

MINUTES OF BUDGET WORKSHOP OF THE CITY OF SAN JUAN COMMISSION

DATE: Saturday, August 26, 2023

TIME: 8:00 a.m.

PLACE: Isla Grand Beach Resort
500 Padre Blvd.
South Padre Island, Texas 78597

MEMBERS PRESENT: Marco "Markie" Villegas, Mayor Pro-Tem
Leonardo "Lenny" Sanchez, Commissioner
Adina "Dina" Santillan, Commissioner
Ernesto "Neto" Guajardo, Commissioner
Rick Palacios, City Attorney

STAFF PRESENT: Benjamin Arjona, City Manager
Brenda Escalante, City Secretary
Tirso Garza, Interim Chief of Fire
Leandro Sifuentes, Chief of Police
Leroy Gonzales, Finance Director
Maria Beltran, Asst. Director of Finance
Adelaida Cordero, Director of Human Resources
Armandina Segin, Library Director
Patrick Willingham, Director of Parks & Recreation
Daniel Tijerina, Director of Planning
Israel Garza, Director of Sanitation/ Public Works
Juan Carlos Martinez, Interim Director of Utilities
Mary Enriquez, Court Administrator
Pat Karr, Director of Information Technology
Ruben Guajardo, Asst. Director of Parks & Rec/PAL Director

ORDER OF BUSINESS

- I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER:**
- Mayor Pro Tem Marco "Markie" Villegas called meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.
- II. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON ALL THE FOLLOWING MATTERS:**
- A. Discussion on the Proposed City Budget for Fiscal Year 2023-2024. [Benjamin Arjona, City Manager]**

DISCUSSION: The City Manager, Benjamin Arjona, thanked the City Commission and personnel for attending the training. Also, told the staff that Monica De La Cruz presented a legislative proposal and Eddie Cantu requested \$37,500 to \$75,000 in funding. Brenda Escalante, City Secretary, noted that there were no substantial changes in the Legislative Department; the sole account would be OTHER: EXPENSES (10-400.9899) for city events ranging from \$39,890.00 to \$42,790.00. Commissioner Adina "Santillan" inquired whether the city had any plans for Dia de los Muertos celebrations. No, said City Manager Benjamin Arjona. Mr. Arjona suggested changing the \$3,000.00 intended for Dia de los Muertos to the Parks account under the Fall 5K Run after Patrick Willingham, Director of Park and Recreation, said that they were looking into an October 5K. Mr. Arjona's suggestion was approved by the City Commission. Mrs. Escalante further noted that the only modifications made under the City Secretary Department were to the CONTRACT SERV. NOT OTHERWISE CL (10-420.9810) from \$45,000.00 to \$40,000.00 for election services, since this year's city election expenditures were \$19,754.15 due to the lack of a runoff election.

Maria Enriquez, Court Administrator, requested training for the municipal court's administrative assistant clerks. Mayor Pro-Tem Marco "Markie" Villegas inquired whether the Municipal Court required the assistance of extra judges. Mr. Arjona claimed that he visited with all of the city judges, who acknowledged that they would find it impossible to be present for arraignments. Interim Chief of Police Leandro Sifuentes noted that no rejection must be signed by an attorney in order to conduct a blood warrant; the issue would be after hours. The City Attorney, Rick Palacios, remarked that something has to be worked out with the IT Department. In addition, he would consult with the

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judges and DA in order to get a blood warrant and appoint judges on rotation. Judge Hernandez's salary, according to Commissioner Villegas, should be reconsidered. Mr. Palacios indicated that, according to the City Charter, the qualifications and expectations will be included in the appointment of a presiding judge and assistant judge. This matter should be addressed before the City Commission. Mr. Arjona proposed adding another alternate judge with the requirement of \$25,000.00, and the City Commission agreed.

Leroy Gonzales, Director of Finance, stated that the Finance Department decreased travel and training for the GFOA line item.

Daniel Tijerina, Director of Planning and Zoning, stated that with the staff approval of a new inspector and a planning engineer, this will alleviate the planning led by Mrs. Monica Gomez.

Leandro Sifuentes, Interim Chief of Police, stated that the employee request of officers and sergeants was not approved, to which Mr. Arjona stated he would make a few arrangements to add one sergeant. Also, the Sheriff's Office will be sending a list of trainings that they will offer that the police officers and the fire department could benefit from. Furthermore, clothing and uniform line items would be increased to provide summer attire for the officers. For the police department's transport van, they would have to incur additional expenses since it's missing certain equipment. Commissioner Adina "Dina" Santillan asked if officers are still providing paper tickets, to which Chief Sifuentes replied yes and mentioned that this process would hold them behind. Mr. Arjona asked Pat Karr, Director of IT, to revisit the ticket printer, and next calendar year they would bring another CO for the police department fence and carport. Chief Sifuentes informed us that they would be canceling their membership with Blue Wave as their fees went up to \$4,500.00 a year. Furthermore, he inquired about a Collective Bargaining Agreement typo, which Lulu Beltran, Assistant Director of Finance, stated she would be looking into.

Interim Chief of Police Leandro Sifuentes indicated that the employee request of officers and sergeants was denied, to which Mr. Arjona responded that he would make a few arrangements to add one sergeant. In addition, the Sheriff's Office will give a list of trainings that will be available to police officers and firefighters. Furthermore, apparel and uniform line items would be increased to give cops with summer gear. As the police department's transport van lacks crucial equipment, they would have to spend additional costs. Commissioner Adina "Dina" Santillan inquired whether police were still issuing paper tickets, to which Chief Sifuentes answered that they were, but that this method would cause them to fall behind. Mr. Arjona requested that Pat Karr, Director of IT, look into the ticket printer, and that they bring another CO for the police department fence and carport the next calendar year. Chief Sifuentes advised us that they would be discontinuing their membership with Blue Wave since their annual costs had increased to \$4,500.00. He also inquired about a typing mistake in the Collective Bargaining Agreement, which Lulu Beltran, Assistant Director of Finance, said she would investigate.

Tirso Garza, Fire Chief, praised Mr. Leroy Gonzales, Director of Finance, and Benjamin Arjona, City Manager, for doing an excellent job of budget balancing. Chief Garza advised the City Commission that the new fire station construction had not been hampered by the rain, that work was proceeding on schedule, and that sandbagging equipment had been ordered. The EMS account has also been balanced and is self-sufficient.

Commissioner Leonardo "Lenny" Sanchez arrived to the budget workshop at 9:45 a.m.

Israel Garza, Director of Sanitation, requested that David Garca and Juan Roque be promoted to supervisors and that new heavy equipment workers be hired, which was authorized. He also requested two heavy-duty trailers and a Polaris to assist them with eliminating weeds on the walkways. Mr. Garza replied that they just made an equipment request through the Central Garage.

According to Patrick Willingham, Director of Parks and Recreation, they requested a tractor shredder and are in desperate need of a new one. Furthermore, Mr. Willingham requested that a light equipment employee be promoted to crew leader because of to his hard work and dedication. Commissioner Santillan inquired about the weedy lien procedure, to which Mr. Willingham said that they only help when necessary. The procedure is explained to them by Daniel Tijerina, Director of Planning and Zoning. Mr. Willingham requested that the budget be increased under the Building Maintenance line-items for REPAIR and MAINTENANCE because those funds are used for all city structures. Commissioner Santillan inquired whether there were any plans for the swimming pool.

Armandina Sesin, Library Director, stated that the library is requesting computer and software upgrades as they are obsolete.

Leroy Gonzales, Director of Finance, stated that legal services for hourly rates and one flat rate would need to be brought back to the city commission for approval as their rates increased. Rick Palacios indicated that after multiple meetings with his partners, they concluded that they needed to request that the city consider adjusting the cost of their services. Mayor Pro-Tem Villegas requested that the City

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Commission examine Mr. Palacios' request because they had been with the city for a long time and he believed it was time, and the City Commission agreed.

Adelaida Cordero, Director of Human Resources, claimed that the professional services and training account was reduced from \$15,000.00 to \$10,000.00, but she requested reconsideration because they have been working on providing additional training to city employees. Commissioner Sanchez inquired about the orientation procedure and the length of new employee training sessions. Ms. Cordero responded that the orientation will be between 30 and 45 minutes. She also stated that the new city hall will provide extra room for new employee onboarding and other forms of training. Commissioner Sanchez stated that training would relieve all department heads, and he requested them to employ all available internal resources. Furthermore, Ms. Cordero proceeded, stating that the Risk Management post will be relocated to the City Manager's office.

The Zoom membership for courts will be terminated, according to Pat Karr, Director of IT, because it has increased to \$3,000.00, and the city will be able to download the material as needed.

According to Tirso Garza, Fire Chief, the skeeter was taken for the Emergency Management account, but the trailer was maintained to haul sandbags to the northside park and the emergency light tower. Furthermore, he added that the sand is no longer free for the city to use.

Leandro Sifuentes, Interim Chief of Police, stated that he would like to request a pay increase for Animal Control Officer Gongora due to her hard work and dedication to the city. Chief Sifuentes added that when Officer Gongora is needed, she will show up with no questions asked. Also, boxes for the animal control units are needed.

Israel Garza, Director of Sanitation, stated that he is now working on a prospective Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) arrangement with Eddie Cantu-Hidalgo County and Hidalgo Irrigation District 2 to restore the irrigation district's roadway, which requires extensive repairs. Commissioner Sanchez inquired as to whether the option was most cost-effective. Mr. Arjona claimed that the irrigation district bridge would cost half a million dollars to repair, but that if authorized, Hidalgo County would cover the other half. Mr. Tijerina, together with Chief Garza and Mr. Garza, are presently working on a truck route ordinance, according to Mr. Arjona. Mr. Garza indicated that he made a few personnel requests and requested a wage rise for Mrs. Janie Morin, who has been a dedicated employee. Mr. Gonzales inquired as to whether she would be promoted from Administrative Assistant I to Administrative Assistant III. Mr. Garza, according to Mayor Pro-Tem Villegas, oversees one of the largest departments, which includes Sanitation, Public Works, Central Garage, Streets and Alleys, and Storm Water. He feels that bringing in an assistant would be beneficial to Mr. Garza. Mr. Arjona asked Mr. Garza for his thoughts on the Mayor Pro-Tem Villegas concern, to which Mr. Garza answered that assistance would be very appreciated but that he would leave it for the City Commission to decide. Mayor Pro-Tem Villegas announced that he would propose elevating the present Fleet Manager to the position of Assistant Director and removing the Administrative Assistant. Mayor Pro-Tem Villegas suggestion was concurred in by the City Commission. Mr. Garza explained that the excavator would be self-sustaining.

Leroy Gonzales, Director of Finance, claimed that in order to keep up with the city's rapid expansion and all forthcoming subdivisions, they required an additional meter reader for utility billing. Commissioner Sanchez inquired whether the city was prepared with all of the new subdivisions and if the city had looked at wireless-smart meters. That was the plan, according to Mr. Arjona.

Juan Carlos Martinez, Interim Director of Utilities, stated that everything stayed the same under the Utilities Administration. Furthermore, equipment would be brought in from another location under the water plant. Finally, under Water Distribution, Mr. Martinez requested that a water operator be reclassified. In addition, there were a few accounts increases in REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE and TRAVEL AND TRAINING.

Benjamin Arjona, City Manager, mentioned that after balancing the budget with the finance staff, they reached the following percentages for the cost of living: 3, 4, and 5. Mr. Arjona asked the City Commission for their recommendation. After a long and extensive review, the City Commission asked Mr. Gonzales for his recommendation. Mr. Gonzales stated that it was in the best interest of the city to go with 4%. Mr. Arjona and the City Commission concurred with Mr. Gonzales.

The City Commission thanked the directors and staff for their hard work and dedication.

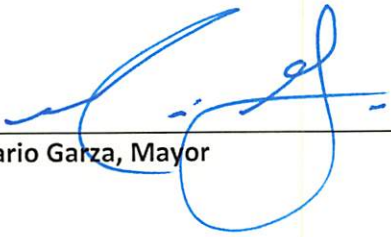
III. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Pro-Tem Marco "Markie" Villegas made motion to adjourn the budget workshop at 1:02 p.m. and was seconded by Commissioner Ernesto "Neto" Guajardo. Motion Passed (4-0).

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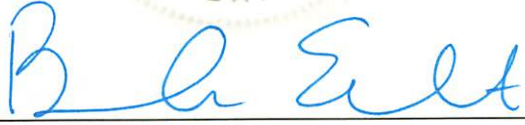


CITY OF SAN JUAN, TEXAS



Mario Garza, Mayor

ATTEST:



Brenda Escalante, City Secretary