

**CITY OF VIDOR
VIDOR CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
November 14, 2024**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mayor Songe
Councilmember Lee
Councilmember McGowan
Councilmember Barker
Councilmember Bourque

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Councilmember Thompson
Councilmember Weldon

Administrative Personnel: Robbie Hood, City Manager; Pebbles Eckhoff, Finance Director; Rachel Duplechain, City Secretary; Brooke Carroll, HR Director; Jason McDonald, for City Attorney; and Rodney Johnson, Captain;

A. OPENING, PRESENTATIONS, AND CITIZENS COMMENTS

A -1. Call to order and the establishment of a Quorum

A quorum was present, and the Regular Meeting of the Vidor City Council began at 7:00 p.m., Misty Songe, Mayor, presiding.

A -2. Invocation and Pledge to the United States Flag and the State of Texas Flag

Rachel Duplechain, City Secretary, gave the Invocation and led the Pledge to the United States Flag and the State of Texas Flag.

A -3. Citizen Comments

None

B. COUNCIL CONSENT AGENDA

B -1. Approval of Accounts Paid:

Paid Invoices:	General Fund –	\$467,789.76
	MCBSF –	\$358.74
	Hotel Occupancy –	\$227.03
	Proprietary Fund –	\$36,399.25
	Total:	\$504,774.78

B -2. Approval of Minutes: Regular Meeting – October 24, 2024, and Special-Called Meeting - November 7, 2024

A motion to **approve the Consent Agenda** was made by Councilmember McGowan, seconded by Councilmember Lee. The Council voted three (3) for and one (1) opposed. **The motion carried.**

C. COUNCIL REGULAR AGENDA

C -1. Consideration and possible action to approve cancellation of the regularly scheduled Council meeting on November 28, 2024, due to Thanksgiving Holiday.

A motion to **approve cancellation of the regularly scheduled Council meeting on November 28, 2024, due to Thanksgiving Holiday**, was made by Councilmember Bourque, seconded by Councilmember Barker. The Council voted four (4) for and none (0) opposed. **The motion carried.**

C -2. Discussion and possible action to approve the Resolution allowing the City of Vidor, to enroll and execute the Next Level Prime Medical Agreement with NLUC, PLLC

Mayor Songe, called Preston Hager, Next Level Prime to speak on this. Preston Hager, Next Level Prime, so Next Level Prime, is the health care benefits package that we are presenting tonight and Next Level Urgent Care, to give a little background Next Level Urgent Care, started over eleven (11) years ago, out of Houston, and now we've grown to over 45 locations between Houston, Austin, San Antonio, Beaumont, and Nederland. And at that time, we realized that traditional insurance was going through the roof, so our CEO said listen, we have all these locations, all the machines, and all the personnel. We can offer health care benefits at a lower rate than traditional insurance. We came up with Prime about three and half (3 ½), almost four (4) years ago, and what Prime entails is primary care, chronic care, preventative care, and of course, urgent care as well. And so, for the City with the number of employees that are here, it would be seventy-five (\$75) per employee, per month, and that's it. There's no deductibles, no co-pays, so they come in, get the service they need, the care they need, and they walk out and don't pull their wallets out at all. So, under all of those scenarios, there's a lot of different things, and it's all in the packet and it's a lot to read. The best way to think about it is any non-life-threatening event or acute illness will be covered under this. So, think of it like this from a common cold all the way up to a broken bone. So we have x-ray machines in every location and then we have orthopedic consult on staff, they look at those x-rays and if they deem that it doesn't need surgery, we will cast it, splint it, and see it through the recovery, right there in the clinic; no matter how many visits it takes, doesn't cost a dime. So, on top of that, we have 24/7 telemedicine as well, if you don't need to come in, you can call us, we'll do a FaceTime type call over the phone, we'll look at you and determine if we can give you the care you need over the phone. If so, a prescription will be sent to the pharmacy of your choice and be done. If we think we need to see you, we'll ask you to come in and that's simply come in, we want to diagnose you a little bit further and then give you the care you need that way and again it's not a money grab or anything, there's no co-pays no deductibles; come in, get the care you need and walk out. So, we're open seven days a week from 9:00 AM to 9:00 PM, we're only closed two (2) days out of the year, which is Thanksgiving and Christmas Day and that's it. So an employee can come see us on a Saturday, Tuesday evening after work, or whatever it may be, and they don't have to take PTO, they don't have to miss any time at work and on top of that, if their general physician isn't available like on a Saturday and they have a sore throat, little kid gets hurt, they can come see us get the care they need. And then go see their doctor if they feel the need later on down the road. Nicole McGowan, Councilmember, so this is supplemental insurance? Hager, it is not supplemental, no mam, it's more of like a foundation, so it's not an add on or supplemental. The way it works is you come see us first and then if we can't service you, you use your traditional insurance and the way that saves the City money is it reduces your utilization rate or your claim count. So then when you go to renew your traditional insurance, I think it's Blue Cross? Robbie Hood City Manager, Blue Cross, yes sir. Hager, when you go to renew that, they'll see that your utilization rate has declined significantly. So, they say, okay, you didn't use as much, so we're not going to charge you as much the next time going around. McGowan, and how much does this charge cost the City? Hager, seventy-five dollars (\$75) per employee per month. Hood, the good thing about this, as you all know, we've had some meetings is that you all are covered as well. McGowan, I know, but if we pay for insurance already and the employees have insurance that is paid for by us, why would we pay for another insurance? Hood, as he has indicated using this benefit will lower our potentially lower go-ahead Brooke.

Brooke Carroll, HR Director, so basically just lowering the utilization and so then we can hopefully have better insurance costs and everything for next year and see the difference when we do annual and open enrollment. Pebbles Eckhoff, Finance Director, we are hoping it will save us money to where we don't get that 15% hike in insurance premium costs next year. McGowan, yeah but how much is it costing us this year? Eckhoff, so right now between full-time and part-time, because part-time do not get any benefits at all and you don't City benefits at all either, and spouse and your children. McGowan, because I have insurance. Hood okay so back up, so the good thing about what we've learned with this is that seventy-five dollars (\$75), that we're talking about covers everybody. McGowan, I want the total seventy-five (75) times how much, is how many. Eckhoff, right now we have eighty-five (85) employees, if we are fully staffed, we are at eighty-seven (87) employees, which at eighty-seven (87) employees the total yearly cost is \$78,000.00. McGowan, \$78,000.00? And how much do we already pay for insurance? Eckhoff, we pay \$83,000.00 a month and this would add \$6,400.00 a month. Mayor Songe, but if I correctly understand this, the employee has zero co-pays for anything using here, so it does save them money as well. Hood, what I was going to add to that is, if you're finished, if you got your numbers. Eckhoff, it will be an additional \$6,400.00 a month and if we wait till January 1, 2025, to roll it out then we will save \$13,000.00 on this budget. MiKayla Bourque, Councilmember, what's the co-pays now? Eckhoff, they are thirty-five dollars (\$35.00). Hood, so with this particular plan, the good thing that that we see the benefit is that it's open seven (7) days a week. Employees that get sick don't have to use sick time if they don't have sick time, they can go after 5:00 o'clock and see a doctor. The seventy-five dollars (\$75) is paid by the City covers everyone that's eligible and correct me if I'm wrong, anybody is eligible if you can claim them on your income tax form, they can be covered at no additional cost. In some, of our employees, our insurance is too expensive that they can't carry their spouse or their dependent, so this is a way to offset some of that and kind of bridge that gap. Songe, and it covers mental health as well. McGowan, so is this why we went looking for something else? Eckhoff, I'm sorry? McGowan, is this why we went looking for something to add to the insurance for which we are already paying? Eckhoff, we did not go looking for anything else, it was actually brought to us, and the Mayor, City Manager, HR, and myself sat down and looked over it and said this is a benefit that is worthwhile, that's why. And MiKayla, it's thirty-five (\$35.00) if you go to your PCP, it's sixty-five (\$65.00) if you go to a specialist, ER is \$500.00, urgent care is eighty-five (\$85.00), and after your deductible is met, depending on the service you have a 20% co-pay. Songe, I know I went for the flu last December and my coinsurance for an urgent care was \$200 plus. I had a 20% coinsurance bill and that was just for the flu and dehydration. This says it does IV fluids for dehydration and. That's all included in it. That would have saved me a lot of money. Mercedes Lee, Councilmember, so these locations are specifically urgent cares. Hager, they are urgent care facility, but if you are a prime member, which is the benefit program, then you get the primary care the chronic care, preventive care, mental health, women and child wellness exams, physicals, annual physical sports, physicals for school, all of that. Lee, so if someone who didn't have the prime membership went to one of these locations, they would be charged the urgent care pricing with their insurance. Hager, correct, and they would only get urgent care services so they wouldn't get primary care. Lee, and what are the closest locations to us? Hager, so closet to Vidor, right now we have one in Beaumont that is 12 miles away, one in Nederland, that's 18 miles away. Eckhoff, what if I am on vacation and sprain my ankle then what? Hager, yes, so we have eight (8) locations in San Antonio, eight (8) in Austin, and over twenty-five (25) in Houston. So, no matter where you are at in those cities, you have access to all of those seven days a week 9:00am to 9:00pm. Carroll, then can you confirm if there are other municipalities or cities that are just government entities that are involved in this prime membership either locally or just in the state of Texas? Hager, Yes, we do, right off top, my head city of Manville has signed up for it, and Montgomery County has signed up, and there's a handful of others as well. I can get that information, but I'm more than happy to give references. Information if you want to do your due diligence. Jessica Barker, Councilmember, if this went through and I'm just giving hypotheticals, is there a contract, a term, or can we start and stop this if we feel like it's not working and ss beneficial as we thought it would. Hood, I can answer that Preston if you would like me to. So, Chris has been looking at the contract, it will be a contract that we enter into, but we're putting verbiage that we can get out, terminate the contract within 60 days of written notice to either party, for any reason. Songe, and I believe the rate does not go up at all for the first two (2) years. Hood, correct that rate will be fixed for the two-year contract which give us enough time to look at the utilization and seeing if we've

seen the discounted rates that we think we're going to get and that will give us option to get out of it. Barker, what are your thoughts on this Pebbles? Hood, Brooke has had the most interaction with them. Eckhoff, The biggest gain for us is that we do not get the 15% increase in rates again next year. If they can save us and they put us under double digits, it will pay for itself. We won't know that until we start using it and then we go out for bids next year. Lee, and the potential increases for Blue Cross that's based on our utilization, isn't it? Eckhoff, correct and it's unfortunate that when people go to seek care be it for cancer, neonatal care, diabetes, etc.; that pings us and then we get a bad rating. Just to put it in perspective we had three (3) companies, Aetna, TML, and United Healthcare that would not even bid us at all this year. Hood, our goal is to reduce our costs enough that we can get into the TML Risk Pool, but being our costs are so high right now other cities don't want to be responsible for absorbing those costs. Bourque, do you know the number for the 15% if it did go down next year? Eckhoff, I can have that to you by the next council meeting. Hood, I mean we will get an increase next year, everybody is increasing every year, we are just trying to reduce that increase. Eckhoff, we are trying our best to find a way to stay under double digits. We want to find a way to try and stay within the 6 to 10% range. Because if we look back at previous years, we can go back at least six (6) years and they probably had better competent insurance, but a six (6) years they were right at that percentage mark and then it just started compiling. Barker, may I ask a question. What percentage do you think our employees go to the Dr. or whatever your Primary Health Physician for these types of services, are these the most commonly used services? Eckhoff they are like testing, the common cold, physicals, and those types of things. We are filling out a questionnaire and we are going to get the employees feedback first. That they will utilize this benefit. Carroll, and I will say that in all the meetings that we've had with the employees so far, I've heard a lot of very positive feedback of, well, why wouldn't I use that? It's not an additional cost to me. We've confirmed that if there's anything that Next Level cannot provide that they will let them know prior to doing any additional services that would incur on the insurance. But it seems like they cover a wide range of services and needs, and it is a good location for both Nederland and Beaumont where we do have a lot of employees that don't work live in the city limits of either. It's closer for them and then having both those locations would be ideal. But overall, I've heard a lot of positive feedback and why when I use it especially in regard to being able to have spouse and children on it for no additional cost. So, for me myself of not being married, not having children at \$75 and then for another Employee who has a spouse and four children, then it is the same cost, that is a very big benefit for us. Hood, so with our insurance that we have in place, there's no back filling. If, as a service that they cannot not provide, correct me if I am wrong. The reason they'll have our insurance information is to refer us to a specialist that's in our network. It would be only reason correct. Hager, that is correct we will grab your tradition and say this is what you need, and we can't do it, here are your in-network specialists within your area. Then we just give that referral, and we cut out of it, and we share the patient's file with the Dr. they are going to go too. Songe, that's kind of big in itself because if you've ever had, to like get, I see Neurologists and to get referrals from the Primary Care Doctor, you have to wait, you have to call and remind them. Sometimes you have to make sure they send it over, so being able to be referred in a situation like that is very helpful. McGowan, but a lot of people want to go to their same PCP. So, this says that you would be going to their clinic instead of your PCP. Hager, no mam you do not have. So, we come into that all the time, like me personally with Next Level we have traditional insurance and Prime, and I've had my same family doctor for 25 years. It takes me four months to get in to see him just for an annual checkup. If I want to wait for months, I wait for months and go see him. Where prime comes in is if you're kick in is if it's a Saturday or after 5:00 in your PCP is already gone for the day. You just need quick care, come see us and then whenever you can go see your PCP again, we share that file with your PCP, we're not trying to take them away from anybody that they love to see, and they trust. But there's some scenarios where you don't need that touch of somebody that you trust, right? Just need quick care, that's when you come see. We will never say you have to use our doctors. And then on top of that, if you don't have a PCP or you do have a PCP and you just don't have a good relationship, you meet one of our doctors and you like them, then every time you schedule an appointment, you can request them so you see the same person over and over if you want to. Hood, talk to them about the app. Hager, so we have an app, obviously 2024, everybody should use it. If you don't like the app, you can always call. But you can do this both via phone call or that you schedule your appointment and 9 out of 10 times we'll see you same day, but 100% of the time we will see you within 24 hours. So, you

schedule an appointment, if you do it through the app, they'll put you in line. You pick the location you want and if let's say you pick Beaumont and you see it's a four hour wait. Then you can go to Nederland and see oh, it's only a 20-minute wait. If you want to make the extra 6 miles, whatever it may be, and you can go to Nederland. Then they put you in line, you can watch it on the app if you have that much time and see when your appointment's coming up. But we will text you or call you 15 minutes before your room's available and say go ahead and come on in. You don't have to sit in the lobby, you can sit at your house or in the car, And then we hold that room for at least 30 minutes. Songe, that's neat. I know Heart of Texas right now, which has been my primary care for a very long time. They're not taking walk-ins for the most part, and I've always had a real need to make a walk in appointment kind of thing. So, they're having to schedule out too, which? Hager, we will too even if you're a prime member, you can just walk in. But that's when you take the risk of having to wait because there might be a line of 10 other people that have already checked in. Songe, right. Hager, so just because you're a prime member, doesn't mean you have special needs, right? You're not more special than the other person that needs some care. But if you schedule your appointment, it is guaranteed within 24 hours. Barker, so Robbie, I think you all were asking for an action item on this one, right? Hood, so getting back to our primary insurance Blue Cross Blue Shield the city pays for the employee 100% the spouse and dependents employees have to pay 60% of that cost, so there's really not a lot that participate in that. They try to look for insurance in other places. We just think that this would kind of offset some of that, that they're not able to afford it in. Basically, cover everyone in your house, for one fee, and limited visit. Bourque, did you say \$75 per family? Hood, yes so then we would pay \$75 towards employees including you all because you are in the part time people that don't have benefits whatsoever be able to like to have this as well \$75 one time a month payment and it covers everybody in your house. Lee, I have a question about Pebbles for you. Since we've already approved and adopted our budget for this fiscal year, where would we anticipate this coming from? Eckhoff, we just take it out of our reserves unless we see another area where we could take it from, and we would have to do a budget amendment. But we wanted to present it to Council first and your approval and provide you with the details. That way when the time comes you all could use it too. Hood, not basically, I didn't mean to interrupt sorry. So basically, if the Council approves the contract, it's also pending legal review and then, then we'll go forward. Chris just has a few things to critique to take some stuff out of the contract. Since we're a public entity, we have immunity and some different things about which he and I had already talked. Chris knows what we're talking about and when we get those out, then we can move forward. But our goal is to try to roll out as fast as possible, You know, I was shooting for, it might be January, but we want to get this push this fast as possible to get it signed. Barker, I just have one question sorry. Whenever you negotiate the contract is for two years and you are going to ask for a 60 day out. Hager, the contract typically comes with a 30 day out, but we are going to do a 60 day out for the City. Eckhoff, is that only in the first 60 days or anytime? Hager, no mam it's the whole two years, anytime.

A motion to approve the Resolution allowing the City of Vidor to enroll and execute the Next Level Prime Medical Agreement with NLUC, PLLC, was made by Councilmember McGowan, seconded by Councilmember Barker. The Council voted four (4) for and none (0) opposed. The motion carried.

C -3. Discussion and possible action to approve an Ordinance of the City of Vidor establishing an exemption from ad valorem (property) taxes for a Qualified Childcare Facility pursuant to Texas Tax Code §11.36

Mayor Songe calls Britni McPayne to come and speak. Britni McPayne, Lollipop Stop Daycare Owner, thank you all for revisiting this. We've been waiting and we're hoping we can reach something. I did some research on mid counties mid county facilities based on about maximum capacity at my facility. Our rates versus their rates are approximately \$2500 a week that they charge more than we charge because of the demographics, the people that they serve over there. However, we spend about the same on supplies and on insurance and on all the things that we have to do daily. Yet we're getting the same, you know, paying the same taxes and all that kind of stuff. So, this tax break could really help us a lot because we can't just keep upping the price and I haven't done a rate increase in over a year. Because it will price people out of the market in our area, our daycares are very across the board in our area. We kind of try to stay together to make sure that we're all providing quality care and around the same price give or take. So that \$2500 is a lot and we're not getting the revenue that they're getting and we're still spending the money that they're spending over there. And so, we also spend a ton of money monthly to maintain our four-star rating. For Texas rising star, they don't send us money for anything. Occasionally, they'll send us some things for our rooms or whatever, which is great, but the monetary part comes on our part. So, we try very hard to have quality childcare have children learning, it's not just watching babies all day. At a higher cost and in doing so, something like this could be very beneficial to us. You know, our insurance has doubled the pre-K that the public school has taken on has taken a lot of children from our pre-K. Hey, people want to lose the payment that they're having to pay and it's free for the ones that qualify and there's some too, that the state pays for that could come to our pre-K But they also qualify for public pre-K. They send them there because their siblings are already there, or whatever. So, we lose those children too, so that we would still be getting paid for by the state. So, this, you know, this kind of thing where we're facing with the three- and four-year-olds, our class sizes are extremely small now across the board and I guess it's a lot of that or some people just keeping their kids home, with lots of rising costs. You know the babies, they're all booming, lots of children being born. We don't worry about that, but the older ones, as they're getting older, it's it is getting harder. So, we're doing all we can for that and we're trying to keep the cost low for the parents. But inevitably we have to keep going up. You know, we would really appreciate it. It would be very helpful for us, and I guess with the state doing it, they realize that it's needed. We got some grants during some of the COVID stuff, but of course that stuff is long gone and we're still trying to keep great staff and all the things. The only other thing I would say is if y'all come up with qualifications, it's not a one-size-fits-all. I know like the city of Austin did like 20%, state funded children that you had to have. Will we have the maximum that we can and will take any more that we can, but there aren't those numbers here. For us to have 20% were close, but it's just they're bigger up there, and there's more funding there. So that kind of thing, I'll be willing to help y'all look at it, if possible, to make sure the qualifications meet where we can. Of us, I mean, there's definitely different tiers, of the Texas Rising Star stuff like. So, you know, there's great things that you can put into place, but please just make sure it's not what Austin did, and this is what we should do too. Mayor Songe, and Britini, I think your city taxes are \$2,000.00 to \$2,500.00 a year. I mean, it's not, its money, but it's not like you're asking for a substantial amount of help. McPayne, right yes mam. Robbie Hood, City Manager, Mayor, if I if I may, so the legislature, as she talked about, put this in place and allow local entities, including counties, to give a tax break no less than 50%, up to 100% of their taxable value that they charge. Our tax rate is .63 cents per \$100 evaluation based off of and I looked at appraised value, I won't say the price value, but it's about \$2400 that she would be saving. That's nothing compared to the services that they offer if they didn't have daycares here. Nicole McGowan, Councilmember, If we pass this do your rates stay the same. You don't go up on your rates. McPayne, I can't promise that just because of the rising cost of everything else, because we're looking at having to go up and up based off of everything else still rising, so I would love to pass that on to the families and it can help with that. But I can't say that no, we would not have to at all simply because, you know, keeping staff and stuff like that is, we're faced with having to give more and more and to try to keep the quality people there. I mean, you know how it goes with people not walking in the door and we're asking them to take care of humans. You know, I'm not trying to just hire anybody on

Facebook. Hood, so this basically will enable and help you to keep your doors open. McPayne, correct yes sir. Hood, it is the City's recommendation that the percentage be passed at 100%.

A motion to **approve an Ordinance of the City of Vidor establishing a 100% exemption from ad valorem (property) taxes for a Qualified Childcare Facility pursuant to Texas Tax Code §11.36**, was made by Councilmember McGowan, seconded by Councilmember Barker. The Council voted four (4) for and none (0) opposed. **The motion carried.**

C -4. Discussion and possible action to approve a Resolution authorizing the submittal of a 2025/2026 TxCDBG application to the Texas Department of Agriculture and committing matching funds

A motion to **approve a Resolution authorizing the submittal of a 2025/2026 TxCDBG application to the Texas Department of Agriculture and committing matching funds**, was made by Councilmember McGowan, seconded by Councilmember Bourque. The Council voted four (4) for and none (0) opposed. **The motion carried.**

C -5. Discussion and possible action concerning the property owner's request for an extension of time for a recreational vehicle's placement on property in excess of ninety (90) days located at 615 Lyndale

Mayor Songe, called contractor Matt McPayne, to speak on this. Songe, I am going to go ahead and say my concern with this one, because this one has been an issue. They have lived in this since 2017, it has gone back and forth, back, and forth so. I know it states that you're working on bids and stuff like that, but are there actual plans? We know for sure it's moving. Like what actual part of the process are they in? Matt McPayne, we had one site meeting and the and since that meeting, she had I believe she lives in College Station and Nathan lives on the property, and they were going to reach out, I gave them a contact to, you know, get started with the home design. So, we could actually start the estimate process and there was a death in the family and that's about as far as we've gone so far. During the meeting, she did express a sense of urgency to get the process going and I told them, you know, I mean, I can't pull a permit. Can't really give them a bid until we have a good set of. We come down, you know, and then we, you know, everything's approved through the code enforcement process and then we can start on, the actual bid. We could complete the house build in about six (6) months. Pebbles Eckhoff, Finance Director, special needs son lives on the property in the RV, elderly mother lives in College Station, house was demolished in 2019, letters were sent to the wrong persons on the property. Brief discussion ensued, Council agreed to revisit in 90 days and see if there is progress and if that is transpired we will go from there.

A motion to **approve a 90-day extension and it comes back to Council with proof of progress and if not immediate removal**, was made by Councilmember McGowan, seconded by Councilmember Bourque. The Council voted four (4) for and none (0) opposed. **The motion carried.**

Mayor Songe stated after the motion and second that the 90-day revisit is 02-13-2025.

C -6. Consideration of Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Councilmember McGowan, seconded by Councilmember Lee. The Council voted four (4) for and none (0) opposed. **The motion carried; the meeting adjourned at 7:52 pm**

These minutes were approved on December 12, 2024.

ATTEST:



Rachel Duplechain, City Secretary



Misty Songe, Mayor