

The Bandera PROPHEET

June 26, 2024

Bandera City Council members adopt amended drought ordinance

By Jessica Nohealapa'ahi
The Bandera Prophet

After voting for changes to the city's drought contingency plan in February, Bandera City Council members unanimously approved the amended ordinance during their June 25 regular meeting.

Research showed the action taken during council's Feb. 27 meeting approved only the amendments, Mayor Rebeca Gibson explained, so Ordinance 443, amending The City of Bandera Code of Ordinances Chapter 13 Drought Contingency Plan, Section 13.09.069 Drought Response Stage Responses and Water Use Restrictions, needed to be formally adopted.

Aligning with the Bandera County River Authority and Groundwater District drought restrictions and triggers, the city's ordinance was revised to allow watering of trees by a hand-held hose, the watering of building foundations to prevent irreversable structural damage, the watering of gardens to sustain fruits and vegetables, and maintaining existing swimming pool levels when water evaporates.

Resident Tammy Morrow expressed concern about allowing the refilling of pools during all conservation stages, asking whether the luxury of a swimming pool was more important than drinking water.

"It's not a governmental body's objective to destroy someone's personal property. Letting a swimming pool run dry puts the instructional integrity in question," Council Member Tony Battle said. "Yes we're in a drought, but we also have the right to protect our personal property. The [pre]existing ordinance was a governmental overreach."

Stating private (non-permitted) wells in the county have zero restrictions, Battle said multiple areas were addressed in the city's drought ordinance, including watering home foundations to ensure their structural integrity, and watering gardens and trees.

"Watering gardens seemed fair and reasonable," Battle said. "We have to water trees to keep them alive. That's how we breathe."

Council Member Lynn Palmer said residents who use more than 1,500 gallons of water per month are charged more incrementally per bracket, in accordance with the city's fee schedule. Gibson said council has been diligent in attempting to diversify water resources, such as utilizing reclamation and rainwater collection.