

DEE MARGO
MAYOR

TOMMY GONZALEZ
CITY MANAGER



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

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
July 6, 2020
9:10 A.M.

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. Meeting was called to order at 11:06 a.m. Mayor Dee Margo present and presiding and the following Council Members answered roll call: Peter Svarzbein, Alexsandra Anello, Cassandra Hernandez, Sam Morgan, Isabel Salcido, Claudia Rodriguez, Henry Rivera and Cissy Lizarraga.
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AGENDA

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1. **For discussion and action: FY 2020 – 2021 Budget as presented by the City Manager.**

Discussion and action may include but are 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 opening remarks, and Mr. Robert Cortinas, Chief Financial Officer presented a PowerPoint presentation.

The presentation included information on the benefits of having year-round budget updates which provide real-time information on revenue impacts and cost-cutting measures, along with the necessary reduction of services due to the lack of increase on property taxes, and the impact of COVID-19. Mr. Gonzalez mentioned that some of the current vacancies won't be filled and some of the quality of life projects will be placed on hold as the focus needs to remain on the basics such as Police, Fire, Streets, and the current workforce. Mr. Gonzalez also mentioned that in order to reopen museums and libraries, the City needs to have seven consecutive days of decreasing COVID cases.

Ms. Ellen Smyth, Mass Transit Director, answered questions posed by Council members related to bus route availability and mentioned that Mass Transit is working on different projects to include route priorities, which will be presented for Council's consideration later in the summer.

Mr. Cortinas continued the presentation by going over the effects of the decline in consumer spending and talked about the various tax credits while mentioning that the credit for people 65 and over has been raised each year. Mr. Cortinas also discussed the topics of the salary increase for Council members and the reduction in discretionary funds.

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

Mr. Cary Westin, Senior Deputy City Manager, and Mr. David Coronado, International Bridges Director, continued with the presentation, which included a discussion on the increase of cargo traffic at the bridges when compared to last year. He also elaborated on the measures aimed at relieving traffic from trucks crossing to and from Juarez/El Paso, the development of a streetcar route and cost savings by the reduction of outside contracts.

- **Safe and Beautiful Neighborhoods**
 - Goal 2 – Public Safety (Police, Fire, and Municipal Court)

Ms. Dionne Mack, Deputy City Manager, and Police Assistant Chief Patrick Maloney presented a PowerPoint that covered the presentation for Goal 2. Topics reviewed included budget increases with the major variances in salary increases due to collective bargaining agreements, overtime, and healthcare costs for Police and Fire. A decrease was realized due to the removal of Public Safety Capital pay-go funding for Police and Fire and the reduction in one-time capital expenditures in the Municipal Court

- Goal 7 – Infrastructure (Capital Improvement, Sun Metro, Streets & Maintenance)

Ms. Yvette Hernandez, Capital Improvement, Grant Funded Program Director, continued with the presentation on Goal 7 and highlighted cost decreases due to unfunded positions (all non-essential) and the removal of pay-go funding for facility renovations, as well as the removal of residential streets resurfacing.

- Goal 8 – Healthy Community (Environmental Services, Animal Services, Community Development, Public Health)

Ms. Ellen Smyth, Environmental Services and Mass Transit Director covered this portion of the presentation by sharing information related to cost decreases due to staffing reductions in the Animal Services and Public Health Departments, the completion of light vehicle inventory replacement, and the implementation of biweekly recycling collections. There was an increase in salaries in Community and Human Development due to the impact of the fulltime CDBG positions that was partially offset by unfunded positions in neighborhood services and the transfer of the Military Liaison position to the Airport.

- **Update on NTMP and ADA Programs**

Ms. Olivia Montalvo, Neighborhood Services Coordinator, and Mr. Julio Perez, Americans

with Disabilities Act Coordinator, took over the presentation and provided an overview of the City's Neighborhood Traffic Management and Americans with Disabilities Act Programs while highlighting the services provided.

- **Exceptional Recreational, Cultural and Educational Opportunities**
 - Goal 4 – Quality of Life (Library, Museums, Parks, Zoo)

Ms. Tracey Jerome, Deputy City Manager, shared information related to cost savings on salary and benefits decreases due to unfunded positions, reductions in publication and subscription costs, reduction to the Children's Museum stipend, and contractual services. Ms. Jerome also mentioned that the priorities set for FY'21 will include the restoration of service levels and the reopening of facilities and programs.

- **High Performing Government**
 - Goal 5 – Communication (Information Technology)

Ms. Araceli Guerra, Information Technologies Director, briefed Council members on the priorities for the upcoming fiscal year which include cybersecurity and equipment updates while providing information on the cost decreases due to unfunded and deleted positions within the IT Department along with a decrease in citywide software contracts. Ms. Guerra also reviewed the accomplishments as part of the COVID-19 response and recovery to include support for virtual meetings, press conferences, Wi-Fi expansion at 26 quality of life facilities, COVID-19 website development, and 24/7 emergency operation center support, and the installation of telecommuting equipment for the workforce.

- Goal 6 – Sound Governance (City Attorney, City Manager, Human Resources, Mayor/Council, City Clerk, Non- Departmental, Comptroller, Purchasing, Tax)

Ms. Maria Pasillas, Tax Assessor Collector, and Mr. Robert Cortinas, Chief Financial Officer, finalized the presentation by providing information on cost decreases in the departments mentioned above due to unfunded positions and audit fees. On the other hand, an increase was due to healthcare costs and general and runoff elections. Key accomplishments highlighted were the completion of two Special elections, a Runoff Election, a Tax Office Mobile Bank, legal support for the elections, the sale of El Paso Electric, COVID-19 responses, continued growth of the Purchasing Expo, Hire El Paso First, Return to Work Guidelines, and completion of the FY21 audit with no financial findings among others.

- FY 2020 3rd Quarter Financial Report

Mr. Robert Cortinas, Chief Financial Officer, went over the proactive response to the revenue impacts caused by the COVID-19 crisis to include a hiring freeze of non-essential employees, the closure of multiple facilities, furloughs, layoffs, the delayed opening of new facilities, Sun Metro route adjustment and the suspension of the Streetcar service. Other impacts included the deferment of non-essential capital projects. Mr. Cortinas then provided a status of the third quarter general fund revenue and expenditures and ended by explaining that year-end projections were only estimates at this time and subject to change with the uncertainty of the pandemic.

Mayor Margo and Representatives Svarzbein, Annello, Hernandez, Rodriguez, Rivera, and Lizarraga commented and asked questions during the meeting.

The following City staff members were available to provide comments and answered questions posed by Council:

- Mr. Sam Rodriguez, City Engineer
- Ms. Nicole Cote, Office of Management and Budget Director
- Ms. Karla Nieman, City Attorney
- Ms. Jessica Herrera, Economic, and International Development Director
- Fire Chief Mario D'Agostino
- Assistant Fire Chief Jonathan Killings
- Mr. Ben Fyffe, Museums and Cultural Affairs Director
- Mr. Joel McKnight, Streets, and Maintenance Assistant Director
- Ms. Norma Martinez, Public Libraries Director

NO ACTION was taken on this item.

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ADJOURN

Motion made by Representative Lizarraga, seconded by Representative Morgan, and unanimously carried to **ADJOURN** this meeting at 6:39 p.m.

AYES: Representatives Svarzbein, Annello, Hernandez, Morgan, Salcido, Rodriguez, Rivera, and Lizarraga

NAYS: None

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APPROVED AS TO CONTENT:

Laura D. Prine, City Clerk