

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

**CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION MINUTES**  
**March 15, 2021**  
**3:35 PM**

**Due to the temporary suspension of Open Meetings laws due to the COVID-19 emergency this meeting was conducted via telephonic and videoconference formats.**

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The City Council of the City Council met on the above time and date via videoconference. **Due to technical difficulties on March 15, 2021 the meeting was postponed and called to order on March 16, 2021 at 1:52 p.m.** Mayor Oscar Leeser present and presiding and the following Council Members answered roll call: Peter Svarzbein, Alexsandra Annello, Joe Molinar, Isabel Salcido, Claudia Rodriguez, Henry Rivera and Cissy Lizarraga. Cassandra Hernandez requested to be excused.  
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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.**

**1. Overview (Tommy Gonzalez)**

City Manager Mr. Tommy Gonzalez introduced the item and provided a local status on the governor's new executive order, upcoming federal assistance to cities and states, the receipt of 700 Johnson & Johnson vaccines to be distributed among the homeless community, and stated the City would need to cover \$2.5 million dollars of expenses related to COVID-19 efforts. Mr. Gonzalez urged the public to continue practicing preventative safety measures.

**2. Cross Functional Team Operations (Chief Mario D'Agostino)**

Staff presented information on the number of educators that received the vaccine, the status of the migrant protection protocol, a phased return to work timeline for City staff, a financial focus illustrating the FY2021 cost estimates related to the pandemic, the allocation of the American Rescue Plan Act Funds, and a reopening plan for Quality of Life services.

**3. City Attorney Overview (Karla Nieman)**

- a) State Disaster Declarations
- b) Governor's Abbott's Executive Order GA-34
- c) City Attorney's Office COVID-19 Support

- d) Legal Monitoring
- e) Courts Update

Ms. Karla Nieman, City Attorney, provided information related to the status of state declarations and executive orders, ongoing legal support in connection with Local Health Authority Orders, monitoring of eviction orders, and Court updates related to the Texas Supreme Court Emergency Order 36 and Municipal Court cases. Ms. Nieman stated that the City is no longer a high hospitalization area.

**4. Team Lead Reports:**

- 1. Health Focus (Hector Ocaranza, M.D.)
- 2. Vaccination Update (Angela Mora)
- 3. Data Analysis (David Coronado)

Dr. Hector Ocaranza, Public Health Authority, provided a COVID-19 status related to local changes due to Governor Abbott's Executive Order 34 and discussed the effectiveness of face coverings.

Ms. Angela Mora, Public Health Director, provided a vaccination update related to the community outreach provided by the Education Taskforce at senior centers and businesses and provided information on the Downtown Walk-in Center.

Mr. David Coronado, International Bridges Director, provided data analytics on local citizen mobility patterns compared to other Texas cities, the number of business visits, unemployment rates, hotel occupancy rates, and manufacturing activity and trade figures.

Mayor Leeser and Representatives Svarzbein, Rodriguez, and Rivera commented and posed questions to presenters and other staff.

Ms. Lisa Turner, citizen, commented.

The following City staff members participated in the presentation and provided answers to questions posed by Council members:

- 1. Mr. Tommy Gonzalez, City Manager
- 2. Fire Chief Mario D'Agostino
- 3. Ms. Karla Nieman, City Attorney
- 4. Dr. Hector Ocaranza, City of El Paso Public Health Authority
- 5. Ms. Angela Mora, Public Health Director
- 6. Mr. David Coronado, International Bridges Director
- 7. Mr. Cary Westin, Senior Deputy City Manager of Economic Development and Tourism
- 8. Mr. Robert Cortinas, Chief Financial Officer
- 9. Ms. Tracey Jerome, Deputy City Manager of Quality of Life
- 10. Ms. Laura Cruz-Acosta, Strategic Communications Director
- 11. Ms. Jessica Herrera, Economic and International Development Director
- 12. Mr. Ben Fyffe, Parks and Recreation Director

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

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**ORDINANCE 019151**

**AN EMERGENCY ORDINANCE  
RE-ENACTING, RESTATING AND AMENDING EMERGENCY ORDINANCE  
NO. 019036, AS RESTATED AND AMENDED BY EMERGENCY ORDINANCE NO. 019115,  
AND FURTHER AMENDED BY EMERGENCY ORDINANCE NUMBERS 019118 AND  
019126; PENALTY AS PROVIDED IN SECTION 8**

**WHEREAS**, on March 13, 2020, the Governor of the State of Texas declared a state of disaster and the President of the United States of America declared a national emergency in relation to COVID-19; and

**WHEREAS**, by proclamation issued on March 13, 2020, the Mayor declared a local state of disaster for the City of El Paso resulting from a public health emergency; and

**WHEREAS**, on March 17, 2020, the City Council, pursuant to City Charter Section 3.10, adopted Emergency Ordinance No. 019036 to meet a public emergency affecting, life, health, property or the public peace; and

**WHEREAS**, since March 2020, El Paso City Council has re-enacted Emergency Ordinance No. 019036 monthly, with the most recent extension taking place on March 1, 2021; and

**WHEREAS**, Section 122.006 of the Texas Health & Safety Code provides home-rule municipalities express authority to adopt rules to protect the health of persons in the municipality, including quarantine rules to protect the residents against communicable disease; and

**WHEREAS**, Section 121.003 of the Texas Health & Safety Code states that a municipality may enforce any law that is reasonably necessary to protect public health; and

**WHEREAS**, a disaster continues to exist and requires that certain emergency measures be taken to meet a public emergency affecting life, health, property or the public peace; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of El Paso in Trauma Service Area I, has 7 consecutive days of COVID hospitalization rates below 15%; and

**WHEREAS**, the City Council desires to amend Emergency Ordinance No. 019036, as restated and amended on November 9, 2020 (Emergency Ordinance No. 019115) and amended on November 23, 2020 (Emergency Ordinance No. 019118), and re-enacted March 1, 2021 (Emergency Ordinance No. 019141) to incorporate revisions to address the declining number of COVID-19 cases in El Paso; and

**WHEREAS**, on March 01, 2021, the Governor of Texas has issued GA 34 Relating to the opening of Texas in response to the COVID 19 disaster effective March 10, 2021; and

**WHEREAS**, this Order shall remain in effect through April 14, 2021, or until otherwise terminated, re-enacted, or superseded by a conflicting El Paso Local Health Authority order, or state or federal law or order.

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF EL PASO,**

**TEXAS:**

That Emergency Ordinance No. 019036 is re-enacted, restated and amended to read as follows:

1. STATE AND FEDERAL GUIDANCE

The City authorizes the Emergency Management Director or designee to update, restrict and promulgate regulations necessary to comply with Federal, State, and Local authorities' guidance in relation to COVID-19.

2. CITY BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

[Reserved].

3. PRICE CONTROLS

A person shall not sell any of the following goods or services for more than the fair market value:

- a) groceries, beverages, toiletry articles, ice;
- b) construction and building materials and supplies, and earthmoving equipment and machinery;
- c) electrical and gas generating and transmission equipment, parts and accessories;
- d) charcoal briquettes, matches, candles, lamp illumination and heat unit carbides, dry batteries, light bulbs, flashlights, and hand lanterns;
- e) hand tools (manual and power), hardware and household supplies, and equipment rental;
- f) automotive parts, supplies, and accessories;
- g) plumbing and electrical tools and supplies;
- h) apartment, duplex, multi-family dwelling, rooming house, hotel and motel rental;
- i) motor oil, kerosene, grease, and automotive lubricants;
- j) restaurant, cafeteria, and boarding-house meals;
- k) services of roofing and building contractors, plumbers, electricians, mechanics, tree surgeons, and automobile wrecker companies;
- l) medicine, pharmaceutical, and medical equipment and supplies;
- m) blankets, quilts, bedspreads, bed linens, mattresses, bedsprings, bedsteads, towels, toilet paper; and
- n) furniture and clothing.

4. SUSPENSION AND MODIFICATION OF ORDINANCES AND RULES

a) The following ordinances are hereby suspended or modified as indicated:

i. Any ordinance or regulation that imposes an obligation upon the City to deliver in less than five (5) business days any non-essential good, or service, as determined by the Mayor, is hereby suspended.

ii. Ordinance number 016736 is hereby modified to read as follows:

*Ordinance granting the authority to the City Manager or designee to enter into and sign*

*certain contracts on behalf of the City is hereby amended to authorize the City Manager to negotiate and enter into contracts, including the issuance of purchase orders, on behalf of the City and sign and bind the City for contracts for the acquisition of goods and services in an amount that exceeds \$50,000 per annum, in order to take immediate action to relieve the emergency necessity of the municipality's residents, to preserve the property of the municipality, and to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the municipality's residents.*

- iii. El Paso City Code, Title 12 (Vehicles and Traffic), Chapter 12.56 (Parking Meters), Sub-chapter 12.56.020 (Installation), Sub-section 12.56.020(F), second sentence of the first paragraph, as stated below is hereby suspended and temporarily replaced with the following:

Parking meter fees shall apply in all areas between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. of every day except on officially designated city holidays and Sundays. The International Bridges Director shall make recommendations to city council for exceptions to the days and times when parking meter fees shall apply, except that, for the duration of the local disaster declaration, the Director of International Bridges or designee may, without recommending to City Council, select as exempt from the parking meter fees those parking meters that enable curbside pickup and take out at restaurants in increments not to exceed 15 minutes.

The Exceptions within 12.56.020(F) are not suspended or amended, and remain in full force and effect.

- iv. The following sections of the Resolution Amending the Rules of Order for the El Paso City Council (the "Rules of Order"), Revised, as Effective March 3, 2020, including but not limited to exhibits, is hereby temporarily suspended and amended as follows:

- a) All references to 9:00 a.m. are changed to 3:30 P.M.
- b) All references to 12:00 noon are changed to 6:00 P.M.

Except as amended herein, the remainder of the Rules of Order are not suspended or amended, and remain in full force and effect. This Rule shall not be in effect the week of Thanksgiving through January 5, 2021; the City shall revert to its Original Rules of Order during this period.

- v. El Paso City Code Title 5 (Business License and Permit Regulations), Chapter 5.01 (General), Sub-chapter 5.01.090 (License/Permit-Appeal of denial, suspension or revocation), is hereby modified to add the following:

- D. The City official or designee or the permit official or designee, as defined in El Paso City Code Chapter 5.01, may without warning, notice or hearing, suspend the permit and or license to operate an establishment granted under Title 5 of the El Paso City Code for a period not to exceed thirty days if:

- 1. Conditions exist in an establishment that constitute an imminent health hazard, which by way of example may include failure to comply with any provision of a Local Emergency Directive, Local Health Authority Order, Emergency Ordinance, or other local, state or federal law relating to the COVID-19 pandemic;

2. The establishment operation has serious or repeated violations of any of the requirements noted in paragraph 1 above, which are a violation of this chapter. For purposes of this provision a serious violation includes but is not limited to, failure to comply with any provision of an active Local Emergency Directive, Local Health Authority Order, Emergency Ordinance or other local, state or federal law related to the spread of a communicable disease.

A City official or permit official may reinstate a permit if in the discretion of the official and following an inspection, the establishment has taken sufficient corrective actions. Any suspension subject to this paragraph D may be appealed pursuant to paragraphs A through C of this El Paso City Code Section 5.01.090, unless a specific chapter of the El Paso City Code sets out a different appeal process.

- E. Whenever a permit or license is suspended the holder of the permit or license shall immediately cease operation of the establishment. It shall be a violation of this chapter to operate an establishment with a suspended permit or license.
- vi. Title 9 (Health and Safety), Chapter 9.12 (Food and Food Handling Establishments), Section 9.12.040 (Permit-Approval Process), is modified to add paragraph D which shall read as follows:

**D. Permit Process Moratoria.** If the Director finds that there is good cause to halt the issuance and or renewal of permits granted pursuant to Chapter 9.12 of the El Paso City Code, the Director may pause the processing and issuance of such permits for up to 30 days. Such good cause may be based upon lack of sufficient resources to conduct reviews, inspections, process payments, or based on a state of emergency, protection of life from imminent health hazards, or for other similar reasons.

If the Director makes such a determination he shall issue a written moratorium stating the date that the City will halt processing permits pursuant to Chapter 9.12 of the El Paso City Code, what the moratorium will halt the processing of, the basis for his determination, and the date which such permitting will resume. Upon issuing this Moratorium by filing it with the City Clerk, the City will cease processing new permits and/or renewals pursuant to Chapter 9.12 of the El Paso City Code. The City will continue to accept applications after the effective date of the moratorium, but they will be placed in a first in first out queue which will not be processed, acted upon or issued until the end date of the moratorium.

If an applicant for a permit or renewal has special circumstances which they believe warrants a permit or renewal be issued during the moratorium period, they may appeal to the City Manager or designee for a determination on that permit or renewal by filing a letter explaining their circumstances with the City Manager, who will within 10 days issue a final determination on whether the permit or renewal will be processed or must wait until the moratorium has ended.

- vii. Title 9 (Health and Safety), Chapter 9.12 (Food and Food Handling Establishments), Section 9.12.080 (Suspension-Notification), Subsection (A) of the El Paso City Code is modified to read as follows:

A. The director or designee as defined in El Paso City Code Section 9.12.010, may without warning, notice or hearing, suspend the permit and or license to operate the establishment if:

1. Conditions exist in an establishment that constitute an imminent health hazard which by way of example may include failure to comply with any provision of a Local Emergency Directive, Local Health Authority Order, Emergency Ordinance, or other local, state or federal law relating to the COVID-19 pandemic;
2. The establishment operation has serious or repeated violations of any of the requirements of this chapter. For purposes of this provision a serious violation includes but is not limited to, failure to comply with any provision of an active Local Emergency Directive, Local Health Authority Order, Emergency Ordinance or other local, state or federal law related to the spread of a communicable disease.

viii. El Paso City Code Title 9 (Health & Safety), Chapter 9.48 (Public Swimming Pools and Spas), f (Suspension of licenses and closure by director), sub-section A, is hereby modified to read as follows:

3. A violation not appearing on this list but appearing elsewhere in this chapter regarding public pool or spa health and safety which has not been corrected within the number of days indicated on a written notice of violation; or
4. The public swimming pool or public spa fails to comply with any provision of a Local Emergency Directive, Local Health Authority Order, Emergency Ordinance, or other local, state or federal law relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, which constitutes an imminent health hazard.

ix. Title 9 (Health & Safety), Chapter 9.84 (Miscellaneous Health Regulations), Section 9.84.030 (Spitting) is hereby modified to read as follows:

9.84.030- Spitting, Sneezing and Coughing.

It is unlawful for any person to:

1. With criminal negligence spit, sneeze or cough upon:
  - a. Another individual,
  - b. Any sidewalk,
  - c. Upon the floor of any bus, taxi, trolley-car, or other similar public conveyance,
  - d. Upon the stairway, floor, passages or walls of any public building in the city,
  - e. Upon the walks, grass, grounds, seats or stands in any of the public parks in the city which people regularly use for recreation, rest or amusement,
  - f. Upon any frequently touched object with which members of the general public commonly interact, such as gas pumps, credit card readers, doorknobs, etc.

This section shall not apply to children ten years of age and less.

b) The suspension or modifications of the ordinances and regulations listed in Subsection (a) shall remain in effect for 30 days, unless re-enacted in accordance with City Charter

3.10 or until the state of disaster is terminated, whichever is sooner.

## 5. MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE AND OCCUPANCY OF PREMISES

a) [Reserved].

b) Restaurants may remain open as allowed by the Texas Governor or local law, and pursuant to current Local Emergency Directives and El Paso Health Authority Orders for Restaurants, as amended.

## 6. TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE

The City urges all businesses to provide two weeks of paid sick leave to employees that succumb to COVID-19, are caring for someone with COVID-19, or are subject to quarantine. The City further urges businesses to apply for any available federal funding for the provision of paid sick leave.

## 7. UTILITIES & RESIDENCE

Residents and commercial tenants are responsible for paying their respective utility, mortgage and rent bills

Landlords and tenants are encouraged to in good faith work out deferred payment plans or long term payment plans; however,

a) To the extent allowed by law, no local utility shall discontinue the provision of cable, internet, water, gas, waste removal and electric utility services to a residential or commercial customer for lack of payment while this ordinance is in effect.

b) To the extent allowed by law, no landlord shall evict a tenant for lack of payment while this ordinance is in effect.

## 8. PENALTIES

a) These regulations shall have the effect of ordinances when duly filed with the City Clerk.

b) A person who violates any provision of these regulations, upon conviction, is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of not more than one thousand dollars (\$1,000.00).

## 9. NOTICE OF INDEPENDENT CRIMINAL PENALTIES

A. State and local officials strongly urge that the public wear face masks whenever possible, particularly inside of buildings and in open spaces where it is not feasible to maintain social distancing from others not of the same household. It is important to remember that when an individual is not wearing a face covering, and is infected with COVID-19, their coughs or sneezes propel droplets carrying the virus through the air, and those airborne droplets may infect others with the virus.

The public is here notified that it is still a criminal violation under Title 9 Section 9.84.030 of the El Paso City Code to spit sneeze or cough on other individuals, sidewalks, on



public conveyances, on public places, and on frequently touched objects in public places. Failure to act reasonably and responsibly in this regard can still lead to criminal sanction.

- B. Individuals who fail to follow Isolation and Quarantine Orders issued by the El Paso Department of Public Health knowingly expose others to COVID-19. Similarly, individuals whose names were not reported to the El Paso Department of Public Health and fail to self-quarantine despite knowing they are a high risk contact due to their exposure to an individual with COVID-19, knowingly expose others to COVID-19.

The public is hereby on notice that a violation of any Order issued by the El Paso Local Health Authority is a criminal offense and may result in criminal penalties. Criminal penalties do not include jail time.

#### 10. EMERGENCY

This ordinance is adopted as an emergency measure with the unanimous vote of the City Council Representatives present and the consent of the Mayor and pursuant to City Charter Section 3.10.

Except as specified in a preceding section, this emergency ordinance shall take effect immediately upon its adoption and publication and it is accordingly so ordained. This ordinance shall remain in effect for 30 days, unless re-enacted in accordance with City Charter section 3.10 or until the state of disaster is terminated, whichever is sooner.

#### 11. SEVERABILITY CLAUSE

It is hereby declared to be the intention of the City Council that the phrases, sentences, paragraphs and sections of this ordinance are severable. If any part of this ordinance shall be declared unconstitutional by the valid judgment or decree of any court of competent jurisdiction, such unconstitutionality shall not affect the remaining phrases, sentences, paragraphs and sections.

Motion made by Alternate Mayor Pro Tempore Lizarraga, seconded by Representative Rivera, and unanimously carried to **ADOPT** the Emergency Ordinance.

AYES: Representatives Svarzbein, Annelo, Molinar, Salcido, Rodriguez, Rivera, and Lizarraga

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Representative Hernandez

**Mayor Leeser consented to the adoption of the Emergency Ordinance.**

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**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Motion made by Representative Rivera, seconded by Representative Molinar, and unanimously carried that the City Council retire into **EXECUTIVE SESSION** at 3:29 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 following:

Section 551.071 CONSULTATION WITH ATTORNEY

Section 551.087 DELIBERATION REGARDING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NEGOTIATIONS

AYES: Representatives Svarzbein, Annelo, Molinar, Salcido, Rodriguez, Rivera, and Lizarraga

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Representative Hernandez

Motion made by Representative Molinar, seconded by Representative Anello, and unanimously carried to **ADJOURN** the Executive Session at 3:45 p.m. and **RECONVENE** the meeting of the City Council.

AYES: Representatives Svarzbein, Anello, Molinar, Salcido, Rodriguez, Rivera, and Lizarraga  
NAYS: None  
ABSENT: Representative Hernandez

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**EX1.** Discussion on potential aviation business opportunity. (551.071, 551.087)

Motion made by Mayor Pro Tempore Svarzbein, seconded by Representative Rivera and unanimously carried that the City Manager or designee be authorized, in consultation with the City Attorney, to negotiate and execute all necessary documents in continuance of the potential aviation site location determination process, to include but not be limited to a Non-Disclosure Agreement.

AYES: Representatives Svarzbein, Anello, Molinar, Salcido, Rodriguez, Rivera, and Lizarraga  
NAYS: None  
ABSENT: Representative Hernandez

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**ADJOURN**

Motion made by Representative Molinar, seconded by Representative Rivera and unanimously carried to **ADJOURN** the meeting at 3:46 p.m. on Tuesday, March 16, 2021.

AYES: Representatives Svarzbein, Anello, Molinar, Salcido, Rodriguez, Rivera, and Lizarraga  
NAYS: None  
ABSENT: Representative Hernandez

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APPROVED AS TO CONTENT:

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Laura D. Prine, City Clerk