

MINUTES OF REGULAR CALLED MEETING OF THE CITY OF SAN JUAN COMMISSION

DATE:

Tuesday, June 11, 2024

TIME:

6:00 P.M.

PLACE:

San Juan Memorial Library
Multipurpose Meeting Room
1010 S. Standard St.
San Juan, Texas 78589

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mario Garza, Mayor
Marco “Markie” Villegas, Mayor Pro Tempore
Ernesto “Neto” Guajardo, Commissioner
Adina “Dina” Santillan, Commissioner
Rick Palacios, City Attorney

STAFF PRESENT:

Benjamin Arjona, City Manager
Brenda Escalante, City Secretary
Tirso Garza, Fire Chief
Leandro Sifuentes, Chief of Police
Adelaida Cordero, Director of Human Resources
Leroy Gonzales, Director of Finance
Christina Perez, Interim Library Director
Daniel Tijerina, Director of Planning
Israel Garza, Director of Sanitation/ Public Works
Juan Carlos Martinez, Director of Utilities
Mary Enriquez, Court Administrator
Pat Karr, Director of Information Technology
Ruben Guajardo, Director of Parks & Recreation / PAL Director

ORDER OF BUSINESS

I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER:

Mayor Mario Garza called meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

II. INVOCATION:

Benjamin Arjona, City Manager led the Invocation.

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Mayor Mario Garza led the Pledge of Allegiance.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

Commissioner Leonardo Sanchez announced his resignation, noting that he has accepted a new opportunity for his family’s future. He expressed his gratitude to the Mayor, City. He expressed his gratitude to the Mayor, City Commission, and City Manager for their collaboration and stated he was honored to serve the City of San Juan. Luis Pena raised concerns regarding the City Manager’s actions, specifically questioning the use of taxpayer money for the demolition of the San Juan Hotel. Kimberly Grimaldo Voiced opposition to the demolition of the San Juan Hotel. She requested that the City Commission allow the community to help save the building, noting they have resources to apply for grants to restore the hotel into a museum for future generations. Roseann Bacha-Garza representing Hidalgo County Historical Commission reiterated the Commission's May 30, 2024, statement opposing the demolition and suggested alternative uses for the property. She highlighted that the hotel is one of only 36 recorded Texas Landmarks in the county. Juventina Herrera expressed opposition to the demolition and advocated for preserving the hotel as a historical civil rights museum. Mae Anzaldua Trevino expressed concerns regarding the demolition and addressed a public records request she filed on May 28. She contested the potential fees associated with her request, as communicated by the City Secretary, arguing that such information should be free for taxpayers.

V. PRESENTATIONS

A. Presentation of the San Juan Parks & Recreation 2023-2024 School Participation Award. [Ruben Guajardo, Director of Parks and Recreation.]

DISCUSSION: Ruben Guajardo, San Juan Parks and Recreation Director, presented the 2023-2024 School Participation Awards. These traveling trophies recognize local schools with the highest percentage of student enrollment in the city's sports and recreation programs.

Mr. Guajardo announced this year's winners:

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Carmen Elementary: Won the elementary division for the third consecutive year with a 44.1% participation rate.
Raul Yzaguirre Middle School: Claimed the junior high division title for the second time, with nearly 34% of their sixth graders participating.

Mr. Guajardo also extended his gratitude to PSJA ISD, various city departments, and our dedicated staff members for their continued partnership in making these youth programs a success.

B. Presentation on 2024 Hurricane Preparedness. [Tirso Garza, Fire Chief]

DISCUSSION: Fire Chief Tirso Garza presented the city's 2024 Hurricane Preparedness Action Plan, highlighting several significant upgrades to our emergency response capabilities. Chief Garza noted key improvements include the acquisition of a new automated sandbagging attachment, which can fill up to 6,000 bags in an 8-hour shift, and two additional 6-inch water pumps, bringing the city's total to five. Furthermore, the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is now fully prepared for activation with upgraded technology and improved accommodations for essential personnel.

To ensure uniform planning and clear communication ahead of the storm season, the City Commission has suggested organizing a dedicated workshop for all department directors.

C. Presentation on Departmental Reports: Department of Planning and Zoning, Department of Parks and Recreation, Department of Sanitation, and San Juan Memorial Library.

- 1. Department of Planning and Zoning Monthly Report. [Daniel Tijerina, Director of Planning]
- 2. Department of Parks and Recreation Monthly Report. [Ruben Guajardo, Director of Parks and Recreation]
- 3. Department of Sanitation Monthly Report. [Israel Garza, Director of Sanitation]
- 4. San Juan Memorial Library Monthly Report. [Christina Perez, Interim Director]

DISCUSSION: Commissioner Ernesto “Neto” Guajardo raised flags regarding the status of the city's water and storm drains, Israel Garza, Director of Sanitation, has confirmed that crews have been operating the vactor truck for several months to ensure drains remain clear of debris. Mr. Garza stated that the Sanitation and Public Works departments are collaborating on an in-house city cleanup scheduled for this Saturday. This initiative aims to remove discarded tires and eliminate standing water. Following these efforts, vector control (mosquito spraying) will be conducted on Monday and Tuesday.

VI. PUBLIC HEARING/ORDINANCES

- A. Hold a Public Hearing for a Variance Request to Allow an Automotive Service Station at the Expressway Corridor District (EC) Located 708 W. Interstate Highway 2, Legally Described as Lot 5B, Re-plat of Lot 5, Texas National Subdivision, as Requested by Cross Engineering and Consultants. [Daniel Tijerina, Director of Planning] Tabled
Commissioner Adina “Dina” Santillan made a motion to untable the item and was seconded by Mayor Mario Garza. Motion passed (4-0).

DISCUSSION: Daniel Tijerina, Director of Planning and Zoning recommended denying a variance request for a new Firestone location off the expressway based on its Expressway Corridor designation.

Mayor Mario Garza opened the public hearing at 6:38 p.m.

Michael Pacheco, a representative from Texas National Bank, spoke in favor of the project and inquired about the voting requirements following a commissioner's resignation.
Rick Palacios, City Attorney clarified that overturning the Planning and Zoning Commission recommendation would still require an 80% supermajority, which meant a unanimous vote from the four remaining commission members was necessary.

Mayor Mario Garza closed the public hearing at 6:40 p.m.

Mayor Mario Garza made a motion to approve the variance to help create local jobs. However, the motion died due to a lack of a second, therefore no action was taken.

- B. Hold a Public Hearing and Consider an Ordinance for a Rezoning Request from Single-Family Residence District (R-S) to General Business District (C-2) of Lots 95-96, Valley Ranch No. 5 Subdivision, Located at the Southeast Corner of Hall Acres Road and Stewart Road, as Requested by Esponjas Development, LTD. [Daniel Tijerina, Director of Planning] Tabled

Commissioner Adina “Dina” Santillan made a motion to un table the item and was seconded by Mayor Pro Tem, Marco “Markie” Villegas. Motion passed (4-0).

DISCUSSION: Mr. Daniel Tijerina, Director of Planning and Zoning presented a request to rezone two lots on Stewart Road from single-family residential to a C2 commercial designation. Mr. Tijerina noted that both city staff and the Planning Commission recommended approval because the road serves as a major corridor.

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Mayor Mario Garza opened the public hearing at 6:43 p.m.

Eddie Cantu property owner spoke in favor of the rezoning, explaining that the high traffic volume at the intersection makes residential development impractical for the two lots closest to the road.

Mayor Mario Garza closed the public hearing at 6:45 p.m.

Commissioner Ernesto “Neto” Guajardo made a motion to approve and was seconded by Commissioner Adina “Dina” Santillan. Motion passed (4-0).

VII. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON ALL THE FOLLOWING MATTERS:

- A. Discussion and Possible Action to Accept Commissioner Leonardo "Lenny" Sanchez, Place 4 Letter of Resignation.

DISCUSSION: City Manager Benjamin Arjona has discussed the formal acceptance of Commissioner Lenny Sanchez's resignation letter, which was received on May 9th. Following a consultation with legal counsel regarding the official effective date, a motion was made and approved to accept the resignation, effective May 17th.

Mayor Pro Tem Marco “Markie” Villegas made a motion to approve the resignation letter effective May 17, 2024 and was seconded by Commissioner Adina “Dina” Santillan. Motion passed (4-0).

VIII. RESOLUTIONS

- A. Consider Resolution Authorizing the City of San Juan to Submit and Accept an Application for Funding to the Office of the Governor, Rifle Resistant Body Armor -FY2025 for the City of San Juan. [Leandro Sifuentes, Chief of Police]

DISCUSSION: Leandro Sifuentes, Chief of Police has requested consideration of a resolution to approve a grant funding application for rifle-resistant body armor. The total amount requested in the application is \$36,120.

Commissioner Adina “Dina” Santillan made a motion to approve and was seconded by Commissioner Ernesto “Neto” Guajardo. Motion passed (4-0).

- B. Consider Resolution Authorizing the City of San Juan to Submit and Accept an Application for Funding to the Office of the Governor, Local Border Security Program (LBSP) FY25 for the City of San Juan. [Leandro Sifuentes, Chief of Police]

DISCUSSION: Leandro Sifuentes, Chief of Police requested consideration of a resolution to approve the submission of a grant application for the Local Border Security Program, also known as "Border Star." Chief Sifuentes noted that the city applies for this grant annually. The requested funding amount for this application is \$75,000.

Mayor Pro Tem, Marco “Markie” Villegas made a motion to approve and was seconded by Adina “Dina” Santillan. Motion passed (4-0).

- C. Consider resolution authorizing the City of San Juan to submit and accept an application for funding to the Office of the Governor, Bullet Resistant Shields FY25, for the City of San Juan. [Leandro Sifuentes, Chief of Police]

DISCUSSION: Leandro Sifuentes, Chief of Police requested to consider a resolution to approve a funding application for bullet-resistant shields requested a resolution to approve a funding application for bullet-resistant shields for the upcoming year. Chief Sifuentes noted that the shields cost approximately \$7,000 each, making the total requested grant amount \$30,000.

Commissioner Ernesto “Neto” Guajardo made a motion to approve and was seconded by Adina “Dina” Santillan. Motion passed (4-0).

- D. Consider Resolution Authorizing the City of San Juan to Submit and Accept an Application for Funding to the Office of the Governor, LEERT Protection Gear Grant -FY2025 for the City of San Juan. [Leandro Sifuentes, Chief of Police]

DISCUSSION: Leandro Sifuentes, Chief of Police requested consideration of a resolution to approve a grant funding application for the regional SWAT team, which is based in the City of San Juan. Chief Sifuentes mentioned that the active SWAT team currently consists of 30 members from across the Valley, serving areas from Sullivan City to South Padre Island. The requested grant amount of \$116,065 will be used to purchase body armor for all members of the team.

Mayor Pro Tem Marco “Markie” Villegas made a motion to approve and was seconded by Ernesto “Neto” Guajardo. Motion passed (4-0).

- E. Consider Resolution Authorizing the City of San Juan to Submit and Accept an Application for Funding to the Office of the Governor, Operation Lone Star Grant Program -FY2025 for the City of San Juan. [Leandro Sifuentes, Chief of Police]

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DISCUSSION: Leandro Sifuentes, Chief of Police requested the consideration of a resolution to approve a grant application to the Office of the Governor for the Operation Lone Star grant program.

The requested funding amount is \$75,990. These funds will be used to purchase ATVs and UTVs to assist officers in patrolling the border area.

Commissioner Adina “Dina” Santillan made a motion to approve and was seconded by Mayor Pro Temp Marco “Markie” Villegas. Motion passed (4-0).

- F. Consider Resolution Authorizing the City of San Juan to Submit and Accept an Application for Funding to the Office of the Governor, Gear and Communications Equipment -FY2025 for the City of San Juan. [Leandro Sifuentes, Chief of Police]

DISCUSSION: Leandro Sifuentes, Chief of Police requested the consideration of a resolution to approve a grant application for SWAT team gear and communication equipment. The total funding request is \$53,363. Chief Sifuentes noted that the state typically provides notification of grant approvals during the summer, which would allow the department to budget these funds for October.

Commissioner Adina “Dina” Santillan made a motion to approve and was seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Marco “Markie” Villegas. Motion passed (4-0).

- G. Consider Resolution Authorizing the City of San Juan to Submit and Accept an Application for Funding to the Office of the Ticket Writers -FY2025 for the City of San Juan. [Leandro Sifuentes, Chief of Police]

DISCUSSION: Leandro Sifuentes, Chief of Police requested the consideration of a resolution to approve a grant application for new ticket-writing software. Chief Sifuentes noted that officers currently rely on handwritten paper tickets; this software would modernize and simplify the process. The requested funding amount is \$46,453, which exclusively covers the software costs.

Mayor Pro Tem Marco “Markie” Villegas made a motion to approve and was seconded by Commissioner Ernesto “Neto” Guajardo. Motion passed (4-0).

- H. Consideration and Action, if any, on Resolution Issuing an Order and Notice of the City of San Juan Special Municipal Election for September 7, 2024, for the Election of Commissioner Place 4 and Designating Election Precincts and Polling Places. [Brenda Escalante, City Secretary]

DISCUSSION: Brenda Escalante, City Secretary discussed a resolution to issue an order and notice for a special municipal election. Based on staff recommendations, the election will be contracted to the Hidalgo County Election Department. While a city-run election was initially considered for September, it was determined that voting machines could not be guaranteed due to the November presidential election.

City Commission agreed that in order to maximize voter turnout and convenience given the short timeframe, both the San Juan Memorial Library and the Fire Station will serve as polling locations for early voting and Election Day.

Mrs. Escalante noted the following key dates:

- Filing Period: Opens June 12, 2024, and closes June 20, 2024, at 5:00 PM.
- Early Voting: July 15 – July 26, 2024.
- Election Day: July 30, 2024.

Commissioner Adina “Dina” Santillan made a motion to approve and was seconded by Mayor Pro Tem, Marco “Markie” Villegas. Motion passed (4-0).

IX. CONTRACTUALS

- A. Consideration and Action, if any on an Inter-local Cooperation Agreement Between the County of Hidalgo and City of San Juan to Provide Efficient and Effective Library Services for County Residents. [Christina Perez, Interim Library Director]

DISCUSSION: Christina Perez, Interim Library Director stated this agreement was the renewal of a yearly interlocal cooperation agreement between the City of San Juan and Hidalgo County. She further stated this agreement allows the San Juan Memorial Library to acquire resources and provide efficient library services to approximately 54,000 county residents. In exchange for providing these services, the city's library will receive an allocation of \$14,400.46 from the county.

Commissioner Adina “Dina” Santillan made a motion to approve and was seconded by May Pro Tem, Marco “Markie” Villegas. Motion passed (4-0).

X. EXECUTIVE SESSION

- A. The San Juan City Commission will Convene in Executive Session in Accordance with the Texas Open Meeting Act, Vernon's Texas Statutes and Codes Annotated, Government Code Chapter §551.071 (Consultation with Attorney).

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1. Pursuant to Section §551.071 CONSULTATION WITH ATTORNEY; Discussion and Possible Action Regarding Legal Issues Concerning 4th of July Event to be held on July 3, 2024.

Mayor Mario Garza opted to discuss the upcoming Independence Day celebration, scheduled for July 3rd, in an open session rather than moving into a closed executive session. During the meeting, City Manager Benjamin Arjona provided the full event line-up.

XI. RECONVENE

- A. The San Juan City Commission will Convene in Executive Session in Accordance with the Texas Open Meeting Act, Vernon's Texas Statutes and Codes Annotated, Government Code Chapter §551.071 (Consultation with Attorney).

1. Pursuant to Section §551.071 CONSULTATION WITH ATTORNEY; Discussion and Possible Action Regarding Legal Issues Concerning 4th of July Event to be held on July 3, 2024.

No Action Taken

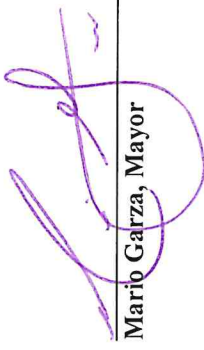
XII. ADJORNMENT

Mayor Pro Tem Marco “Markie” Villegas made a motion to adjourn at 7:05 p.m. and was seconded by Mayor Mario Garza. Motion passed (4-0)

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ATTEST:


Brenda Escalante, City Secretary


Mario Garza, Mayor