

RENARD U. JOHNSON
MAYOR

DIONNE MACK
CITY MANAGER



CITY COUNCIL
ALEJANDRA CHÁVEZ, DISTRICT 1
JOSH ACEVEDO, DISTRICT 2
DEANNA MALDONADO-ROCHA, DISTRICT 3
CYNTHIA BOYAR TREJO, DISTRICT 4
IVAN NIÑO, DISTRICT 5
ART FIERRO, DISTRICT 6
LILY LIMÓN, DISTRICT 7
CHRIS CANALES, DISTRICT 8

CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
July 7, 2025
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL AND VIRTUALLY
9:00 A.M.

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The City Council met at the above place and date. The meeting was called to order at 9:04 a.m. Mayor Renard Johnson was present and presiding. The following Council Members answered roll call: Alejandra Chávez, Josh Acevedo, Deanna Maldonado-Rocha, Cynthia Boyar Trejo, Ivan Niño, Art Fierro, and Lily Limón. Chris Canales requested to be excused.

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AGENDA

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1. For presentation and discussion: FY 2025 - 2026 Budget as presented by the City Manager.

Mayor Johnson called the meeting to order and asked everyone to join him in a moment of silence for those in Texas suffering from the floods.

City Manager Overview

Ms. Dionne Mack, City Manager, began the presentation by outlining the FY2026 budget process. It started in March with a development session, followed by the launch of Chime-In surveys in April, Community Budget Workshops in April and May, individual Council briefings in June. The presentations on July 7 and 8, and will be followed with the tax rate introduction on July 31. The budget season will conclude with the adoption of the final budget on August 19, 2025.

Ms. Mack emphasized that despite certain budget constraints, the FY2026 budget incorporates efficiencies and adjustments aimed at preserving the quality of services provided, reducing reliance on the fund balance, and ensuring long-term financial sustainability. It also anticipates economic uncertainties and potential impacts from state and federal legislation.

Mr. Robert Cortinas, Chief Financial Officer, continued the presentation with an overview of the general fund expenditures, revenue, estimated taxable property valuations, exemptions to 65-year-olds and over, and the disabled population, the recovery in sales taxes, debt service tax rate, and the annual pay-go funds.

Ms. Mack and Mr. Cortinas answered questions posed by Mayor Johnson and Representatives Chávez, Acevedo, Maldonado-Rocha, Boyar Trejo, Niño, Fierro, and Limón.

Compensation Initiatives

Ms. Mary Wiggins, Chief Human Resources Officer, began her presentation by highlighting the city's focus on employee recruitment and retention; she also presented a breakdown of the total workforce by category: civilian, Police (uniformed), and Fire (uniformed) employees.

Ms. Monika Kretschmer, Deputy Human Resources Officer, provided a brief refresher on Phase I of the civilian compensation strategy, which will continue through FY2026 with the inclusion of professional and managerial positions.

Ms. Wiggins and Ms. Mack responded to questions from Representatives Chávez, Acevedo and Limón regarding minimum wages, turnover, and salaries compared with other cities.

The following highlights the departmental presentations, which included information on each department's function, reason for any budget variance, and initiatives (copies on file in the City Clerk's Office). The presenters were available to answer questions from Mayor Johnson and Representatives Chávez, Acevedo, Maldonado-Rocha, Boyar Trejo, Niño, Fierro, and Limón.

Economic & International Development

Ms. Karina Brasgalla, Director of Economic and International Development, opened the department presentations by highlighting efforts to strengthen the city's long-term financial stability and competitiveness. She reported that the main budget variances are due to across the board salary increases and higher economic incentive rebate obligations.

International Bridges

Mr. Roberto Tinajero, Director of International Bridges, spoke about the department's role in supporting cross-border mobility and managing on-street parking for residents, businesses, and visitors. He explained that budget variances are primarily driven by across the board salary increases and higher revenue resulting from the elimination of the commercial trucks' Empties Program.

Office of the Comptroller

Ms. Margarita Marin, Comptroller, discussed the department's responsibilities in financial reporting, managing audits, overseeing grants, and maintaining internal controls. Ms. Marin stated that the department's budget variances stem from across the board salary increases, the addition of a position to support payment card industry compliance, and increased staffing for capital asset inventory, funded through auction sales.

Tax Office

Ms. Maria Pasillas, Tax Assessor and Collector, spoke about the department's responsibilities in property tax billing, collection, and customer service, and attributed the department's budget variances to across the board salary increases, postage costs, and indirect costs.

Parks & Recreation

Mr. Pablo Caballero, Parks and Recreation Director, briefed council members on the department's functions and initiatives and reported that budget variances are mainly due to across the board salary increases, higher water utility costs, and investment in park amenities.

Animal Services

Mr. Terry Kebschull, Animal Services Director, discussed the department's efforts to support pets through shelter services, medical care, and adoptions. Mr. Kebschull noted that the budget variances are driven by across the board salary increases, materials, and contracted services.

Libraries

Ms. Norma Martinez, Library Director, spoke about the wide range of services the library provides to the community and explained that the budget variances result from across the board salary increases, expanded grant matches, and growth in the passport program.

Museum & Cultural Affairs

Mr. Ben Fyffe, Managing Director of Museums and Cultural Affairs, spoke about the department's engagement in arts and cultural programming and attributed budget variances to across the board salary increases, La Nube stipend funding, and greater investment in public art repairs.

Destination El Paso

Mr. Jose Garcia, Destination El Paso President and Chief Financial Officer, talked about the efforts on tourism promotion, convention services, and visitor experiences. He reported that the budget variances are primarily due to an increase in Hotel Occupancy Tax revenue.

Zoo

Mr. Joe Montisano, Zoo Director, talked about the department's goal to celebrate the value of animals and natural resources. Mr. Montisano identified budget variances stemming from across the board salary increases and additional revenue from membership sales.

Public Health

Mr. Vinny Taneja, Public Health Director, presented an overview of the department's functions and noted that budget variances are due to personnel transfers to Code Enforcement related to food inspections, salary adjustments, and grant allocations.

Planning & Inspections

Mr. Philip Etiwe, Planning and Inspections Director, presented the department's FY 2026 budget overview and key initiatives and stated that the budget variances reflect general fund increases primarily due to citywide compensation adjustments.

Purchasing & Strategic Sourcing

Ms. Claudia Garcia, Purchasing and Strategic Sourcing Director, presented an overview of the department's budget profile and key initiatives. She explained that the budget variances are the result of eliminating the Managing Director position and increased sponsorships for the annual Purchasing Expo.

Sun Metro

Mr. Anthony Dekeyzer, Mass Transit Director, presented the information for Sun Metro, which highlighted key updates and initiatives for the department and reported that budget variances are linked to shifts in funding sources and changes in staffing levels.

City Attorney

Ms. Karla Nieman, City Attorney, provided information on her department's activities and stated that the budget variances are due to salary increases and staffing adjustments.

City Clerk

Ms. Laura Prine, City Clerk, talked about the key focus areas of her department and explained that budget variances are due to reduced election and legal notice contract costs (no scheduled elections) and across the board salary increases.

City Manager

Mr. Sasho Andonoski, Director of Management and Budget, presented for the City Manager's Office and summarized the department's main role. He mentioned that the main budget variances are due to salary increases.

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The Special City Council meeting was **RECESSED** at 11:56 a.m. for a lunch break.

The Special City Council meeting was **RECONVENED** at 1:00 p.m.
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Community Driven Innovation

Mr. Roman Sanchez, Chief Innovation Officer, presented on the functions of the newly developed department and reported that budget variances are due to across the board salary increases.

Internal Audit

Ms. Liz De La O, Deputy Chief Internal Auditor, went over the functions of the Internal Audit Department and attributed the budget increases to across the board salary increases, staff promotions, and the addition of one new hire.

Strategic & Legislative Affairs

Mr. Omar Martinez, Assistant Director of Legislative Affairs, introduced himself and related the functions of his department. He explained that budget variances result from the consolidation of Strategic and Legislative Affairs, Climate, and Military Affairs into a new department.

Fire

Chief Jonathan Killings reported on the department's key focus and plans for the next fiscal year. He explained that the budget impacts are primarily driven by collective bargaining agreements and the addition of new hires needed to maintain effective coverage.

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The Special City Council meeting was **RECESSED** at 4:17 p.m.

The Special City Council meeting was **RECONVENED** at 4:30 p.m.

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Police

Chief Peter Pacillas highlighted the department's priorities and key initiatives to support salary increases and expanded training programs, along with critical technology upgrades, which contribute to the budget variances.

NO ACTION was taken on this item.

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Motion made by Representative Limón, seconded by Representative Boyar Trejo, and unanimously carried to **ADJOURN** the meeting at 4:54 p.m.

AYES: Representatives Chávez, Acevedo, Maldonado-Rocha, Boyar Trejo, Niño, Fierro, and Limón

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Representative Canales

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APPROVED AS TO CONTENT:

Laura D. Prine, City Clerk