

CITY OF LAREDO
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP
WITH
THE CITY'S LEGISLATIVE CONSULTANT

CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
1110 HOUSTON STREET
LAREDO, TEXAS
5:30 P.M.

MINUTES

M-98-W-11

FEBRUARY 25, 1998

I. CALL TO ORDER

With a quorum present Mayor Elizabeth G. Flores called the meeting to order.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Elizabeth G. Flores led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. ROLL CALL

IN ATTENDANCE:

ELIZABETH G. FLORES,	MAYOR	
JOSE R. PEREZ, JR.,	COUNCILMEMBER,	DISTRICT I
LOUIS H. BRUNI,	"	, DISTRICT II
ELISEO VALDEZ,	"	, DISTRICT V
JOE A. GUERRA,	"	, DISTRICT VI
MARIO G. ALVARADO,	"	, DISTRICT VII
CONSUELO "CHELO" MONTALVO,	"	, DISTRICT VIII
GUSTAVO GUEVARA, JR.,	CITY SECRETARY	
FLORENCIO PENA, III,	CITY MANAGER	
JAIME L. FLORES,	CITY ATTORNEY	

ABSENCES:

Motion to excuse Cw. Moreno and Cm. Casso.

Moved : Cw. Montalvo

Second: Cm. Guerra

For: 6

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

IV. PRESENTATION BY THE CITY'S LEGISLATIVE CONSULTANT REGARDING THE

**SCOPE OF SERVICES THEY WILL BE PROVIDING TO THE CITY OF LAREDO,
WITH POSSIBLE ACTION.**

Florencio Pena, City Manager, said that over the last year there was considerable discussion by council of the need to have legislative representation in Austin and through the work of the committee over the last three months, council selected the firm represented by Mario Martinez. He said they will go over their scope of services, to have a general understanding of the issues that affect cities, and hear council's concerns and issues. He introduced Mr. Mario Martinez, Mr. Bob Strauser, and Ms. Judy Roach who gave a presentation of issues as they see them and as they are happening in Austin and as they affect the City.

Mr. Mario Martinez gave opening remarks and introduced Mr. Bob Strauser. He said he works exclusively on legislative issues. He thinks of most importance to the city are probably annexation issues, transportation, infrastructure issues, NAFTA, water studies, housing, health issues, and telecommunications.

He spoke of interim studies of annexation. He said that as far as studies of annexation are concern, Lt. Governor Bullock gave an interim charge of annexation to study the issue pertaining to annexation. The primary intent of that committee is to go throughout the state and hold public hearings primarily to get public testimony by city and county officials, but also from the general constituency. Many of the issues that have been raised from that is that some of the outer lined areas are for their own reasons not wanting to be annexed. Whether they feel it is primarily because the city is using them as a tax base or whether their concern might be that they are not receiving the proper services that other areas would be receiving or they are not receiving the same standard of services. What the committee is presently doing at this time, with its public hearings and the primary areas they are concentrating on, are specifically looking at fees in lieu of services. They are looking at the possibility of creating some formulas whereby a proposed area in the right of not having to be annexed can go ahead and pay a city a given fees in lieu of the services, that is one option being considered. Another consideration being looked at is the standardization of services. If a given proposed area is going to be annexed they want to make sure they are in the proposed area, they want to make sure that they are going to receive those standards (same quality of level that city is offering to their inner city constituency) they want to be assured that not within a specified period of time, but immediately upon being annexed that they will start in a position of receiving those services.

Another issue being entertained is the voting issue. Allowing a proposed area that is to be annexed, the opportunity to vote to either opt out of being annexed or not. Out of the three he feels, that the voting issue, is one that is not being given that much consideration at this time, needless-to-say, next week the annexation committee is to give Mr. Bullock the initial status report. That report will have the number of meetings held, where the have been held, what areas are proposed for new hearings, and then specifically those areas of concentration just listed and to what degree they have been discussed.

Cm. Guerra pointed out that we seem to be landlocked as far as expansion, we cannot expand any more because in many instances we do not have the infrastructure, the water and sewer lines to adjoin properties (farm and ranch) that could be annexed and developed. Developers tell him that they would be in favor of us altering or revising our ordinance so that we could extend those lines on a reimbursement basis if needed. He said that would make the price of land more competitive and expressed that is why the price of land is so high and expensive here.

Cm. Bruni said that he thinks that the price of land is probably high is because there is less than four or five gentlemen that own all the land around the City of Laredo and when there is only four or five key developers or key property owners that own the land he thinks that is why the price is so high not because of the extending of infrastructure to these areas. He is in favor of the developers paying for infrastructure.

Mr. Bob Strauser spoke in relation to NAFTA implementation and the impact on the border area. He said the principle of the committees is to bring back recommendations on problems created by NAFTA in the border area, how NAFTA has affected employment, identify specific impact, state laws that have to be changed by those impacts, infrastructure, and transportation needs. He said they held five meeting in Corpus Christi and talked in particular about highway impact funds needed in the valley and in border areas. They also spoke of the need of changing the formulas for delivery of those funds. He said that delivery of funds on the basis of overweight permits is not satisfactory in the immediate area of the border. There was extensive testimony regarding Laredo and Corpus in the Corpus Christi hearing. He said Senator Truan has been invited to come to Laredo to address the A & M Conference being held here and it would be useful for him to be invited for him to summarize where he thinks he is going with the committee and the recommendations of it. He had to file an interim report by the end of the week

on where he is going with the committee and the report will be finalized by September.

Cm. Valdez was concerned about the formula being use that affects the valley. He said NAFTA has imposed in our community and has affected the quality of life for many people and the formula needs to be revisited and these people need to be pressured for more money for infrastructure. We need more commitment at the state level.

Mr. Martinez pointed that federal and state legislation relate together, one of the major focuses he will be having for the city in Washington on this session is the re-authorization of ISTEA funds. The trend in that legislation is to give more flexibility to the states', so how the state decides to spend that money is going to be very important, but they will also be focusing for Laredo in particular to see that there is monies set aside for border infrastructure in the ISTEA, the formula used to decide how much goes to each state, how much for border infrastructure, that it is favorable to the City.

Cm. Guerra mentioned several points of importance so that Mr. Martinez and Ms. Betty Cain are aware of these points and maybe together they can work on them and help us bring some type of a solution at the federal and state level.

- 1) Laredo handles the largest number of international trade along the entire Southwestern U.S. border with Mexico.
- 2) Bridge No. 1 is being promoted by Nuevo Laredo Custom Brokers to handle cargo inspite of structural problems in the Mexican side which caused a portion of the bridge to collapse last year.
- 3) In order to increase traffic flow at Bridge No. 2 an additional road needs to be constructed at the U.S. Customs Import lot which cost the City \$350,000. The city estimates that by placing additional inspection station Customs would be able to increase their clearance of cargo at 25%.
- 4) In order to increase efficiency at the Colombia Bridge, Customs needs two additional inspections and another two exits.
- 5) The Colombia Bridge was built to handle 5,500 trailers daily at present there are days when the volume exceeds 3,200.

Mr. Strauser continued with the third issue, and said that discussed was on the follow-up to passage of Senate Bill 1, water planning for the state. He said the Regional Districts have been formed and the initial appointees have been made, Laredo has theirs,

"M" obviously. There will be a state wide water plan within two years. He said Senate Bill No. 1 is written that you will not have a municipal water permit approved unless it is consistent with that reasonable plan and that state plan, so that needs monitoring on the next meetings. He expects the Interim Committee makes recommendations of what they perceive to be unfinished business of the committee. He said they might want to make a record before that committee. In referenced to Senate Bill No. 1, he said that working in conjunction with Senator Zaffirini and Representative Henry Cuellar they would like to attempt to try to bring the Conference Committee on water to Laredo and have a hearing here. It is extremely important, it is needed, and he feels that with the support of the Senator, the Representative, that of the Mayor and Council he feels confident that we might be able to have them here immediately addressing the concerns of Laredo, but most importantly of the State of Texas.

One other issue that he mentioned was the taxation issue. He said that certainly taxation and the financing of public education preoccupied the last legislative session and had some bill passed or one like it passed in the House, it would have greatly expanded the sales tax base. There is possibility that would have increased city revenues. He said he does not really expect to see a major tax bill passed on the next session or that they bring those issues back. He pointed that the committee is on the House, appointed, active, and thinks the concerns regarding city issues need to be watched closely, and maybe you will possibly want to appear before that committee on one of the seven meetings remaining to present testimony on the issue and on the need of tax incentives for economic development in a border region.

Mr. Martinez stated that in the tax hearings there has been reference made to the border area, to the "Laredo area". He strongly suggests that we play a major role. In the testimony and in working with committee members they can get an invitation to come and address some of the concerns brought up, it would be beneficial to have the City of Laredo there showing their concern and addressing some of the questions that have come up on previous meetings.

Cm. Bruni stated one of the main issues is water, and wants to make sure that the first order of business is pertaining to water.

Mr. Martinez stated feels it is extremely important that they try to get the Conference Committee to come down to Laredo and

hold a public hearing here. He said Laredo is a dynamic community, is unique in its own right, it is one of the largest communities in the nation, the quickest growing, and those factors alone dictate the concern that the committee should have with the water needs facing the city and surrounding communities. He mentioned Mr. Ron Lewis Chairman of the House and Senator Buster Brown from the Senate. He feels that in representing the city along with the council and the community leaders should work with them in trying to bring that particular committee to the city and strongly feels that can happen.

Mr. Martinez spoke of another city concern, franchise fee or franchise tax, however it is referred. He said the committee has met they are going to hold additional hearings. There are individuals representing the Telecommunications Commission, they have been before the committee and have testified. He added that TML has been responsive in dealing with the committee in representing the various municipalities. It is his understanding that at this time the interim report due on March 1st to Lt. Governor will primarily be indicating the committee hearings that have taken place, the proposed committee sites, and in essence addressing some of the concerns that have been brought up, there is no recommendation going to be made at this time in the initial report, but he has been told by the committee that there will be recommendations and to expect a bill to come out of that committee report.

He spoke on Consolidation of local Governments and housing. He reported that the chairman stated that there will not be any legislation pertaining to the consolidation of governments. He is not supportive of it, they did hold various hearings throughout the state. In reference to housing, the committee report is out, it will be sent to Lt. Governor, and it basically reads the number of hearing they have held, their proposals, proposed site, comments, no recommendation, and no suggestion at this time on the issue related to housing.

Mr. Pena stated they will be monitoring this items, staff is already involved in some these issues, there will come a time within the next three months or so when they need to decide what legislative issues we want to pursue heavily, so we can give them direction and they can give us direction as to how best get those accomplished for 1999. He said that will happen around July, but at any point if council feels there some legislative issues they feel are important, to deliver them to him and he will deliver them to Mr. Martinez and they will begin formulating some kind of strategy so that in July when they have a regrouping they will have an understanding of the issues.

Mr. Martinez concluded by briefing council about "Laredo Day" and the purpose of it which is basically to bring Laredo to the attention of the State of Texas at the State Capitol. He said it is an opportunity to sell Laredo before the Legislature.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn.

Moved : Cm. Valdez

Second: Cm. Guerra

For: 6

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Adjournment time: 6:35 p.m.

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THE ABOVE MINUTES CONTAINED IN PAGES 01 TO 07 ARE TRUE, COMPLETE, AND CORRECT PROCEEDINGS OF THE CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP WITH THE CITY'S LEGISLATIVE CONSULTANT HELD ON FEBRUARY 25, 1998. A CERTIFIED COPY OF MINUTES IS ON FILE AT THE CITY SECRETARY'S OFFICE.

GUSTAVO GUEVARA, JR.
CITY SECRETARY

Minutes prepared by: Delia Rodriguez
Minutes approved on: **April 20, 1998**