

OSCAR LEESER  
MAYOR

TOMMY GONZALEZ  
CITY MANAGER



**CITY COUNCIL**  
PETER SVARZBEIN, DISTRICT 1  
ALEXSANDRA ANNELLO, DISTRICT 2  
CASSANDRA HERNANDEZ, DISTRICT 3  
JOE MOLINAR, DISTRICT 4  
ISABEL SALCIDO, DISTRICT 5  
CLAUDIA L. RODRIGUEZ, DISTRICT 6  
HENRY RIVERA, DISTRICT 7  
CISSY LIZARRAGA, DISTRICT 8

**SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES  
CITY HALL, 300 N. CAMPBELL  
COUNCIL CHAMBERS AND VIRTUAL  
JUNE 27, 2022  
9:00 AM**

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The City Council of the City of El Paso met at the above place and date. Meeting was called to order at 9:11 a.m. Mayor Oscar Leeser was present and presiding and the following Council Members answered roll call: Alexandra Annello, Joe Molinar, Isabel Salcido, Claudia Rodriguez, Henry Rivera, and Cissy Lizarraga. Cassandra Hernandez joined virtually. Late arrival: Peter Svarzbein at 10:20 a.m.

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**AGENDA**  
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- 1. For discussion and action: FY 2022 – 2023 Budget as presented by the City Manager. Discussion and action may include, but not limited to operating, capital and debt budgets and all possible funding sources.**

**Please note: Copies of all presentations are available at the City Clerk's Office.**

- City Manager Overview**

Mr. Tommy Gonzalez, City Manager, provided a brief explanation of budget priorities to include a reduction in the tax rate and the City's workforce retention and recruiting efforts, the reason for a proposed increase to wages, bonuses, and an adjustment to the minimum wage.

Mr. Robert Cortinas, Chief Financial Officer, introduced the first presentation:

- Vibrant Regional Economy – Tracey Jerome & Sam Rodriguez**
  - Goal 1 – Economic Development (Airport, Bridges, Economic Development, Destination El Paso)
  - Goal 3 – Visual Image (Planning & Inspections)

Ms. Tracey Jerome, Senior Deputy City Manager, and Mr. Sam Rodriguez, Director of Aviation, provided an overview of the presentations for Goal 1, which included achievements and variances for the current fiscal year and plans for FY2023 for the departments covered under Goals 1 and 3.

Some of the major variances noted during FY2022 were the compensation increases for non-uniformed employees and the filling of vacancies.

The section on priorities for the next year included continuing with the pursuit of additional funding opportunities for large port of entry projects, enhancement of online plan submittals and payments, the adoption of a new building code, continuing the growth in convention sales and initiatives to attract meetings and conventions, the management and administration of funding for small business response and recovery programs, leverage of real estate assets in support of economic development, and maintaining high passenger traffic at the airport.

Notable achievements included the addition and expansion of flights out of El Paso, the funding of overtime hours at the ports of entry, which helped to reduce the cross-border wait times, the addition of parking meters with 5G capabilities, hotel occupancy recovery, the strong return of in-person annual events and festivals, the addition of five new hotels, new jobs, and capital investment by the expansion of Schneider Electric, and the completion of the 2020 U.S. census redistricting process.

The following City staff members contributed to the presentation for Goals 1 and 3 by answering questions posed by Council members:

- Mr. David Coronado, Managing Director of International Bridges
- Mr. Jose Garcia, President and CEO of Destination El Paso
- Ms. Elizabeth Triggs, Director of Economic and International Development
- Mr. Philip Etiwe, Director of Planning and Inspections
  
- **Safe and Beautiful Neighborhoods – Mario D’Agostino & Ellen Smyth**
  - Goal 2 – Public Safety (Police, Fire and Municipal Court)
  - Goal 7 – Infrastructure (Capital Improvement, Sun Metro, Streets & Maintenance)
  - Goal 8 – Healthy Community (Environmental Services, Animal Services, Community Development, Public Health)

Ms. Ellen Smyth, Chief Transit and Field Operations Officer, Chief Mario D’Agostino, Deputy City Manager, and Interim Fire Chief Jonathan Killings presented the budget for Goals 2, 7, and 8, including ten departments.

The presentation included the departmental priorities for the next fiscal year, including Fire, Police, and Public Safety Communicator academies, the reduction of Municipal Court trial and hearing backlogs, completion of design and construction projects, a recovery plan for transit operations, enhancement of public health services offered to the community, mega vaccination clinics for pets, and reliable data collection regarding the state of housing and homelessness in the city. The major budget variances are due to the collective bargaining obligations, compensation increases, and restoration of vacancies.

Some of the key accomplishments highlighted were the partnerships for the flu campaign and monoclonal infusions for COVID treatment, the groundbreaking of the Fire Station 36, the 2022 award to Municipal Court for their traffic safety initiatives, the groundbreaking of the Police Far East Regional Command, the approval of funds and grants received for the purchase of 700 body-worn cameras, completion of 46 projects including 16 transportation and 30 facilities related, irrigation upgrades to 40 parks for water conservation, extended hours for the streetcar, reopening of animal shelter and reestablishment of free drive-thru pet wellness clinics, COVID related assistance, including providing shelter to the most vulnerable population, completion of 30 new affordable housing units, the collaboration between Health

Department and 12 school districts, Charter, and Private Schools on COVID-related activities, and the administration of approximately 92,000 COVID vaccines.

The following City staff members were available to answer questions posed by Council members:

- Ms. Nicole Cote, Office of Management and Budget and Purchasing and Strategic Sourcing Managing Director
- Mr. Tommy Gonzalez, City Manager
- Assistant Police Chief Zina Silva
- Mr. Robert Cortinas, Chief Financial Officer
- Ms. Elizabeth Triggs, Director of Economic and International Development
- Ms. Nicole Ferrini, Community and Human Development Director
- Mr. Sam Rodriguez, Capital Improvement Director
- Ms. Karla Nieman, City Attorney
- Ms. Lilia Worrell, Municipal Court Clerk
- Mr. Richard Bristol, Streets and Maintenance Director
- Mr. Joe McKnight, Parks and Recreation Assistant Director
- Ms. Dionne Mack, Deputy City Manager

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The City Council Meeting was **RECESSED** at 11:57 a.m. for lunch.

The City Council Meeting was **RECONVENED** at 1:04 p.m.

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- **Exceptional Recreational, Cultural and Educational Opportunities – Dionne Mack and Ben Fyffe**
    - Goal 4 – Quality of Life (Library, MCAD, Parks, Zoo)

Ms. Dionne Mack, Deputy City Manager, began the presentation and answered questions. Ms. Mack went over the priorities for the next fiscal year, including the completion of the Children’s Museum and the Mexican American Cultural Center, the restoration of services at City libraries, museums, recreation centers, and zoo. She pointed out that the major variances were due to the compensation increases, restoration of unfunded vacancies, and water costs.

Some of the key accomplishments listed were the increase in public attendance to the zoo, parks, and downtown Farmers Market, in some cases exceeding pre-pandemic levels, the completion of 7 public art projects, the reopening of 9 senior centers ahead of schedule, and 11 library facilities in response to community need, hosting of the national unveiling of the first-ever United States Postal Service Día de los Muertos Stamp, five graduates of the Career Online High School, the return of Winter Fest with in-person Celebration of Lights. Completion of renovations at Nolan Richardson, Grandview Senior Center, Multi-Purpose Center, Pat O’Rourke and Leo Cancellare and addition of Eastside Sports Phase II, and the Completion of Master Planning Process for Memorial Park and Mary Frances Keisling Park

The following staff members were available to answer questions:

- Ms. Norma Martinez, Director of Library Services
- Mr. Ben Fyffe, Managing Director of Museum and Cultural Affairs

- Mr. Robert Cortinas, Chief Financial Officer
- Mr. Joseph Montisano, Zoo Director
  
- **High Performing Government – Robert Cortinas and Araceli Guerra**
  - Goal 5 – Communication (Information Technology)
  - Goal 6 – Sound Governance (City Attorney, City Manager/Audit/OMB/PIO/Performance Office, Human Resources, City Council, City Clerk, Non- Departmental, Comptroller, Purchasing, Tax)

Mr. Robert Cortinas, Chief Financial Officer, was in charge of the last presentation of the day and answered questions posed by Council members.

Mr. Cortinas began the presentation with a breakdown of the funding sourcing for the ten departments covered under Goals 5 and 6 and reviewed the priorities for FY2023. Priorities included upgrades to IT equipment and investments in cybersecurity and cloud platforms. The priorities for Goal 6 included staffing vacancies, the expansion of the volunteer and internship programs, the general and runoff elections to take place in November and December and the City of El Paso Retirement Fund Board of Trustees election. Some of the major variances are due to increases in software licenses and maintenance contracts, compensation increases and additional positions, increases in the self-insurance fund, and increases in debt service payments.

Highlights of the accomplishments included the increase to the minimum wage in April 2022 from \$10.36 to \$11.11, with a proposed additional increase in May 2023 of \$11.86, signing incentives for new employees, no health care increases for civilian employees, additional Wellness Clinics for employees and dependents, savings of \$196M for El Paso Texas Gas Securitization (Winter Storm Yuri), and \$28.3M savings from the El Paso Electric Rate Case, an addition of \$2.5M in new airport leases, settlement of Class Action Global Opioid totaling \$1,419,358, generation of the Mass Transit Department Board agendas utilizing the Legistar Software, expansion of Security Awareness Program Offerings, continued reduction of employee phishing failure rates thru education, completion of the FY22 audit with no financial findings; on-line bidding for Construction, Architects and Engineers Selections, and the support for Council's legislative priorities.

The following staff members were available to answer questions:

- Ms. Araceli Guerra, Managing Director of Internal Services
- Mr. Tommy Gonzalez, City Manager
- Ms. Laura D. Prine, City Clerk
- Ms. Nicole Cote, Managing Director
- Ms. Karla Nieman, City Attorney
- Mr. Sam Rodriguez, Chief Operations Officer

Mayor Leeser and Representatives Svarzbein, Annello, Hernandez, Molinar, Salcido, Rodriguez, Rivera, and Lizarraga commented.

**NO ACTION** was taken on this item.



**ADJOURN**

Motion made by Representative Hernandez, seconded by Representative Anello and unanimously carried to **ADJOURN** the meeting at 4:19 p.m.

AYES: Representatives Svarzbein, Anello, Hernandez, Molinar, Salcido, Rodriguez, Rivera, and Lizarraga

NAYS: None

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APPROVED AS TO CONTENT:

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Laura D. Prine, City Clerk