

OSCAR LEESER  
MAYOR

TOMMY GONZALEZ  
CITY MANAGER



CITY COUNCIL  
PETER SVARZBEIN, DISTRICT 1  
ALEXANDRA 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

**CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION MINUTES**  
**August 1, 2022**  
**COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL AND VIRTUALLY**  
**9:05 A.M.**

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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 9:12 a.m. Mayor Oscar Leeser present and presiding and the following Council Members answered roll call: Alexandra Anello, Cassandra Hernandez, Joe Molinar, Isabel Salcido, Claudia Rodriguez, Henry Rivera, and Cissy Lizarraga. Late arrival: Peter Svarzbein at 9:37 a.m.  
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**AGENDA**

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1. Presentation and discussion by the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Cross-Functional Team providing information on key activities, efforts, and processes.  
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1. Overview (Tommy Gonzalez)

Mr. Tommy Gonzalez, City Manager, began the presentation by pointing out a 30% increase in the number of positive COVID-19 cases and the associated upward trend in hospitalizations. He asked the community to wear masks as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) along with getting vaccinated, boosted and tested. Mr. Gonzalez also provided the location for the four City vaccination clinics and the [epcovidvaccine.com](http://epcovidvaccine.com) website for additional information.

Mr. Gonzalez reminded people of the seriousness of the situation and mentioned that two thirds of the people hospitalized had underlying medical conditions with 99% of COVID related deaths correlated to those with such conditions. He added that currently everyone from 6 months or age and older were eligible for vaccines.

2. City Attorney Overview (Karla Nieman)

a) Greg Abbott, in his official capacity as Governor of Texas v. City of El Paso and Statewide Mask Mandate Litigation

Ms. Karla Nieman, City Attorney, continued the presentation by indicating there were no updates to report on the City's mask mandate litigation and provided information on the recent decision by the 5<sup>th</sup> Court of Appeals upholding the mask mandate ban.

3. Team Lead Report:

- a) Health Focus (Hector Ocaranza, M.D.)
- b) Economic Response and Recovery Update (Elizabeth Triggs)
- c) Data Analysis (David Coronado)

Dr. Hector Ocaranza, Public Health Authority, carried on with the presentation and reminded people to get tested if experiencing any symptoms and remain at home for at least five days of isolation if testing positive with the virus. He added that the City is working with school districts and conducting weekly meetings in order to provide recommendations to avoid any disruption to in person classes. Dr. Ocaranza asked parents to keep kids at home if they are sick and reminded them that vaccinations are available at pediatrician offices.

Dr. Ocaranza mentioned that there is still some hesitance regarding vaccinations and stressed that vaccines protect against death adding that one out of 10 people vaccinated end up hospitalized despite underlying medical conditions. He stressed that COVID is not another flu and highlighted that 92% of people who have died were not fully vaccinated.

Ms. Elizabeth Triggs, Economic and International Development Director, provided information on the City's goals for helping small businesses by listing examples such as facilitating access to capital through stimulus funds, promoting the *buyelpaso* campaign and by helping businesses restart and grow operations. She added that support will also be available to people who are looking to begin a new business and mentioned that 83% of El Paso County businesses have fewer than 20 employees, representing a huge portion of El Paso's economy.

Ms. Triggs provided an explanation of the action requested on item 2 of the agenda which includes the request of \$3M to offset the costs associated with small local manufacturers' relocation to the Advanced Manufacturing District.

Mr. David Coronado, Managing Director of International Bridges and Economic Development, finished the presentation by providing data on the economic growth observed during the month of June driven by retail sales, employment gains in manufacturing and the decline in the County's unemployment rate. Mr. Coronado commented that inflation continues to be a concern as it remains high and impacting City contracts however improvement in gasoline prices were observed.

4. City Manager Wrap-up (Tommy Gonzalez)

Mr. Gonzalez concluded by mentioning that as a result of schools beginning a new year, there would be an increase in the number of positive cases reported adding that the City would work on recommendations from the epidemiological team to help schools reduce infection.

Mayor Leeser and Representatives Svarzbein, Hernandez, and Salcido commented.

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

2.

**RESOLUTION**

**WHEREAS**, on March 13, 2020, the President of the United States declared a national emergency, Governor of the State of Texas declared a state of disaster, and the Mayor of the

City of El Paso declared a local state of disaster in relation to Coronavirus Disease 19 (COVID-19); and

**WHEREAS**, on March 17, 2020, City Council issued an Emergency Ordinance Instituting Emergency Measures due to a Public Health Emergency (“Emergency Ordinance”); and

**WHEREAS**, on May 11, 2020, City Council approved appropriations for the CARES Act funds received by the City for eligible expenses from March 1, 2020 through August 31, 2021; and

**WHEREAS**, the City has ongoing COVID-19 related expenditures that have continued into FY 2022; and

**WHEREAS**, the COVID-19 pandemic is a public health crisis that has required immediate action from the City to relieve the emergency necessity of the municipality’s residents and to protect the health and safety of the community, resulting in expenditures by the City to respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency; and

**WHEREAS**, on March 11, 2021, the federal government enacted the American Rescue Plan Act (“ARPA”) which established the Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund and Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (“CSLFRF”); and

**WHEREAS**, the U.S. Department of Treasury’s Final Rule (“Final Rule”) contains a non-exclusive list of programs or services that may be funded as responding to COVID-19 or the negative economic impacts of the COVID-19 public health emergency, along with considerations for evaluating other potential uses of recovery funds not explicitly listed; and

**WHEREAS**, the City is a recipient of an ARPA grant in the amount of \$154,365,135 from the fund received in two tranches, with the first received on May 12, 2021 in the amount of \$77,172,567.50, and the second half of equal value received on or about May 12, 2022; and

**WHEREAS**, on July 27, 2021, the City Council appropriated \$15,000,000 of ARPA grant funds; and

**WHEREAS**, on January 8, 2022, the City Council appropriated \$7,821,018 of the ARPA grant funds; and

**WHEREAS**, on March 15, 2022, the City Council appropriated \$6,600,000 of the ARPA grant funds; and

**WHEREAS**, on May 9, 2022, the City Council appropriated the remaining \$115,979,244 of the ARPA grant funds; and

**WHEREAS**, of the \$115,979,244 in ARPA grant funds appropriated on May 9, 2022, \$14,000,000 was allocated to respond to the negative economic impacts of the COVID-19 public health emergency; and

**WHEREAS**, small businesses have faced widespread challenges due to the pandemic, including periods of shutdown, declines in revenue, or increased costs; and

**WHEREAS**, the City Council has adopted a Strategic Plan which includes the strategic objective of growing existing target industries, including advanced manufacturing to foster economic prosperity and create high-paying career pathways; and

**WHEREAS**, the City Council desires to reallocate \$3,000,000 of the \$14,000,000 in ARPA grant funds appropriated for the response to the negative economic impacts of the COVID-19 public health emergency to assist impacted or disproportionately impacted small businesses in the manufacturing industry sector; and

**WHEREAS**, such funding may be used to provide loans or grants to mitigate financial hardship, such as by supporting payroll and benefits, costs to retain employees and mortgage, rent, utility, and other operating costs; and technical assistance, counseling or other services to support business planning; or other assistance as identified in the Final Rule to support impacted and disproportionately impacted small businesses in the manufacturing industry sector.

**BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF EL PASO:**

**THAT**, as the recipient of the American Rescue Plan Act (“ARPA”) grant funds in the amount of \$154,365,135, the City Council approves the appropriation of \$3,000,000 of the grant funds from the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds to assist impacted or disproportionately impacted small businesses in the manufacturing industry sector in accordance with the requirements stipulated by the American Rescue Plan Act and federal guidelines in the Final Rule to cover expenses incurred to respond and recover from the COVID-19 public health crisis;

**THAT**, the above appropriation is obligated during the period starting March 3, 2021, and ending December 31, 2024;

**THAT**, the instant and previous appropriations are made in compliance with the Final Rule; and

**THAT**, the City Manager, or designee, be authorized to effectuate any budget transfers and execute any contracts and/or related documents necessary to ensure that the American Rescue Plan Act (“ARPA”) grant funds are properly expended to respond and recover from the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Mayor Leeser and Representatives Anello, Rodriguez and Molinar commented.

The following City staff members commented:

- Ms. Elizabeth Triggs, Economic and International Development Director
- Mr. Tommy Gonzalez, City Manager

Motion made by Representative Anello, seconded by Representative Rodriguez, and unanimously carried to **APPROVE** the Resolution.

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

NAYS: None

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3. Discussion and action to allocate additional budget dollars to implement a competitive wage for Quality of Life and Animal Services employees with a competitive wage analysis to be completed in Q1 and executed in Q2 FY2023.

Representative Annello explained that she placed this item in response to Call to the Public comments related to staffing in the Animal Services Department. She then proceeded to present a wage comparison chart of entry level hourly wages across various positions in the City of El Paso ranging from \$11.92 to \$12.48 and of 5 local private entities ranging from \$12 to \$17.

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

The following City staff members commented and/or answered questions posed by the members of Council.

1. Mr. Robert Cortinas, Chief Financial Officer
2. Mr. Tommy Gonzalez, City Manager
3. Chief Mario D'Agostino, Deputy City Manager

**1<sup>ST</sup> MOTION**

Motion made by Mayor Pro Tempore Svarzbein, seconded by Representative Annello and carried to **AMEND** the item to read "Discussion and action to direct staff to implement a competitive wage analysis for Quality of Life and Animal Services employees to be completed by Quarter 1 of FY2023".

AYES: Representatives Svarzbein, Annello, Salcido, Rivera, and Lizarraga

NAYS: Representatives Hernandez, Molinar and Rodriguez

**2<sup>ND</sup> AND FINAL MOTION**

Motion made by Representative Annello, seconded by Representative Rivera, and carried to **DIRECT** staff to implement a competitive wage analysis for Quality of Life and Animal Services employees to be completed by Quarter 1 of FY2023.

AYES: Mayor Leeser and Representatives Svarzbein, Annello, Salcido, and Rivera

NAYS: Representatives Hernandez, Molinar, Rodriguez, and Lizarraga

**Mayor Leeser broke the tie by voting "Aye".**

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4. **RESOLUTION**

**WHEREAS**, Dr. Gullermina G. Núñez-Mchiri began her career at the University of Texas at El Paso as a visiting assistant professor in 2004-2005, eventually earning tenure, and becoming the Director of Women and Gender Studies and an Associate Professor of Anthropology where she exhibited the passion for her career through the manner in which she taught her courses, incorporating research and community engagement opportunities to further student success in higher education earning her the UT Regents Outstanding Teaching Award in 2012 for her dedication and innovation; and

**WHEREAS**, Dr. Núñez-Mchiri made a difference within the classroom and beyond, working in the community to empower Latinas, challenge stigmas of aging, and conduct research on the U.S.-Mexico border region as she served as an academic partner to Wise Latina International, as Co-Chair for the L.E.A.D. project, partnered with the City of El Paso's Park and Recreation Department, and specialized in ethnographic research in topics related to immigration and Latinas; and

**WHEREAS**, Dr. Núñez-Mchiri served as Vice President (2018-2020) and President of The University of El Paso's faculty senate (2020-2022), and has received numerous awards and honors throughout her time at as she was named a Texas Compact Faculty Fellow, an IMPACT Faculty Leadership Fellow, a Kauffman Foundation Faculty Fellow, a Junior Faculty Fellow by the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education, an Emerging Scholar/Professor of Purpose by Diverse Issues in Higher Education Magazine, a UTEP Faculty Fellow for Civic Engagement by the Provost's office, received a Fellowship for Innovation and Change by the Southern Education Foundation, and was one of fourteen top Hispanic Professors Making a Difference in Texas; and

**WHEREAS**, Dr. Guillermina G. Núñez-Mchiri will extend the transformative influence she has made in El Paso to the San Diego State University – Imperial Valley campus as she serves as the first Chicana/Latina dean in the school's 125-year history; and

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF EL PASO:**

That the City of El Paso is proud to support Dr. Núñez-Mchiri as she provides opportunities for a new community and university and the City of El Paso urges all citizens to acknowledge the work Dr. Núñez-Mchiri has done for her students, faculty, staff, community and higher education in El Paso.

Representative Annello requested to move this item to the forefront of the agenda and read the resolution into the record.

The following members of the public commented:

1. Dr. Guillermina Núñez-Mchiri
2. Ms. Margie Brickey
3. Ms. Alicia Davis

Motion made by Representative Annello, seconded by Representative Salcido, and unanimously carried to **APPROVE** the Resolution.

AYES: Representatives Annello, Hernandez, Molinar, Salcido, Rodriguez, Rivera, and Lizarraga

NAYS: None

NOT PRESENT FOR THE VOTE: Representative Svarzbein

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The Work Session was **RECESSED** at 10:59 A.M. in order to convene the Special City Council Meeting.

The Work Session was **RECONVENED** at 1:39 P.M.

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**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Motion made by Representative Hernandez, seconded by Representative Rodriguez, and unanimously carried that the City Council **RETIRE** into **EXECUTIVE SESSION** at 1:40 p.m. pursuant to Section 3.5A of the El Paso City Charter and the Texas Government Code, Sections 551.071 - 551.089 to discuss the executive session item:

Section 551.071 CONSULTATION WITH ATTORNEY  
Section 551.074 PERSONNEL MATTERS

AYES: Representatives Svarzbein, Annello, Hernandez, Molinar, Salcido, Rodriguez, Rivera, and Lizarraga  
NAYS: None

Motion made by Representative Rivera, seconded by Representative Annello, and unanimously carried to **ADJOURN** the Executive Session at 4:36 p.m. and **RECONVENE** the meeting of the City Council.

AYES: Representatives Svarzbein, Annello, Hernandez, Molinar, Salcido, Rodriguez, Rivera, and Lizarraga  
NAYS: None

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**EX1.** Consultation with Attorney regarding City Manager and City Attorney employment contracts. Matter No. 22-1043-831 (551.071) (551.074)

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

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**ADJOURN**

Motion made by Representative Annello seconded by Representative Molinar and unanimously carried to **ADJOURN** the meeting at 4:37 p.m.

AYES: Representatives Svarzbein, Annello, 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