

OSCAR LEESER
MAYOR

TOMMY GONZALEZ
CITY MANAGER



CITY COUNCIL
PETER SVARZBEIN, DISTRICT 1
JIM TOLBERT, DISTRICT 2
EMMA ACOSTA, DISTRICT 3
CARL L. ROBINSON, DISTRICT 4
MICHEL R. NOE, DISTRICT 5
CLAUDIA ORDAZ, DISTRICT 6
LILY LIMÓN, DISTRICT 7
CORTNEY CARLISLE NILAND, DISTRICT 8

**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
EL PASO ZOO EVENT PAVILION
4001 EAST PAISANO
EL PASO, TEXAS 79905
February 16, 2017**

The City Council met at the above place and date. Meeting was called to order at 8:20 a.m. Mayor Leeser present and presiding and the following Council Members answered roll call: Peter Svarzbein, Jim Tolbert, Emma Acosta, Claudia Ordaz, and Lilia Limón. Late arrivals: Cortney Niland at 8:57 a.m. and Michiel Noe at 9:12 a.m. Not Present: Carl L. Robinson

AGENDA

1. Discussion and action on the update of the Strategic Plan: Goals for the City.

Mayor Leeser introduced the Strategic Planning Meeting by explaining its importance in establishing a realistic and balanced budget for 2017.

He explained the debt service requirements of the city and questioned Chief Financial Officer Mark Sutter on refinancing of over \$200 million dollars with a savings of \$17 million for the taxpayers. He addressed previous debt practices that impact the taxpayers all at once. The more conservative practice now does not allow Council to "spend" the same dollars twice.

The Mayor spoke of the job creation that has occurred.

Ms. Nancy Bartlett, Chief Performance Officer, gave a PowerPoint presentation.

Mr. Tommy Gonzalez, City Manager, thanked the Council for being here to establish the strategic goals (continuation of PowerPoint).

Mayor Leeser spoke of the additional training academies for EPPD to allow for growth in the police force. Negotiations with the Fire Department are important for the budget. Public safety is not an option for budget costs to him.

Mayor Leeser spoke of his efforts to create jobs and the use of economic incentives to attract new businesses. FAM tours, 150 CEOs come to El Paso for site visits. We were looking not just for jobs, but for the future of our citizens through jobs with

training opportunities, benefits and the ability to advance.”

Unemployment rate lowered from 9.1% to 4.1%.

New house starts in El Paso are up because El Pasoans can use their livable wages to create a home for their families.

Job retention is extremely important.

Mayor Leeser spoke of the need to maximize users of our park and recreation and aquatic facilities by building higher quality facilities.

Mr. Gonzalez addressed the funding of Sun City Lights. Four projects are funded.

Mr. Cary Westin, Deputy City Manager for Economic Development and Tourism, discussed 20 in 20 initiatives (continuation of PowerPoint) for economic development.

Mr. Westin discussed the need to develop new strategies to attract millennials to our community. He addressed the critical nature of our international ports of entry.

Mayor Leeser discussed funding sources for airport improvements.

Mayor Leeser discussed travel to Chicago with the Mayor of Juarez.

Mr. Khalil Zaied, Deputy City Manager of Public Works and Transportation, addressed the public works and transportation projects (continuation of PowerPoint).

Dr. Mark Sutter, Chief Financial Officer, addressed computer and finance issues and some public works projects and transportation (BRIO) projects (continuation of PowerPoint).

Recess at 10:23 a.m. back in session at 10:47 a.m.

Representative Limón questioned Ms. Bartlett on procedure for approval of strategies. She questioned Item #1: Camino Real, and the Multipurpose Cultural and Performing Arts.

Mr. Westin explained the item and the need for parking solutions.

Representative Svarzbein asked that parking solutions be creative and flexible, not just building another parking structure but one that will make downtown more livable and walkable as a mixed used area.

Representative Svarzbein asked about trailheads and the need to also invest in the trails themselves.

Mr. Khalil Zaied focused on the \$600,000 Quality of Life item that was identified for the trailheads.

Representative Svarzbein stressed the need for a complete strategy for trailheads and trails.

Representative Limón questioned Strategy #3: Attract two retail destination anchors.

Mr. Westin explained the item.

Representative Limón asked if Grey Wolf Lodge was an actual deal made with the City now.

Mr. Gonzalez replied, "There is no contract. This is a vision."

Representative Svarzbein stated, "Certain retailers are popular to millennials: REI, Patagonia, Trader Joe's, that further connect El Paso to a larger context of economic development cache.

Representative Tolbert expressed the need for bike plans.

Mr. Zaied stated, "Every street we construct has a bike plan set into it. In the future, splurge funding for a bike plan would be wise. \$750,000,000 would be needed to implement a bike plan, ambitious plan.

Representative Ordaz also spoke of the need for overlapping bike plans and hike and bike plans, including utility lines.

Representative Niland questioned Strategy #19. Program facility rehabilitation and equipment replacement plan. "We need to change our mindset for every new facility to have the operating and maintenance attached to it in a sinking fund. The public needs to know the complete cost picture of the new facilities."

Mr. Gonzalez stated, "Yes, good idea for that annotation to each project."

Representative Svarzbein stated, "Old utility paths in my district could be an opportunity for public recreation sites."

"There is a need to get people off Mesa Street; it is dangerous for bike riders and pedestrians and cars to all utilize Mesa. Doniphan to downtown Paisano could be built out for bike access."

Representative Limón questioned Strategy #6. Develop eco-tourism and heritage tourism strategy, specifically to encourage City participation with community organizations,

Mr. Westin explained that some of the resiliency strategies like Destination El Paso are focused on this strategy.

Representative Limón questioned Strategy #18. Grow signature holiday attractions. "Is this confined to specific areas?"

Mr. Westin replied, "Airport and downtown areas are the main focus."

Representative Limón asked, "Shawver Park? Could that location be included? Could the strategy be changed to add throughout the City?"

Mr. Gonzalez explained the focus of the strategy and that Council can broaden it.

Representative Limón asked what Council's involvement in this process is today.

Mr. Gonzalez replied, "Council can change the strategies by a vote. We have no problem at all with that."

Mayor Leeser also explained Council members can make a motion.

Representative Noe asked that we be crystal clear. "If we are going to add something, we need a motion and vote of Council."

Representative Limón questioned Strategy #9. Investment in downtown historic structures.

Mr. Westin stated, "There is significant interest from investors in restoring downtown building stock. These projects can be complex and expensive. This is happening in our community in a big way."

Representative Limón questioned, "Do we have incentives for residential area rehabilitation?"

Mr. Westin replied, "No, we do not."

Representative Tolbert questioned incentives for existing small businesses in town and promoting our mountains.

Mr. Westin stated, "Many Chapter 380 agreements have been approved by Council for small businesses."

Ms. Jessica Herrera, Interim Director of Economic and International Development, stated, "We need to address the needs of our small businesses because 80% of the jobs are in small businesses. We need to be more proactive in reaching out to them and explaining what we can do for them. We will re-evaluate our incentives to see how to best serve small businesses. Are there work force issues, capital issues, equipment and real estate issues? The interest in co-work spaces is growing. Economic Development is putting together a guide as a tool box for small business owners on line and we need to engage them."

Representative Limón questioned Strategy #11: Construct Sun City Lights Way. "How did the funding mechanism come to be for the four areas? El Paso Street, Cincinnati Street, Baltimore Street, Glory Road, Eastside Regional. Park, Airport."

Mayor Leeser answered, "It makes more sense to do Eastside Regional Park now rather than retrofit it."

Mr. Zaied stated, "We want to complete the whole recreation area there at once."

Mr. Gonzalez stated, "The next phase would be Mission Trails because there is a lot of opportunity there."

Representative Limón followed up with funding questions.

Mr. Gonzalez stated, "Cincinnati was already part of the CIP plan. Eastside Regional Park, there is funding already in the project."

Representative Limón would like to see a master plan for all of these: Scenic Drive, Mission Valley, etc.

Mayor Leeser stated, "Savings in a project needs to go to other projects in the Sun City Lights program. How do we put money back in fund balance?"

Mr. Gonzalez stated, "Savings comes from the operating budget. 49 cents is for operations."

Representative Noe stated, "It was clear for Sun City Lights that we would have it as an entrance to our areas of town." He questioned the budget and funding of Eastside Regional Park.

Representative Svarzbein questioned Strategy #2: Rapid Transit System Corridors. We need to use operating hours as economic drivers. We need to augment the cost of ridership for the first 6 months to encourage ridership. Get private businesses to sponsor free rides.

Representative Svarzbein questioned Strategy #4: Create a comprehensive International Bridges Capital Improvement Program. We need to create an International Affairs Department to serve as a liaison between us, Mexico, the Federal Government, etc. San Antonio has had one since 1968.

Mr. Westin stated, "The City Manager directed him to look at creating a position to put in the Borderplex's International Office in Mexico."

Representative Svarzbein questioned, "The position would be where? In the Mayor's Office?"

Mayor Leeser explained efforts they have been making in sharing data between Juarez and El Paso. Mayor will be meeting with Governor Abbott and El Paso Days next week with the Mayor of Juarez.

Representative Svarzbein explained his vision for the position or department that is not limited just to us and Mexico.

Mayor Leeser stated that adding personnel does not necessarily add efficiencies. The uncertainty on the border is the biggest issue we are dealing with today. Businesses are reluctant to invest in this uncertain environment.

Mr. Westin stated, "City staff members are making efforts."

Mr. Zaied spoke of street cars as economic drivers.

Mr. Westin spoke of interest from private investors in Juarez.

Representative Limón stated, "We've been extremely successful at building a relationship with Juarez, Chihuahua and the national Mexican government."

Strategy #4: Bridges. "Does this cover all bridges, including the Zaragoza Bridge?"

Mr. Westin replied, "Yes."

Mr. Mathew McElroy, Director of International Bridges expanded on that affirmative answer and pointed out the need for better restroom facilities at all ports of entry. He added that the City needs to create new revenue sources to fund these projects to donate to GSA.

Representative Limón stated, "We should designate an amount in the budget each year to fund improvements at the bridges."

Mr. Gonzalez stated, "We are working on a CIP for the bridges."

Representative Limón would like the bridges as part of the Sun City Lights projects.

Representative Limón questioned livable wages #16: Complete comprehensive livable wages review. "Is this for our contract employees and part-timers?"

Mr. Gonzalez replied, "Yes."

Representative Limón would like to see #4 reworded to make it an action item not just a review.

Representative Noe asked, "Are we just talking about the pros and cons of studying a livable wage?"

Ms. Bartlett replied, "Yes, that's correct."

1st MOTION

Motion made by Representative Niland, seconded by Representative Tolbert, and carried to **INCORPORATE** all the 20/20 strategies and resiliency strategies as amended into the Strategic Plan.

AYES: Representatives Svarzbein, Tolbert, Noe, Ordaz, and Niland

NAYS: Representative Limón

NOT PRESENT FOR THE VOTE: Representatives Acosta and Robinson

Recess at 12:16 p.m.

Reconvened at 1:05 p.m.

2ND MOTION

Motion made by Representative Svarzbein, seconded by Representative Niland and unanimously carried to **DIRECT** City staff to seek out collaborative opportunities with TXDOT, EPWU and other utilities on easements to utilize for bike share and recreational paths.

AYES: Representatives Svarzbein, Tolbert, Noe, Ordaz, Limón, and Niland

NAYS: None

NOT PRESENT FOR THE VOTE: Representatives Acosta and Robinson

Representative Niland questioned, "What would this be a priority one? Funding source? Coordination with TXDOT can be very difficult."

Representative Ordaz requested an amendment to the motion to include utility easements.

Representative Noe stated he does not support doing this at this time over more pressing safety issues with infrastructure on the eastside.

Representative Limón questioned the funding for the Eastside Regional Park Sun City Lights.

Mr. Raul Escobedo, Sun Metro, explained the need for FTA approval on equity analysis for mass transit fares.

Representative Svarzbein explained the desire to jumpstart ridership of the street cars through fare reductions and private sponsorships.

Representative Limón expressed and concern about the mass transit service from the eastside to downtown at later hours. When it is not available it prevents people from coming downtown.

3rd MOTION

Motion made by Representative Ordaz, seconded by Representative Svarzbein, and unanimously carried for the City Manager to bring back to Council, the Council's additional items for the strategic plan, listed on 'the post it notes', as quickly as possible with the proper information to make the best decisions.

AYES: Representatives Svarzbein, Tolbert, Noe, Ordaz, Limón, and Niland

NAYS: None

NOT PRESENT FOR THE VOTE: Representatives Acosta and Robinson

4th MOTION

Motion made by Representative Svarzbein, seconded by Representative Niland, and unanimously carried to **APPROVE** Goal 2.4: Improve Motorist Safety to **ADD** "traffic management solutions" and Goal 5.6: Strengthen Messaging Opportunities through media outlets to **ADD** "proactive community outreach."

AYES: Representatives Svarzbein, Tolbert, Noe, Ordaz, Limón, and Niland

NAYS: None

NOT PRESENT FOR THE VOTE: Representatives Acosta and Robinson

ADJOURN

Motion made by Representative Ordaz, seconded by Representative Tolbert, and unanimously carried to **ADJOURN** this meeting at 1:33 p.m.

NOT PRESENT FOR THE VOTE: Representatives Acosta and Robinson

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APPROVED AS TO CONTENT:

Richarda Duffy Momsen, City Clerk