that filing the rate case does not guarantee the requested rate; the PUC ultimately approves the final rates. Uriel also noted his 12 years with Oncore and recent assignment to the Terrell service center. He highlighted Oncore's commitment to being an engaged, long-term partner in the communities they serve rather than just a company that provides service and leaves.

The mayor reminded council that Poetry joined a statewide city steering committee to coordinate on utility rate cases. Denying Oncore's increase aligns the town with 50+ cities, sending a unified message to the PUC. The resolution will formally deny the request and notify Encore and the steering committee's attorney.

- **Resident Tara Senkevech:** expressed appreciation to the Oncor rep for the light that was installed in front of Town Hall.

Motion to approve the Resolution to Deny the Oncor Rate Increase made by Councilmember Anderson, seconded by CM Hibbs. *Motion was unanimously approved 5:0*

4. Discuss and take action as necessary on a Driveway Culvert Ordinance including an Application for a Culvert Permit Form. (Mayor Pro-Tem):

Mayor Pro Tem Fowler explained that the county no longer provides covert services, so the town is stepping in. He consulted with commissioners and used his construction experience to guide placement, recommending oversizing to account for future upstream development. The application is based on the county's form with minor adjustments, and no fee will be charged at this time. The town will handle the process internally. Council discussed guidance for citizens installing culverts for driveways off county roads. Town staff, led by Mayor Pro Tem Fowler, will temporarily provide specifications and inspections to ensure proper placement, size, slope, and covering to protect drainage and prevent flooding, while citizens or their contractors perform the installation. No fees will be charged at this time, though fees may be implemented in the future if contracted help is required. The ordinance establishes the town's authority, while technical details are included in the application. Addressing Councilmembers Anderson and Hibb's concern, this is a temporary solution; long-term planning will be needed to ensure qualified staff or contractors handle culvert installations consistently. Planning and zoning documents may also be updated to align driveway and culvert standards.

- **Resident Tara Senkevech:** noted that this is a growing pain for the town as the county no longer provides culvert services. She emphasized the importance of having a standard protocol, documenting installations with photos, and following that procedure to ensure safety and coverage under town insurance, expressing confidence that with proper guidance, this temporary solution is manageable and appropriate for a small town.
- **Resident Robin Followell:** expressed appreciation for Mayor Pro Tem Fowler's efforts in handling culvert and driveway guidance, noting the benefit of proper installations during recent flooding. She emphasized that not all residents have the expertise to do this correctly and suggested that, after the initial phase, the town consider implementing a small fee to help cover costs and ensure consistent standards.
- **Resident Kenny Hibbs:** requested to be included in future discussions on driveway and culvert ordinances. He highlighted the importance of addressing driveway angles and approaches, noting that improper angles have led to damage from large vehicles and construction traffic, and emphasized that these considerations should be included along with culvert specifications.

Mayor Jaffe noted that most towns' ordinances address both driveway construction and culverts, including angles and widths, but for now the town is starting small by focusing only on culverts to protect roads and ditches. The ordinance and associated application will be made available on the town website, and recordkeeping procedures will be established to document installations. Council acknowledged that sample images in the application may need adjustment for accuracy but emphasized that citizens remain responsible for proper installation. The ordinance and application as written were presented for approval.

Motion to approve the ordinance and application made by Councilmember Hibbs, seconded by Councilmember Anderson. *Motion passed unanimously 5:0*

5. **Discuss and take action as necessary on a Resolution to designate the Terrell Tribune as the Town of Poetry official Newspaper. (Mayor):** Mayor Jaffe explained that, under Texas state law, the Council is required to designate an official newspaper to publish all Town notices and announcements. He suggested that the Town just continues with the *Terrell Tribune* as the official newspaper. Motion to approve the ordinance and application made by Mayor Pro Tem Fowler, seconded by Councilmember Kendrick.

Motion passed unanimously 5:0

6. **Discuss and take action as necessary on approving additional funds, \$12,000, to be placed in Escrow with Hunt County to replace under road drainage culverts in 3 different locations in the Town of Poetry. (Mayor):** Mayor Jaffe presented a request to approve an additional \$12,000 to replenish the Town's escrow account with Hunt County for ongoing drainage culvert replacements and related road repairs. He outlined the specific projects, noting that several culverts are rusted and collapsing, requiring immediate replacement. Council discussed current expenditures, confirming approximately \$10,000 already allocated for previous Hunt County Road work. Members expressed support for maintaining funds in escrow to avoid project delays, emphasizing the importance of proactive road maintenance to prevent costly future damage. Mayor Jaffe noted that the arrangement with Hunt County provides materials at cost, representing strong value for the Town. The Council agreed the focus should remain on keeping roads drivable until larger resurfacing projects can be planned. Motion to approve placing \$12,000 in escrow for under road culvert projects. Motion to approve made by Councilman Anderson, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Fowler. *Motion passed unanimously 5:0*

G. General Public Comments

- **Resident Tara Senkevech:** Asked about a fall cleanup day and the status of potential roads grant
- **Resident Robin Followell:** expressed her gratitude for fixing the road by her house. She also remarked what success the recently held farmers market was and felt that it promoted community spirit and is looking forward to hosting another one and perhaps other events that would interest the community.

H. Adjournment

The Town Council meeting was adjourned at 9:07 pm


Mike Jaffe
Mayor, Town of Poetry


Prepared by: Anne E. Hamilton
Secretary, Town of Poetry