

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

DATE:

Tuesday, July 23, 2024

TIME:

5:30 p.m.

PLACE:

City of San Juan
EOC Room (2nd Floor)
512 S. Nebraska Ave.
San Juan, Texas 78589

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mario Garza, Mayor
Adina “Dina” Santillan, Commissioner
Ernesto “Neto” Guajardo, Commissioner
Cris Palacios, City Attorney

STAFF PRESENT:

Benjamin Arjona, City Manager
Brenda Escalante, City Secretary
Leandro Sifuentes, Chief of Police
Leroy Gonzales, Finance Director
Mary Enriquez, Court Administrator

ORDER OF BUSINESS

I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER:

Mayor Mario Garza called meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Mayor Mario Garza led the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

A. Discussion and Possible Action on Approving Public Safety Building Renovation/Expansion and Municipal Court.

DISCUSSION: Benjamin Arjona, City Manager brought this item back before the City Commission for a presentation of project renderings. Brian Godinez, CEO of ERO Architects, presented updated renovations and floor plans that maintain the original exterior design while expanding the facility to approximately 42,000 square feet. The presentation included the site plan, floor plan, proposed front façade, project schedule, and budget verification. The revised layout is designed to enhance security by creating better separation between public and private areas, secure corridors, and designated detention and court spaces.

Specifically, the proposed facility includes:

- Police administration offices and investigation areas
- Locker rooms and evidence storage
- Temporary juvenile and adult holding cells
- Municipal court operations

Mayor, City Commission, the Police Chief, and the Municipal Judge reviewed the updated plans and raised concerns regarding functionality, accessibility, and future growth. Judge Robert Garza highlighted issues with public access to the courtroom, the placement of clerks and payment stations, and the space allocated for records and cashier operations. In response, the architects agreed to revise these areas and continue refining the overall design. Additionally, Commissioner Adina “Dina” Santillan and Judge Garza reviewed the Municipal Court layout, noting that the current plan does not sufficiently accommodate the three current cashiers or future records growth. The ERO representative committed to readjusting the payment station and clarified that public access to the court will be provided via the north lobby.

Police Chief Leandro Sifuentes emphasized the necessity of maintaining proper separation for juvenile detainees to ensure compliance with state regulations. He also noted that the department’s expected growth must be prioritized in future planning.

City leaders stressed the importance of ensuring the facility serves the city for decades while minimizing wasted space and costs. The project estimate remains approximately \$11.25 million, and officials are exploring grants and other funding opportunities to reduce expenses.

No formal action was taken during this meeting, as the commissioners have requested additional review sessions and revisions before proceeding with approvals.

CITY OF SAN JUAN
CITY COMMISSION MEETING
TUESDAY, JULY 23, 2024

IV. RESOLUTIONS

- A. Consideration and Appropriate Action on a Resolution by the City Commission of the City of San Juan, Texas Authorizing and Approving the Publication of a Notice of Intention to Issue Certificate of Obligation; Complying with the Requirements Contained in the Securities and Exchange Commission Rule 15c2-12; and Providing an Effective Date.

DISCUSSION: Benjamin Arjona, City Manager explained that the resolution was only a notice of intent to issue debt and did not commit the city to borrowing the full amount. Mr. Arjona informed that City Commission that the city had a 45-day window, giving officials time to further evaluate project costs and needs before making final decisions.

Bobby Villarreal, Financial Advisor, recently reviewed the city’s current debt obligations. He noted that the tax rate has decreased since 2020, and debt obligations continue to decline. Due to city growth and the retirement of existing debt, the city can fund capital improvement projects without increasing property taxes. The proposed funding package includes the public safety building, street improvements, fire department projects, and heavy equipment purchases. Mr. Villarreal also noted that the bond attorney structured the language to allow for the reallocation of funds to streets or other equipment should any project costs decrease.

Mr. Arjona emphasized that the resolution was written broadly enough to allow flexibility if project costs change or if grant funding becomes available. City Officials also discussed the importance of pursuing grants and other outside funding opportunities to help reduce costs to taxpayers.

The financing plan projects annual debt payments of about \$1 million while keeping the current tax rate stable. A timeline was presented showing that after publication of the notice and completion of legal and financial steps, bond funds could potentially become available approximately 30 days after the bonds are sold. The commission ultimately approved the resolution while continuing discussions about long-term planning, project flexibility, and minimizing financial impact on residents.

Commissioner Adina “Dina” Santillan made motion to approve and was seconded by Commissioner Ernesto “Neto” Guajardo. Motion passed (3-0)

Mayor Mario Garza stated that he was going to recommend allowing public comments. Commissioner Adina “Dina” Santillan motion to approve and was seconded by Commissioner Ernesto “Neto” Guajardo. Motion passed (3-0)

Stephanie Alvarez expressed frustration over a two-year delay in meeting to discuss historical preservation. She requested immediate steps to preserve the San Juan Hotel and noted that volunteers are available to assist, despite potential costs. She also shared brief historical information regarding the city.

Amber Arriga Salinas (Proyecto Azteca) stated that demolishing the hotel would be a travesty, as it is a significant symbol for the city. She offered her time to provide training related to grant applications.

Mae Anzaldúa Trevino noted her intent to submit a public information request since the Commission cannot answer questions during public comments. She requested repairs for her street, which she has sought for 18 years, and inquired about using the beautification committee to clean the hotel.

Luis Pena expressed skepticism, believing the hotel will be demolished regardless of public input. He also voiced concerns regarding the Police Department expansion, characterizing it as a waste of funds since officers primarily work in the field.

Gabriel Ozuna shared that the Texas Historical Commission and Preservation Texas have listed the San Juan Hotel as one of the state's most endangered places. He emphasized that restoration can be more cost-effective than demolition and stated his intent to attend future meetings to offer continued assistance.

Tati Martínez a Save the San Juan initiative argued that demolishing the hotel does a disservice to the youth. She urged the Commission to restore the building and convert it into a civil rights museum to educate the community.

Juventina Herrera although not a San Juan resident, she offered to assist with cleaning the hotel or applying for grants on the city's behalf. She requested that the building be restored as a human rights museum to serve the entire valley.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Ernesto “Neto” Guajardo made motion to adjourn at 6:22 p.m. and was seconded by Commissioner Adina “Dina” Santillan. Motion Passed (3-0)

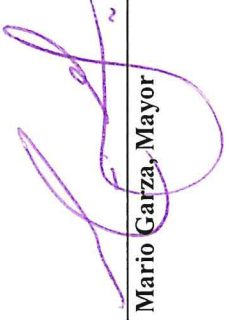
CITY OF SAN JUAN
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CITY OF SAN JUAN, TEXAS

ATTEST:



Brenda Escalante, City Secretary



Mario Garza, Mayor