

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 WORK SESSION MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
MAIN CONFERENCE ROOM
June 29, 2016

The City Council met at the above place and date. Meeting was called to order at 10:49 a.m. Mayor Oscar Leeser present and presiding and the following Council Members answered roll call: Peter Svarzbein, Jim Tolbert, Emma Acosta, Carl Robinson, Michiel Noe, Claudia Ordaz, Lilia Limón and Cortney Niland

AGENDA

1. Goal 2 – Public Safety (Police and Fire)

Fire Chief Sam Pena presented a PowerPoint presentation (copy on file in City Clerk's Office).

Mayor Leeser commented on the Fire Department raises approved by the voters.

Representative Limón questioned police officers vacancies and the net increases of 30 officers being shown.

Representative Niland asked, "How is the 30 net increase determined?"

Police Chief Greg Allen explained.

Representative Limón questioned Chief Allen on vacancies and when they are filled.

Representative Robinson questioned the number of officers who are eligible to retire right now.

Chief Allen replied, "250 officers, approximately."

Chief Allen gave comparisons of El Paso's Police staffing with other major Texas cities. "We are being driven by events, drawing resources from other parts of the City to handle the event and leaving the original locations underserved."

Representative Robinson stated, "We need to do everything we can to build the force."

Mayor Leaser stated, "It has to be done in phases. We cannot handle 400 officers in an academy. We do need to get to 300 more officers."

Chief Allen stated, "City Manager has been responsive to EPPD's needs."

Representative Noe asked, "What is the projection for retaining experienced officers?"

Mr. Gonzalez replied, "An additional 3 to 5 years is the guesstimate."

Fire Chief Pena stated, "Right now there is an incentive for officers to retire after 28 years, pension wise. The "forward drop" option allows officers to recap some pension contributions after 28 years to keep them on the job 3 to 5 years longer."

Mr. Gonzalez stated, "We have 30 new officers per year built into the budget. The "forward drop" is not a strong enough incentive to convince a large number of officers to stay on the force."

Chief Allen explained the Tier 2 retirement requirement for new hires.

Mr. Gonzalez stated, "The budget also includes police equipment."

Representative Noe asked, "At what point are we going to add a new far eastside EPPD command center?"

Chief Allen replied, "The regional command concept is to allow the department to be more responsive to the community, access to police services for citizens."

Representative Acosta questioned actual expenditures for FY15. Central EPPD funding went up. She is concerned about the decrease in funding for Mission Valley and the other command centers.

Chief Allen stated, "There are fluctuations among staffing costs for events and overtime. "The impact of ballpark work in the collective bargaining contract also is a factor. Also, Music Under the Stars."

Representative Acosta expressed concerns about staffing levels being diverted from other parts of town to Central Command.

Chief Allen replied, "Each command site needs more officers. Officers are having to work longer days to compensate. One woman called for help for an intruder in her house at 1:00 a.m. and had to wait 3 hours for a response."

Mr. Gonzalez stated, "We have placed more money in overtime."

Representative Acosta stated, "Former Chief Carlos Leon said that when he left 15 years ago EPPD had more officers than they do now. "

Mr. Gonzalez stated, "Wasn't staffing at that time augmented by a COPS grant?"

Mr. Gonzalez explained the strategy to deal with community needs.

Representative Acosta asked, "Can we hire other peace officers from different entities to staff events?"

Chief Allen replied, "Decisions made by previous administrators are impacting the department today."

Representative Acosta urged Mr. Gonzalez not to cut the Police and Fire Departments.

Mr. Gonzalez replied, "We have no cuts."

Mayor Leeser stated, "Police and Fire public safety is very important."

Representative Ordaz asked, "Where is the biggest need?"

Chief Allen replied, "Pebble Hills, 40 to 50% of the calls for service."

Representative Noe questioned Chief Allen on the size of the Pebble Hills Command Center.

Representative Ordaz asked, "In Mission Valley is there an increase in crime?"

Chief Allen replied, "Beer runs."

Representative Niland commented on beer runs and the placement of beer near the entrances of convenience stores.

Ms. Firth stated, "The sale of alcohol is governed by State law."

Mr. Gonzalez stated, "In the past, the City I managed came up with a convenience store ordinance that required windows with a clean view inside."

Representative Svarzbein asked, "How many cadets can EPPD handle each year?"

Chief Allen replied, "We can handle 80 and more. We will take what we can get."

Chief Allen stated, "We need to keep in place the attrition academy and the 30 officers for growth."

Representative Tolbert asked, "Is there a ratio of officers per citizen we can reference?"

Chief Allen replied, "There is no standard. If we get a department of 1300 we will be well staffed for service."

Representative Limón commented to Chief Allen on what he and his officers have been able to do for our City. "Vandalism and graffiti on the eastside at churches, is this vandalism or a hate crime?"

Chief Allen replied, "It is very difficult to solve these types of crimes."

Public comment:

Mr. Ron Martin, President of El Paso Police Officers Association stated, "Forward Drop Program will not fix the problem. We need more officers. We have the same number of officers we have now as we had 20 years ago. The vehicles are in disrepair, old. We've had academies cancelled. We need to steadily increase our staffing. We need bodies, cars and equipment before you build a building. Downtown metro unit drew from other areas. Deal with the issues now."

Mayor Leeser agreed with Mr. Martin.

Representative Limón stated, "The response time goal is 90%, 67.5% is the actual, 21 minutes for response."

Mayor Leeser stated, "This has been an issue for 38 years."

Mr. Gonzalez stated, "The City does have a plan. We need to stay committed to the 10 year plan. More officers and vehicles are needed."

Representative Limón asked, "What can City do for the replacement of emergency vehicles? Can that date be available?"

Fire Chief Pena replied, "Half of vehicles are over 10 years old, we have run out of reserve units, 50% of the time. State of fleet is critical. Plan recommended to replace on schedule is a \$1.7 million investment, 4 to 5 vehicles per year."

Chief Allen stated, "Each vehicle is \$57,000 one for one trade out."

Mr. Cortinas stated, "Issues addressed by other departments."

Fire Chief Pena stated, "Standardize is very important. Initial investment is expensive. Facilities must be upgraded to accommodate female workers."

Representative Limón asked, "Are the call takers fully staffed?"

Fire Chief Pena answered, "No."

Ms. Bartlett replied, "They are fully funded, but not staffed."

Public comment:

Ms. Holly Mata appreciates public safety.

Mr. Joe Molinar, President, Castner Heights Neighborhood Association, commented, "Increase in Police and Fire staffing needs to happen."

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Goal 4 – Quality of Life (Library, Museums, Parks, Zoo)

Ms. Dionne Mack, Interim Director of Quality of Life, presented a PowerPoint presentation (copy on file in City Clerk's Office).

Representative Limón questioned Slide 12, Borderland High School grant for high scholars who live in a house with migrant workers.

Representative Limón questioned page 7, Deliverables. “What is present attendance?” Slide 13, Argo Park anticipated being on time.

Mr. Javier Reyes, CIP, confirmed.

Representative Tolbert questioned the art piece at Irving Schwartz.

Representative Limón praised museums and libraries.

Representative Robinson appreciates the improvements at the Archaeological Museum and the hiring of the director for that facility. He commented on the talented pool of finalists for the job. Veteran’s Park facility, child care is self-sufficient.

Representative Ordaz asked City Manager to do an analysis of the needs of all the Parks.

Mr. Tracy Novak, Director of Parks and Recreation, replied, “The analysis is completed and is in the City Manager’s office for prioritization of needs among all City needs.”

Mr. Gonzalez asked, “Don’t we have \$2 million set aside for that?”

Ms. Mack explained that safety issues are the first priority and then amenities for the many playgrounds across the City.

Mr. Gonzalez spoke of the previous division of land management and programming. Did not make sense. Now the resources are combined and can better address issues.

Representative Acosta thanked the staff for the presentation. “Where is facilities and maintenance being moved to for Libraries?”

Mr. Cortinas replied, “To Streets and Maintenance.”

Representative Acosta questioned where utilities are budgeted.

Representative Svarzbein questioned MCAD Programming and the Artist Incubation Program.

Mr. Ben Fyffe said, “There is a slight increase this year due to a slight increase in Hotel-Motel tax receipts.”

Representative Svarzbein stated the Local Art Program helps to encourage a creative class here. Film makers Incubator Program, he would like to see this.

Mr. Fyffe stated, “Film making is authorized under the Artist Incubator Program.”

Mayor Leeser asked, “Have you all thought of working with the HUB of Human

Innovation?”

Ms. Tracey Jerome, MCAD Director, replied, “Yes, we recognize the arts can move this community forward.”

Representative Svarzbein addressed street art and how it can enrich the community and become “instagramable”. Would like to knock out one or two of these a year.

Public comment:

Mr. Jaime Quintana spoke of soccer and 8-12k registered players in El Paso. Soccer fields are substandard. Soccer can have a big economic impact for El Paso.

Ms. Paula Powell, Parks and Recreation, reviewed the changes being made to the soccer fields and additional fields that could host tournaments and for our El Paso teams to practice.

Mayor Leaser commented on the need to have fields that meet the needs of our community.

Representative Limón spoke of the quality of the fields for tournaments that could be an economic development tool.

Representative Ordaz questioned the inventory of flat fields vs. the needs. “How many more flat fields do we need?”

Ms. Powell replied, “We will send the analysis to Mayor and Council when she compiles it.”

Representative Robinson stated, “Previously we had cut funding for Parks. So, we are behind. Northeast Regional Park has been worked on since 2005 and still it is not finished.”

Ms. Powell replied, “Over four fields still are to be completed.”

Representative Acosta questioned introduction of Wi-Fi at Seville Senior Center. “When will it happen?”

Mr. Enrique Martinez, Director of Information Technology, replied, “Next year it is on the list.”

Mr. Gonzalez stated, “That is being prioritized over some internal needs, focusing on customers.”

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Goal 5 – Communication (IT)

Mr. Enrique Martinez, Director of Information Technology, presented a PowerPoint presentation (copy on file in City Clerk’s Office).

Representative Acosta, Slide 8, Page 4, contractual services decrease.

Mr. Cortinas explained it was moved to debt service.

Representative Acosta questioned, "Digital El Paso extension across zip codes? 79905?"

Mr. Martinez replied, "Brick and Mortar facilities are more feasible. They are less expensive. Examples are recreation centers and libraries."

Ms. Bartlett asked Mr. Martinez about costs.

Mr. Martinez replied, "Hundreds of millions of dollars."

Mr. Gonzalez tried to partner with El Paso Electric for internet, but not the Wi-Fi piece. We can find out if the Wi-Fi piece is feasible and let Council know the costs.

Representative Acosta stated, "Texas Tech and EPISD were interested in partnering with us."

Mr. Martinez stated, "After the entities met and the costs were explained, the interest of the other entities subsided."

Mr. Gonzalez stated, "The cost is likely to be onerous, but we can get the cost for Council and narrow the coverage down to preferred areas."

Representative Acosta questioned video conferencing capability? Where is IT on this? It was supposed to happen last year but has not happened yet?"

Mr. Martinez replied, "We encountered some technical difficulties."

Ms. Sylvia Firth stated, "City Council asked for video conferencing in the City Council Chambers and Executive Session."

Mr. Martinez stated, "Video conferencing will be implemented in 90 days."

Mr. Gonzalez stated, "The priority is for the video conferencing in the executive session room."

Representative Ordaz questioned faulty wireless connections downtown. "Is it now accessible?"

Mr. Martinez replied, "Only at San Jacinto Plaza Café. After that, the Main Library."

Representative Niland asked, "Is there wireless at the cell phone lot at the EPIA?"

Representative Ordaz asked about expanding Wi-Fi across the City and partnerships with other government entities, including TXDOT.

Representative Limón commented on the electronic taking of the census, the importance of being counted, and the need to be widely publicized.

Mr. Gonzalez replied, "That will be another technological avenue to get the count out."

Representative Tolbert loves "Your City in 5". "What is the viewership in numbers? Also, our Twitter and Facebook numbers?"

Ms. Julie Lozano, Public Information Marketing Manager, replied, "City in 5 is emailed out to 5,000 individuals."

Representative Robinson stated, "Everyone wants the City to pay for everything."

Ms. Lozano gave Facebook, Twitter and YouTube stats for City's home page.

Ms. Richarda Momsen, Municipal Clerk, gave specific stats on Facebook views for the Court's amnesty bulletin in April 2016.

Representative Niland stated, "San Antonio's CIP dashboard is an ideal to evaluate."

Representative Limón stated, "Newsletters could incorporate City in 5."

Representative Svarzbein questioned Channel 15 and what kind of programming can be shown, such as locally made content.

Ms. Lozano stated, "Content has to be limited to government agencies."

Ms. Firth explained the limitation of the PEG funding source.

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Goal 6 – Sound Governance (City Attorney, City Manager, HR, Mayor/Council, Municipal Clerk, Non-Dept., Comptroller, Purchasing, Tax)

Dr. Mark Sutter, Chief Financial Officer, presented a PowerPoint presentation (copy on file in City Clerk's Office).

Ms. Nancy Bartlett, Chief Performance Officer, presented a PowerPoint presentation (copy on file in City Clerk's Office).

Representative Robinson said it was refreshing to see some recommendations being implemented.

Representative Robinson questioned consolidation of grant compliance and water compliance grant.

Dr. Sutter explained.

Representative Robinson questioned the military grant that we received. "Where was it placed?"

Mr. Cary Westin replied, "Economic Development project."

Mr. Cortinas stated, "Budget has not yet been set up, but it will be included in

Economic Development.”

Ms. Pat Degman, Comptroller, stated, “The grant becomes available on September 1.”

Representative Acosta questioned page 31, City Attorney budget/Professional services. “The amount has been budgeted the same each year despite expenditures that have exceeded that amount.”

Ms. Sylvia Firth, City Attorney, replied, “It depends on what occurs each year to require outside legal services.”

Dr. Sutter replied, “We do not want to telegraph what we plan to spend.”

Mr. Gonzalez stated, “Also, some of the outside legal services are embedded in Quality of Life projects.”

Representative Acosta asked, “So they are financed by debt?”

Dr. Sutter replied, “Yes, they are part of the project cost.”

Representative Acosta questioned page 124, Fines and Fees, Municipal Clerk. She also questioned Mayor and Council benefits amount.

Mr. Cortinas stated, “Health Care is being budgeted according to the plan each individual has chosen.”

Representative Acosta questioned, “Discretionary funding?”

Representative Acosta questioned, “Intergovernmental attorney government relations?”

Ms. Firth replied, “The position is still budgeted. I am in the process of negotiating with someone who will work part-time from Austin.”

Mr. Gonzalez replied, “We did market adjustments for attorney salaries.”

Representative Ordaz questioned the contract with the County for housing jail prisoners.

Representative Limón questioned open records request. “Is our number of ORRs higher, lower, even with other major Texas cities?”

Ms. Firth replied, “I do not have those figures.”

Representative Limón questioned the increased funding for support staff. “How does it work? The new overtime laws?”

Ms. Nancy Bartlett, Chief Performance Officer, replied, “HR has looked at every employee in the City who will be impacted. Biggest examination is to see how departments use overtime. It is going to have to be monitored closely.”

Mr. Cortinas commented on uses for the increase in allocation.

Representative Svarzbein commented on the need to be open to providing the required City services. Explore implementation of a soda tax for fleet maintenance, hiring of police officers.

Ms. Firth stated, "The State of Texas has constitutional prohibitions about the imposition of taxes. A soda tax would not be permitted. A municipality cannot create new taxes without authorization."

Representative Limón questioned the compensation for interns.

Ms. Linda Thomas, Director of Human Resources, replied, "If you have the budget, you can compensate them. Also, the City has an agreement with EPCC and UTEP."

Representative Limón questioned the use of volunteers.

Ms. Thomas explained they do not get paid.

Representative Ordaz questioned, "Is there an age limit?"

Ms. Thomas replied, "Yes, at least 14 years old."

Representative Ordaz replied, "Add a component for internship opportunities to retain local talent."

Mr. Westin stated, "We have collaboration with UTEP that could be put in the bonus category."

Representative Limón asked, "Could we give volunteers parking?"

Representative Niland asked, "Can Council Members have side entrance access to free up 10 spaces in the front lot?"

Representative Noe questioned creating new cells at the landfill. He wants to decrease things going into the landfill. "Can we give refunds on plastic bottles if they are recycled?"

Ms. Firth replied, "I will do research on that."

Public comment:

Mr. David Guzman, ASFME 459, questioned longevity pay for employees. ASFME has not been notified.

Ms. Bartlett explained that employees are better off without the longevity pay.

Mr. Gonzalez wants employee committee to look at both the disciplinary issue and the longevity issue.

Ms. Thomas replied, "HR is speaking with the ATU attorney."

Representative Niland thanked staff for setting up computer access today and would like to see it for all meetings held in this conference room.

Representative Niland asked, "How much did the Fire referendum cost?"

Mr. Cortinas replied, "\$3.8 million."

Representative Niland commented, "I would like to see the dollar impact of all voter approved initiatives."

Mr. Gonzalez replied, "We will get that for you."

Representative Niland wants the ability to examine the specific cuts, black or white. Specifically,

FY15 – Total savings was \$ figure?

FY16 – What is projected total savings?

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ADJOURN

Motion made by Representative Niland, seconded by Mayor Pro Tempore Noe, and unanimously carried to adjourn this meeting on June 29, 2016, at 4:49 p.m.

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APPROVED AS TO CONTENT:

Richarda Duffy Momsen, City Clerk