

City of Starbase  
City Commission Regular Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, March 18, 2026  
City Hall – Starbase, Texas  
Meeting Called to Order at 7:00 PM

Present

- Mayor Peden
- Commissioner Buss
- Commissioner Wallace

Quorum: Established

Other staff in attendance:

- Kent Myers, City Administrator
- Cayetana Polanco, Assistant City Administrator
- Gretchen Norton, City Clerk
- Marie Johnson, City Attorney

**1. Call to Order and Quorum Determination** Mayor Peden called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and confirmed that a quorum was present. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**2. Public Comment (Non-Public Hearing Agenda Items)** Public comments were limited to two minutes per speaker. No speakers signed up for non-public hearing agenda items. City Clerk Gretchen Norton noted that Robin Gavriel would address comments during a public hearing item. City Attorney Marie Johnson provided clarification regarding public hearing sign-in and comment procedures.

**3. Consent Agenda** The following items were considered together: a. Approval of City Commission meeting minutes for February 18, 2026. b. Resolution amending the City Commission rules of procedures to change the public speaker registration deadline from 15 minutes to 5 minutes prior to the start of the meeting.

**Motion:** Commissioner Wallace moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

**Second:** Commissioner Buss

**Vote:** For: 3 Against: 0 **Motion carried unanimously.**



## 4. Regular Session

**E1. Public Hearing on Resolution of Intent to Annex Approximately 7,133 Acres (C-4 Annexation – Texas Local Government Code Chapter 43, Subchapter C-4)** This was a public hearing only; no action was taken by the Commission.

City Attorney Marie Johnson gave a detailed presentation, including:

- An explanation of the C-4 consent-based annexation process under Chapter 43 of the Texas Local Government Code.
- Description of the proposed annexation area (approximately 7,133 acres, consisting largely of vacant land, federal and state government-owned property south of Highway 4, portions of Boca Chica Beach, Texas Parks land, the Rockhands parcel owned by SpaceX (subject to a city conservation easement), and limited private parcels, many of which are submerged and non-developable).
- Municipal services plan to be extended, including fire protection through the Starbase Volunteer Fire Department, enforcement of city ordinances (zoning, building codes), and roadway infrastructure services. No city water, wastewater, or new road construction is currently planned.
- The multi-step statutory process: petition circulation for 180 days ending in August, verification of petition signatures (requiring 50% of registered voters or 50% of property owners), notification to property owners, and subsequent public hearings.

Public Hearing opened at 7:11 PM.

### Speakers:

- **Dr. Christopher Basalou**, Brownsville, TX – Opposed the annexation. He stated there had been no consultation with the original indigenous people of the land, cited alleged violations of the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, NEPA, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, and the American Indian Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. He also referenced Section 43.055 acreage limits and described the city's formation as colonial and reflective of white supremacist history. He urged the Commission to reconsider and stop further annexation.
- **Anthony Gomez**, Starbase, TX – Spoke in support of the annexation and commended the City and SpaceX for being good stewards of the community and for visible improvements in the area.
- **David Woolverton**, long-time local resident (70 years) – Spoke in support. He noted his background in commercial fishing and petrochemicals, stated he had observed no significant negative impact on endangered species, and expressed appreciation for the City's presence and future outlook.

- **Robin Gavriel and Gerald Podraza** (statement read by Rebecca Hinojosa) – Both absent landowners opposed the annexation. Robin Gavriel (owner of 4 lots via Blue Rose Alchemy LLC, residing in Colorado) expressed concerns that annexation would lower property values due to zoning changes and restrict her development plans. She questioned the process and described it as a “sneaky move” to control resident property. Gerald Podraza (Illinois) expressed support for local preservation organizations, the South Texas Environmental Justice Network, and efforts to protect Boca Chica State Park and the Copernicus Shores community.
- **Rebecca (Becca) Hinojosa**, South Texas Environmental Justice Network – Opposed the annexation. She argued that Boca Chica is meant for people and wildlife, not for SpaceX or a “company town.” She criticized the lack of Zoom options for public comment, inadequate notice to impacted residents, and called for no further land to be given to SpaceX/Starbase.

Public Hearing closed at 7:19 PM.

City Attorney Marie Johnson clarified that the 10% annual acreage cap referenced by Dr. Basalou applies only to involuntary annexations and does not apply to this C-4 consent-based process. City Administrator Kent Myers noted that the item would not return to the agenda until after the 180-day petition period (anticipated August). No Commission action was taken.

## **E2. Public Hearing & Ordinance Annexing Approximately 3 Acres (Voluntary**

**Annexation – SpaceX Petition)** City Administrator Kent Myers explained this was a voluntary annexation of a 3-acre tract owned by SpaceX, initiated by owner petition. The property is located along Highway 4 and would entitle the owner to city services upon annexation.

Public Hearing opened at 7:22 PM. No speakers signed up. Public Hearing closed at 7:22 PM.

**Motion:** Commissioner Buss moved to approve the ordinance annexing approximately 3 acres into the corporate limits of the City of Starbase, thereby extending the boundary limits, amending the official map, and providing for related matters.

**Second:** Commissioner Wallace

**Vote:** For: 3 Against: 0 **Motion carried unanimously.**

## **E3. Public Hearing & Ordinance Annexing Approximately 1 Acre (Voluntary Annexation**

**– SpaceX Petition)** City Administrator Kent Myers explained this was a voluntary annexation of a 1-acre tract owned by SpaceX, initiated by owner petition.

Public Hearing opened at 7:24 PM. No speakers signed up. Public Hearing closed at 7:24 PM.

**Motion:** Commissioner Wallace moved to approve the ordinance annexing approximately 1 acre into the corporate limits of the City of Starbase, thereby extending the boundary limits, amending the official map, and providing for related matters.

**Second:** Commissioner Buss

**Vote:** For: 3 Against: 0 **Motion carried unanimously.**

**E4. Resolution Adopting a City Purchasing Policy** Assistant City Administrator Cayetana Polanco presented the proposed policy, which was modeled after other small Texas cities, reviewed by legal counsel, and recommended by the city's auditing firm. She noted the policy is especially timely as the city prepares for significant Police Department purchases and will establish clear procedures for small purchases, competitive bidding, use of purchasing cooperatives, and professional services. Mayor Peden inquired about the dollar thresholds; staff confirmed they align with recent state law changes.

**Motion:** Commissioner Buss moved to approve the resolution adopting a city purchasing policy. **Second:** Commissioner Wallace

**Vote:** For: 3 Against: 0

**Motion carried unanimously.**

**E5. Ordinance Canceling the May 2, 2026 General Election** City Administrator Kent Myers explained that only the three incumbent candidates (Mayor Peden, Commissioner Buss, and Commissioner Wallace) filed applications by the deadline, making them unopposed. The ordinance declares the unopposed candidates elected and cancels the election, resulting in an approximate \$15,000 savings to the city. City Clerk Gretchen Norton provided the certification of unopposed candidates.

**Motion:** Commissioner Wallace moved to approve the ordinance canceling the May 2, 2026 general election.

**Second:** Commissioner Buss

**Vote:** For: 3 Against: 0 **Motion carried unanimously.**

**E6. Resolution Authorizing Use of Electronic Signatures for City Documents** Assistant City Administrator Cayetana Polanco presented the resolution to authorize electronic signatures and the electronic city seal on official documents. The change supports a more paperless and efficient operation.

**Motion:** Commissioner Buss moved to approve the resolution adopting a policy authorizing the use of electronic signatures for city documents and official city business.

**Second:** Commissioner Wallace **Vote:** For: 3 Against: 0 **Motion carried unanimously.**

**E7. Beachfront Construction Certificate and Dune Protection Permit for Space**

**Exploration Technologies Corp.** Assistant City Administrator Cayetana Polanco, supported by engineer Mario Garcia (via telephone), presented the application for underground utilities in the State Highway 4 right-of-way near Boca Chica Beach, including in-place mitigation for dunes and dune vegetation. The application was reviewed by Halff Associates, coordinated with the Texas General Land Office (GLO), and pre-approved by TxDOT. Staff recommended approval subject to GLO requirements.

**Motion:** Commissioner Wallace moved to authorize the issuance of the beachfront construction certificate and dune protection permit for Space Exploration Technologies Corp. for the construction of underground utilities within the State Highway 4 right-of-way and in-place mitigation for adverse impacts to dunes and dune vegetation near Boca Chica Beach.

**Second:** Commissioner Buss

**Vote:** For: 3 Against: 0 **Motion carried unanimously.**

**E8. Amendment to License Agreement with Space Exploration Technologies Corp. for Meeting Space**

Assistant City Administrator Cayetana Polanco explained that this amendment to the existing license agreement removes the city administrative office space while retaining the Commission meeting space and equipment use in the Hub facility.

**Motion:** Commissioner Buss moved to approve the amendment to the license agreement with Space Exploration Technologies Corp. for the provision of meeting space and equipment use for City Commission meetings and to authorize the City Administrator to execute the same.

**Second:** Commissioner Wallace

**Vote:** For: 3 Against: 0 **Motion carried unanimously.**

**F1. Items of Community Interest (Texas Government Code §551.0415)** No reports were made by the Mayor or Commissioners. Staff thanked Jessica for her contributions to the city's public relations and communications as she transitions to a full-time role.

**F2. City Administrator Report** City Administrator Kent Myers and Assistant City Administrator Cayetana Polanco provided updates on:

- **Financial Statements (October 2025 – February 2026):** The city is in a strong financial position with a fund balance of approximately \$5.3 million (net of upcoming debt payments of \$2.548 million, leaving roughly \$2.8 million in

discretionary reserves). Property tax collections are nearly complete at 99% of budget. Overall revenues and expenditures are tracking well five months into the fiscal year. A mid-year financial report with recommended budget amendments (including Police Department startup costs) will be presented at the next meeting.

- **Building Permit Report – February 2026:** Three residential permits and no commercial permits were issued. Inspection activity remained strong. The parking structure is now operational, and the adjacent apartment development and Community Center project are progressing on schedule.
- **Police Department Update:** Significant progress continues toward establishment of the department. Key items include implementation of the new purchasing policy to streamline acquisitions (using cooperatives for competitive pricing and local preference), policy development with Lexipol for TCOLE accreditation, construction of police facilities (permits issued, build-out expected in approximately three weeks), dispatch radio services, uniforms and branding, benefits/liability insurance quotes, and an active hiring process for the Police Chief (strong applicant pool; multiple interview stages underway). Community outreach meetings were held with the Cameron County Sheriff's Office and South Padre Island Police Department.
- **Payroll, HR, Asset Management, and Finance Software:** After evaluating five providers, staff recommended Paylocity as the integrated cloud-based platform to unify HR, payroll, asset management, and finance functions for greater efficiency and visibility.
- **Texas General Land Office (GLO) Beach Erosion Project:** The feasibility study contract with Halff Associates is nearing finalization (expected by end of week).

**G. Executive Session** At 7:53 PM, the Commission recessed into Executive Session pursuant to Texas Government Code §551.071 to consult with the City Attorney regarding the authority and duties of city officers.

The Commission reconvened in Open Session at 8:53 PM. No action was reported from Executive Session other than the item below.

**I1. Ordinance Amending Ordinance No. 2025-05-29-J02-OR (Authority and Duties of the City Administrator)** City Administrator Kent Myers provided background on the need to update the ordinance. The original contract position has evolved into a full-time role with increased responsibilities, including management of city personnel (particularly the upcoming 8–10 member Police Department). The amendment expands the City

Administrator's authority consistent with state law while retaining City Commission authority over the hiring and firing of the Police Chief.

**Motion:** Commissioner Wallace moved to approve the ordinance amending Ordinance No. 2025-05-29-J02-OR to further define the authority and duties of the City Administrator, with the revision that hiring and firing authority over the Police Chief remains with the City Commission.

**Second:** Commissioner Buss

**Vote:** For: 3 Against: 0 **Motion carried unanimously.**

**9. Future Agenda Item Requests** No future agenda items were requested.

**10. Adjournment Motion:** Mayor Peden moved to adjourn.

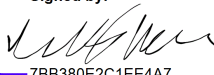
**Second:** Commissioner Buss

**Vote:** For: 3 Against: 0 **Motion carried unanimously.**

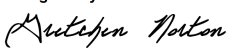
Meeting adjourned at 8:58 PM.

Approved by the City Commission on this 20<sup>th</sup> day of April 2026.

APPROVED:

Signed by:  
  
7BB380E2C1EE4A7...  
Bobby Peden, Mayor

ATTEST:

Signed by:  
  
DAD49BF2123C4F3...  
Gretchen Norton, City Clerk

DS

