

## Jennifer Reynier

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**From:** Craig Stoker  
**Sent:** Friday, September 26, 2025 10:02 PM  
**To:** Cal Hendrick; David Vela; Aaron Smith; Keith Stretcher  
**Subject:** Re: Fixing the Tax Levy for the City Odessa, Texas

Cal,

I am standing by my statement to you that I tried to call out the inaccuracy in our numbers and subsequent marketing. I mentioned that I did not like the use of that number at the budget workshop and I commented again about it when I was invited to a marketing meeting about the budget, but by that point I have been yelled at enough and demeaned by another council member that I mostly kept my mouth shut. By that point I had created my own marketing campaign, and in fact if you use my calculator it produces the correct numbers and the copy that accompanies it on the website explains what is happening - which also got me yelled at too. As I expressed to you earlier this is a failure on the part of not only finance but also marketing. There are inaccuracies and conflicts all over the website regarding the budget and the data. All of them should know better. At least they all knew how to tip off other council members who jumped my ass...

Just like the mess with billing and collections, I am angry that we walk out with egg on our face and take the blame, but we don't even have the ability to take any action to reassure the public that incompetent staff have been dealt with. We will never be able to rebuild any kind of public trust when we can't even trust the staff ourselves. Maybe some will finally understand why I did not blindly trust the budget process and that is why I asked for more financial information - another move that also got me chastised and demeaned.

I asked Mr. Vela to begin the process of hiring a new billing and collections director and I believe it is far past time to also post the jobs of finance director and to revisit Mr. Morton's decision to create the CFO position, since I believe his decision to do this was flawed, or at least his decision of whom to staff the position with. Also, we overpay the director of the marketing department by an incredible amount, and for that kind of salary we could hire a true marketing expert who never would have allowed this to happen. The marketing department also has a hyper inflated budget and with \$630k we could hire a truly professional marketing firm.

I know most of this will sound like sour grapes and so be it. There has never been a space to discuss this and my frustration at the inaction is bubbling over into anger. I am tired of hearing "stay out of the staff," because I do not believe I am meddling in their day to day, but rather calling out the emperors who are obviously not wearing any clothes. Something has got to be done.

I will see you all at the 98th vote on this stupid budget and I will support keeping our rate where it is. We should not be punished and rebuilding the city staff should not be quashed because of two inadequate/incompetent staff members.

I'll leave you all with this, next year I will expect that we have a competent staff member or third party budget manager. I will not suffer through this ridiculousness again.

# Craig Stoker

Mayor Pro Tem  
Member At-Large  
Odessa City Council



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**From:** Cal Hendrick <CHendrick@odessa-tx.gov>

**Sent:** Friday, September 26, 2025 7:12 PM

**To:** David Vela <dvela@odessa-tx.gov>; Aaron Smith <amsmith@odessa-tx.gov>; Keith Stretcher <kstretcher@odessa-tx.gov>

**Subject:** Fixing the Tax Levy for the City Odessa, Texas

Council Members:

You are each BCC'ed to avoid a violation of the Open Meetings Act. I have talked to each of you individually this afternoon to explain the problems with the proposed tax rate and the fact that the effect of the proposed tax rate is much greater than what we understood.

Specifically, the proposed tax rate would be raised 7.3%. The proposed tax rate would raise taxes \$26.21 on a \$100K home. These are not the numbers we understood from our conversations with the Finance Department. Thus, we relied on inaccurate data to communicate the new tax rate to the general public. The inaccurate data was used on the City Web site, on a factoid on our social media pages, and even in conversations with the media, staff, and each other.

As a result, I informed each of you we have 2 choices. We either do nothing and allow the new tax rate to become effective October 1, 2025. Alternatively, we can meet next Friday and agree to a no new tax rate for the coming fiscal year. It is my understanding that Council members desire an opportunity to readdress the tax levy issue next week.

**David, as a result, please get with the City Secretary and post a notice for a meeting for next Friday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, at 11:00 AM. If the City Council chooses to set a no new tax rate, then we would need a 2<sup>nd</sup> reading, and therefore, please post a second notice for a meeting at 11:30 AM.**

**I am hopeful these times work for everyone's schedule. If you cannot be present at 11:00 AM, please send me, and only me, an email, and let me know what time would work best for you.**

Thanks.

Cal Hendrick  
Mayor of Odessa  
[chendrick@odessa-tx.gov](mailto:chendrick@odessa-tx.gov)