

**CITY OF LAREDO  
CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
M2020-R-09  
LIVE WEB LINK: <http://laredotx.swagit.com/live>  
CITY COUNCIL  
CHAMBERS 1110  
HOUSTON STREET  
LAREDO, TEXAS 78040  
June 1, 2020  
5:00 P.M.**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Pete Saenz called the meeting to order.

**II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mayor Pete Saenz led in the pledge of allegiance.

**III. MOMENT OF SILENCE**

Mayor Pete Saenz led in a moment of silence.

**IV. ROLL CALL**

In attendance:

Pete Saenz	Mayor
Rudy Gonzalez, Jr.	District I
Vidal Rodriguez	District II
Mercurio "Merc" Martinez, III	District III
Alberto Torres, Jr.	District IV, Mayor Pro-Tempore
Norma "Nelly" Vielma	District V
Dr. Marte Martinez	District VI
George J. Altgelt	District VII
Roberto Balli	District VIII
Jose A. Valdez, Jr.	City Secretary
Robert Eads	City Manager
Rosario Cabello	Deputy City Manager
Kristina L. Hale	City Attorney

Cm. Altgelt joined at 5:16 p.m.

**V. MINUTES**

Approval of the minutes of May 18, 2020 and May 26, 2020.

Motion to approve the May 18, 2020, and May 26, 2020 minutes.

Moved: MPT Torres

Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For: 7

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Cm. Altgelt was not present.

### **Citizen comments**

Rafael Benavides, Public Information Officer, read the public comments into the record.

Justin Hundsnurscher voiced his full support of Item D1, repainting the water tank in front of United South High School, noting the tank has been at the focal point of the school's pride. He encouraged Council to vote in favor of this item.

Tricia Cortez of the Rio Grande International Study Center stated the organization's support of Council's response to the federal government's desire to condemn and take historic and valuable public lands in Laredo for a border wall, noting that the wall will be destructive, ineffective, and oppressive. She thanked Council for taking a strong position to defend Laredo riverfront lands and asked that the City submit an amicus brief in the federal lawsuit with the Rio Grande International Study Center et al v. Mark T. Esper in his official capacity as Secretary of the United States Department of Defense et al. She reminded Council that the deadline to file this amicus brief is Friday, June 5, 2020; several months ago, the City and Earthjustice decided to postpone filing the amicus brief until after the December 2019 hearing in the D.C. circuit. The judge denied the government's motion to dismiss the case, meaning that the case is moving toward summary judgment. The judge is deeply interested in local opinions on this case; his willingness to consider the City's amicus brief could greatly impact the outcome of Laredo's negotiations with Customs and Border Protection (CBP).

Thomas Lamont of Rio Grande Exploration spoke in favor of Item #8 (Ordinance 2020-O-058).

Gabriela Treviño of Red Wing United stated that the people of Laredo, invoking their power over the institutions built to serve them deliver the following demands to their public servants for unconditional fulfillment:

1. A complete audit of all training the Laredo Police Department and Webb County Sheriff's Office receive for each divisions without exception. If robust anti-racist, anti-violent training do not already compose a major part of police orientation, they demand that training is immediately overhauled to do so through collaboration with Demand #2.
2. a non-City Council appointed Citizen Committee be created to monitor and review police activity, including but not limited to trainings, grants, and internal meetings. They demand that this is not controlled by Laredo City Council as Council.
3. A reworking of patrolling routes to highlight possible disparities and possible overpolicing of some neighborhoods. Additional, they

demand an audit of any quota systems currently implemented and how and/or where these are met. Once reviewed by the Citizen's Committee, local police forces must collaborate to design a more equitable method of policing that does not incentivize escalation to arrest or the targeting of certain neighborhoods.

4. Local police forces in general and the Webb County Sheriff's Office in particular cease all collaboration with ICE.
5. More robust background checks for police force applicants, robust avenues in which women can safely report domestic abuse, and for all officers that receive use of force complaints be terminated. Additionally, they demand that all officers receive free therapy and regular mental health checkups for their wellbeing and the wellbeing of those around them.
6. End of the cash bail system and the creation of "cite and release" programs that keep non-violent minor drug offenders from becoming institutionalized through a vicious cycle of a jail time and legal processes.
7. Complete dismantling of the Police Union and the unionizing of other City of Laredo employees.
8. All budget shortfalls due to COVID-19 be taken from the Police budget solely and that every budget increase planned for the Police Department go instead to public schools, public health facilities, our infrastructure, and our local food bank. Once this has been accomplished, they demand that City Council never again vote to increase the Police budget, unless to reflect inflation, and is approved by the Citizen's Committee.

Ms. Treviño noted that the City's current budget currently allots \$4 million to libraries that give children free education, \$1 million for community development, \$9 million to public works for infrastructure, and \$75 million to a hyper-militarized, over budgeted police force. She stated the organization's opinion that if city government cannot provide for citizens, noting that the people will be forced to take action into their own hands and continue fighting alongside the community.

## **VI. APPOINTMENTS TO COMMISSIONS, BOARDS AND COMMITTEES**

1. Appointment by Mayor Pro-Tempore Alberto Torres, Jr. of Oscar O. Lopez to the Telecommunications Advisory Commission.

Motion to approve the nomination of Oscar O. Lopez to the Telecommunications Advisory Commission.

Moved: Dr. Marte Martinez

Second: Cm. Mercurio Martinez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

## **VII. PUBLIC HEARINGS**

1. Motion to open public hearing #1.

Moved: Dr. Marte Martinez

Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Public Hearing and Introductory Ordinance authorizing the City Manager to accept additional funding from the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) in the amount of \$561,200.00 for grant year 2019 and \$296,668.00 for grant year 2020 and amending the FY 2020 budget by appropriating additional revenues and expenditures in the amount of \$857,868.00 for a total amount of the contract between FY 2017-2021 of \$1,379,168.00 for the continuation of the City of Laredo Health Department (CLHD) Women's Health Preventive Health Services and Family Planning Program.

There was no public input.

Motion to close public hearing and introduce.

Moved: MPT Torres

Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

2. Motion to open public hearing #2.

Moved: Dr. Marte Martinez

Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Public Hearing and Introductory Ordinance amending the City of Laredo Waterworks Construction Fund FY 2020 Annual Budget by appropriating revenues and expenses in the amount of \$2,200,000.00. Expenses will be appropriated for repairs to El Pico Water Treatment Plant. Revenues are available from proceeds of a lawsuit settlement for El Pico Water Treatment Plant.

There was no public input.

Motion to close public hearing and introduce.

Moved: MPT Torres

Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

### VIII. INTRODUCTORY ORDINANCES

3. An Ordinance of the City of Laredo, Texas, establishing a policy that the name of a candidate for an elected city office shall be printed on the ballot with the given name or initials first, then by a nickname in quotations, if any, to be followed by the surname, in accordance with Texas Election Code Section 52.031; providing a severability clause, and an effective date.

Ordinance Introduction: City Council

4. An Ordinance of the City of Laredo, Texas, establishing the rental rates and tenant policies for the Martha C. Narvaez City Hall Apartments an elderly affordable rental housing project located at 820 Convent Avenue; providing for rents to be in compliance and charged at home rent limits; occupancy to be limited to persons aged 62 years or older with incomes at or below 60% of the area median income as set annually by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; and leasing of the units on a first-come, first-served basis.

Ordinance Introduction: City Council

## IX. FINAL READING OF ORDINANCES

Motion to waive the final readings of Ordinances 2020-O-055, 2020-O-056, 2020-O-057, 2020-O-058, 2020-O-059, 2020-O-060, 2020-O-061, 2020-O-062, 2020-O-063, 2020-O-064, 2020-O-065, and 2020-O-066.

Moved: MPT Torres

Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

5. 2020-O-055 Authorizing the City Manager to amend the City of Laredo FY 2020 Airport Operation Fund Budget to accept and appropriate the Federal Aviation Administration grant No. 3-48-0136-091-2020 in the amount of \$18,506,692.00. The purpose of the grant is to provide for airport funds which may be lawfully used, as found in the Office of Airports Revenue Use Policy, such as Airport operating expenses to include payroll, airfield safety, airport security, and terminal maintenance which are 100% federal funds; no local match is required. Federal grant funding is available under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act 2020.

Motion to adopt Ordinance 2020-O-055.

Moved: MPT Torres

Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

6. 2020-O-056 Amending the Zoning Ordinance (Map) of the City of Laredo by rezoning at approximate 15.8502 acres out of Survey 2049, Abstract 594, R. H. Raines, and Porcion 35, Jose M. Diaz, Abstract 546, located at South of Buckeye Dr. and West of Wolly Dr., from R-2 (Multi-Family Residential District) to R-1MH (Single Family Manufactured Housing District); providing for publication and effective date. ZC-24-2020 District III

Motion to adopt Ordinance 2020-O-056.

Moved: MPT Torres

Second: Cm. Gonzalez  
For: 8                      Against: 0                      Abstain: 0

7. 2020-O-057 Amending the Zoning Ordinance (Map) of the City of Laredo by rezoning Lot 1, Block 1, Mulchand Plat, Unit 2, located at 9215 FM 1472 Rd., from R-2 (Multi-Family Residential District) and B-4 (Highway Commercial District); providing for publication and effective date. ZC-25-2020 District VII

Motion to adopt Ordinance 2020-O-057.

Moved: MPT Torres  
Second: Cm. Gonzalez  
For: 8                      Against: 0                      Abstain: 0

8. 2020-O-058 Amending the Zoning Ordinance (Map) of the City of Laredo by authorizing a Special Use Permit for Oil and/or Gas Extraction and Production (Plug/Abandonment of a Well) at approximate 0.99 acres out of 14.69 acre tract, Porcion 35 J. M. Diaz, Abstract 546, located at West of Ejido Ave. and South of Lomas Del Sur Blvd; providing for publication and effective date. ZC-28-2020 District I

Motion to adopt Ordinance 2020-O-058.

Moved: MPT Torres  
Second: Cm. Gonzalez  
For: 8                      Against: 0                      Abstain: 0

9. 2020-O-059 Amending the Zoning Ordinance (Map) of the City of Laredo by rezoning at approximate 11.63 acres out of Porcion 14, Jose Guajardo, Abstract 56, located at South of FM 1472, and East of El Pico, from AG (Agricultural District) to M-1 (Light Industrial District); providing for publication and effective date. ZC-30-2020 District VII

Motion to adopt Ordinance 2020-O-059.

Moved: MPT Torres  
Second: Cm. Gonzalez  
For: 8                      Against: 0                      Abstain: 0

10. 2020-O-060 Amending the Zoning Ordinance (Map) of the City of Laredo by rezoning approximate 13.20 acres out of Porcion 35, Jose M. Diaz, Abstract 546, located at South of Lomas Del Sur Blvd., from R-1A (Single Family Reduced Area District) to R-1B (Single Family High Density Residential District); providing for publication and effective date. ZC-32-2020 District I

Motion to adopt Ordinance 2020-O-060.

Moved: MPT Torres

Second: Cm. Gonzalez  
For: 8                      Against: 0                      Abstain: 0

11. 2020-O-061 Amending the Zoning Ordinance (Map) of the City of Laredo by authorizing a Special Use Permit for townhouses at Lots 1, 2, & 3, Block 2, Khaledi Heights Subdivision, Unit 2, located at 10002, 10012 Bob Bullock Loop, and 4104 Blue Quail Rd; providing for publication and effective date. ZC-12-2020 District VI

Motion to adopt Ordinance 2020-O-061.

Moved: MPT Torres  
Second: Cm. Gonzalez  
For: 8                      Against: 0                      Abstain: 0

12. 2020-O-062 Amending the Zoning Ordinance (Map) of the City of Laredo by repealing Ordinance 2018-O-168 and authorizing a Special Use Permit for a restaurant serving alcohol at Lots 64 & 65, Block 2, North Creek Subdivision, located at 1010 E Hillside Rd. Applicant seeks new permit to change permit holder and to amend the following.

1. Site plan by decreasing square footage from 3,202 SF to 2195 SF, removing the outside dining area.
  2. Patio will not be used.
  3. Removing the remote parking agreement with the property owner from 1020 E Hillside Rd.
  4. Changing hours of operation from 2:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.
  5. Closed on Mondays.
- ZC-20-2020 District V

Motion to adopt Ordinance 2020-O-062.

Moved: MPT Torres  
Second: Cm. Gonzalez  
For: 8                      Against: 0                      Abstain: 0

13. 2020-O-063 Amending the Zoning Ordinance (Map) of the City of Laredo by rezoning at approximate 2.91 acres out of tracts 69 and 70, Porcion 10, Tomas Sanchez, Abstract 280, located at South of FM 1472 Rd., and West of Los Minerales Annex Rd. from AG (Agricultural District) to M-1 (Light Industrial District); providing for publication and effective date. ZC-19-2020 District VII

Motion to adopt Ordinance 2020-O-063.

Moved: MPT Torres  
Second: Cm. Gonzalez  
For: 8                      Against: 0                      Abstain: 0

14. 2020-O-064 Authorizing the City Manager to accept a grant in the amount of \$85,000.00 and to amend the FY 2020 Special Fire Grants

Fund annual budget by appropriating additional revenues and expenditures through the Border Zone Fire Department (BZFD) program. The initiatives are funded by the Office of the Governor (OOG) Homeland Security Grants Division. The purpose is to provide grants to professional fire departments along the Texas - Mexico border region for specialized equipment, maintenance, and medical supplies to support emergency services associated with the execution of border security activities. Funding will be used to purchase extrication equipment. The grant performance period is from March 1, 2020 through August 31, 2020. No local match is required. Grant will be accounted for in the Special Fire Grants Fund.

Motion to adopt Ordinance 2020-O-064.

Moved: MPT Torres

Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

15. 2020-O-065 Authorizing the City Manager to execute all documents for the purchase of a 0.968 acre tract from Manuel E. Perez in the negotiated amount of \$30,000.00; naming of the trail Manuel and Hermina Perez trail and applicable closing costs. Said tract, is a tract of land containing 0.968 acres more or less, out of CALLED 1.5737 acres conveyed to Manuel Perez and wife, Hermina Perez Recorded in Volume 1230, Pages 713-715, Deed Records Webb County, Texas, situated in Porcion 22, Dona M. J. Sanchez Original Grantee, Abstract 277, Webb County, Texas. Acquisition of the proposed property will allow continuity between abutting City of Laredo owned properties for the preservation and beautification of River Vega land and enhance recreational amenities. Additionally, it will allow the expansion of the Father McNaboe hike and bike trail; and providing for an effective date. Funding is available through the Environmental Services Department Fund.

Motion to adopt Ordinance 2020-O-064.

Moved: MPT Torres

Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

16. 2020-O-066 Authorizing the City Manager to enter into a lease agreement between the City of Laredo and the United States Postal Service (USPS) for the rental of 5,708 sq. ft. of first floor of office space, use of general public area, and two (2) parking designations at the Old Federal Courthouse located at 1300 Matamoros. The term of the lease is for five (5) years beginning June 1, 2020 through May 31, 2025 with the annual rental rate set and agreed by both parties at ninety-six thousand dollars (\$96,000.00), payable in equal monthly installments; and providing for an effective date.



Motion to adopt Ordinance 2020-O-065.

Moved: MPT Torres

Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

## **X. CONSENT AGENDA**

### **BRIDGE: STAFF SOURCE YVETTE LIMON, BRIDGE DIRECTOR**

17. Consideration to award contract to TransCore, L.P., in the amount of \$288,275.00 for the development of a solution for the 5 exit lanes at the Laredo World Trade Bridge Port of Entry that incorporates Weigh-in-Motion (WIM), Front Vehicle Enforcement System (VES), and Automatic Vehicle Identification (AVI) information to capture, identify, and process overweight commercial vehicles traveling from Mexico into the United States. Funding is available in the Laredo Bridge System Construction Fund.

Motion to approve.

Moved: Dr. Marte Martinez

Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

### **CITY MANAGER'S: STAFF SOURCE ROBERT A. EADS, CITY MANAGER**

18. Discussion with possible action on the approval of the City Manager's appointment(s) for the position of Assistant City Manager(s), in accordance with Article II, Section 2-19, of the Code of Ordinances, and any other matter incident thereto.

Robert Eads, City Manager, reminded Council that the City has been without these positions for some time; while management has continued to provide the City's services, those services could be brought to the next level with the two Assistant City Manager positions filled. The City began advertising the positions on March 10, 2020, receiving 68 applicants. Of those applications, 39 were qualified, and 37 were referred to management; 11 candidates were interviewed, six of which were local applicants. Mr. Eads recommended Kristina Laurel Hale for the first open Assistant City Manager position.

MPT Torres initiated a motion to approve this nomination, noting that Mrs. Hale has done a great job leading the City Attorney's Office in many major undertakings. He voiced his opinion that her expertise will greatly assist the City and the City Manager's Office moving forward. He voiced his only concern that the City Attorney is placed above the Assistant City Manager position in the City's organizational hierarchy.

Cm. Altgelt congratulated Mrs. Hale on her nomination, noting that she evolved her team into an unprecedented level. Cm. Ball voiced his support of this selection and commended Mrs. Hale's work over the years and her demonstration of diligence and cooperation with other departments. She has

gained the trust of City officials and will help the municipality find the right City Attorney in her place, as well. Mayor Saenz added his congratulations, as well.

Mr. Eads noted Mrs. Hale's educational and professional qualifications and iterated her value to the management team.

Motion to approve the nomination of Kristina Laurel Hale as Assistant City Manager.

Moved: MPT Torres

Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Kristina L. Hale, newly-appointed Assistant City Manager, thanked Council for the approval and noted that it has been a pleasure to serve Council as the City Attorney for the past few years. The City has a great team with management, Directors, and staff, and she voiced her enthusiasm to continue working with this Council in her new capacity to move the City forward.

Mr. Eads nominated Riazul Mia as the second Assistant City Manager position. Cm. Rodriguez initiated a motion to this effect; Mr. Eads noted that Mr. Mia is true to his word and has not been afraid to give Council or management the truth regardless of whether it is popular or easy to accept. He summarized Mr. Mia's educational and professional qualifications and noted his value in moving the City forward.

Cm. Altgelt commended Mr. Mia and noted his approval of Mr. Eads's nomination. MPT Torres voiced his opinion that with these two Assistant City Managers, this City Management team will likely be the strongest one in Laredo's history. The Deputy City Manager is a financial expert, and the two Assistant City Managers are an attorney and an engineer; half of the team is composed of women who bring much value to the organization. He congratulated Mr. Mia on the nomination.

Motion to approve the nomination of Riazul Mia as Assistant City Manager.

Moved: Cm. Rodriguez

Second: Dr. Marte Martinez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Riazul Mia, newly-appointed Assistant City Manager, thanked Council for the confirmation, noting that while he grew up in Bangladesh, he has spent half of his life in Laredo. He commended the City for its most diverse management team to-date and voiced his enthusiasm to continue serving the City in this new capacity.

Cm. Mercurio Martinez noted that this new management team has a lot of brainpower, but noted that there is now a vacancy in the City Attorney's Office. He asked whether an interim appointment is to be made at this time.

Mr. Eads explained that, if Council is willing to approve this suggestion, he

asked Mrs. Hale if she is willing to serve as Acting City Attorney to oversee the Department's needs until the position is filled. As she noted her willingness to do so, he asked Council to formalize this recommendation, noting that Human Resources is ready to post the City Attorney position immediately. MPT Torres initiated a motion to this effect.

Cm. Rodriguez congratulated the newly-formed management team. Cm. Vielma agreed, thanking the two Assistant City Managers for rising to the challenge and Mr. Eads for the selection, which brings diversity to the team and breaks down barriers for smart growth in Laredo. Both of these individuals have worked long hours to serve the community, and their new positions will help further the City's mission.

Dr. Marte Martinez congratulated Mrs. Hale and Mr. Mia on all of their accomplishments in their former capacity, noting his optimism of their continued success moving forward. He also thanked Mr. Eads and Deputy City Manager Rosario Cabello for their dedication as well as the Department Directors throughout the City who stepped up to the new challenges that arose in light of the COVID-19 pandemic in order to continue providing essential City services to the community. The next few weeks and months will certainly be difficult, and the management team will have to face those challenges in new ways to help the community. He voiced his opinion that the intelligence and experience of this management team provides a lot of hope for the City in the face of these new challenges and struggles.

Motion to approve Kristina L. Hale as acting City Attorney until the position is filled.

Moved: MPT Torres

Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Mr. Eads noted that the applicant pool was very strong for these positions, and the underlying quality of the City's team is that it is strong and qualified to meet the challenges that lie ahead. He thanked all of the applicants for these positions.

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: STAFF SOURCE TINA MARTINEZ,  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR**

19. 2020-R-082 Authorizing the City Manager to execute legal documents conveying a perpetual easement and Right of Way to AEP Texas, Inc. over, under, across, and upon a 1,948 square foot tract of land situated in Porcion 22, being out of San Isidro Divine Mercy Church Subdivision Plat, Recorded in Volume 21, Page 33, Webb County, Texas; said 1,948 square foot tract of land is more particularly described by metes and bounds in attached "Exhibit A" and boundary survey in attached "Exhibit B" ; and providing for an effective date.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2020-R-082.

Moved: Dr. Marte Martinez  
Second: Cm. Gonzalez  
For: 8                      Against: 0                      Abstain: 0

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: STAFF SOURCE TECLO J. GARCIA, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR**

20. 2020-R-083 Authorizing the City Manager to submit an application to accept allocation funding under the CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Fund administered and facilitated by the Texas Division of Emergency Management to protect the health and safety of the City of Laredo and mitigate the economic ramifications of COVID-19.

Mayor Saenz noted his desire to see the list of items and priorities that are to be submitted for relief funding before this application is completed.

Teclo Garcia, Economic Development Director, explained that this process is simply to submit an application, not to approve any funding from an itemized list, at this time. This is the typical resolution for any grant. In this case, staff was advised to adopt a resolution and apply for the funds as soon as possible. Staff did so and received the first 20% of the funds that were allotted.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2020-R-083.

Moved: Dr. Marte Martinez  
Second: Cm. Mercurio Martinez  
For: 8                      Against: 0                      Abstain: 0

Mr. Garcia noted that the first 20% is based on the \$55 per person that the City of Laredo was allotted per the federal formula. The total amount to be received is \$15 million, meaning that the 20% received is about \$2.9 million. At least 75% of the remaining funds is to be spent directly on COVID-19 expenditures. Staff is currently categorizing the itemized list for those funding priorities.

21. 2020-R-084 A resolution by the City Council of the City of Laredo, authorizing the City Manager to execute an agreement made pursuant to Texas local government code chapter 380 with Mastronardi Produce, USA, Inc. Related to the development of a cold storage manufacturing and distribution center; and providing an effective date.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2020-R-084.

Moved: Dr. Marte Martinez  
Second: Cm. Gonzalez  
For: 8                      Against: 0                      Abstain: 0

**ENGINEERING: STAFF SOURCE RAMON E. CHAVEZ, CITY ENGINEER**

22. Consideration for approval of amendment no. 6, for an increase in the amount not to exceed of \$274,975.00 to the professional services contract with Structural Engineering Associates, Inc., San Antonio, Texas, for the World Trade International Bridge U.S. Customs Exit Booth Expansion to include expert services for radiation portal monitors by Pacific Northwest National Laboratories as required by Sponsors of Donation Acceptance Projects. Current engineering contract amount with this amendment is \$2,645,862.48. Funding is available in the Bridge Construction Fund.

Motion to approve.

Moved: Dr. Marte Martinez

Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

**ENVIRONMENTAL: STAFF SOURCE JOHN PORTER, ENVIRONMENTAL DIRECTOR**

23. Authorizing the City Manager to sign Amendment #2, for the additional engineering services contract with Crane Engineering - Laredo, Texas in the amount of \$18,000.00. The total contract amount with this amendment is \$60,865.00 for the trail and fishing pier at Bartlett Park pond. Amendment #2 proposes to prepare plans, specifications, cost estimates, ADA review, utility coordination, bidding services, and construction oversight for the construction of trails and floatable fishing pier anchor to be located at the Bartlett Park pond. Funding is available in the Environmental Services Department budget.

MPT Torres noted flooding damage as a result of the recent rains and storms in the area; he asked staff to dedicate extra attention when reviewing engineering firms for projects so that the City hires quality firms for quality work. He clarified that he is not singling out this specific engineering firm or this specific project.

Ramon Chavez, City Engineer, explained that the storm water ordinance contains certain requirements to address a long-term flood plan. He assured Council that these ordinances are obeyed by the firms as per FEMA requirements; staff ensures that the plans and specifications meet the ordinance requirements.

Cm. Rodriguez noted his concern that the flooding that occurred over this weekend happened in a new subdivision. Dr. Marte Martinez agreed, noting that it is detrimental to the City in terms of insurance liability and public safety to have new neighborhoods flooding by more than two or three inches with only an inch and a half of rain. Detention and retention ponds are very effective in many parts of the city, but he reiterated that there are key areas where staff must make big lifts to get properties out of the floodplain.

Mayor Saenz stated that the builder must also share this responsibility with City staff.

John Porter, Environmental Services Director, explained that this contract needs a second amendment because originally, the City was going to implement the Muller pond in-house but instead bid it out. This change zeroed out the contract. Staff decided to finish the plan and bid out this project so that outside groups could bid on the work rather than simply performing the work in-house.

Motion to approve.

Moved: Cm. Vielma

Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

**FLEET MANAGEMENT: STAFF SOURCE RONALD MILLER, FLEET DIRECTOR**

24. Consideration to award contract number FY20-052 to the sole bidder, Lopez Transmission, Laredo, Texas, in an amount up to \$60,000.00 to provide automatic transmission repair services for the Fleet Department. This contract establishes a discount percentage on parts and an hourly labor rate for repair services. The term of this contract shall be for a period of one (1) year beginning as of the date of its execution. The contract may be extended for three (3) additional one (1) year periods, each upon mutual agreement of the parties and contingent on future funding appropriations. Funding is available in the Fleet Department Fund.

Motion to approve.

Moved: Dr. Marte Martinez

Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

**HEALTH: STAFF SOURCE RICHARD A. CHAMBERLAIN, INTERIM HEALTH DIRECTOR**

25. 2020-R-085 Ratifying the submission of a continuation grant application in the estimated amount of \$546,658.00 to the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to continue the City of Laredo Health Department (CLHD) Women's Health Preventive Health Services and Family Planning program for the term period from October 1, 2020 through September 30, 2021 and further authorizing the City Manager to execute any and all documents resulting from the award of this grant.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2020-R-085.

Moved: Dr. Marte Martinez

Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

26. 2020-R-086 Ratifying the submission of a grant application in the estimated amount of \$125,000.00 to the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) to provide diabetes prevention and

control services through the City of Laredo Health Department (CLHD) for the term period from execution date through August 31, 2021 and further authorizing the City Manager to execute any and all documents resulting from the award of this grant.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2020-R-086.

Moved: Dr. Marte Martinez

Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

27. 2020-R-087 Authorizing the City Manager to submit a grant application to the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to provide and/or assure the provision of breast and/or cervical cancer screenings, diagnostic and support services including tracking, follow-up, and patient navigation and individual client education services through the City of Laredo Health Department (CLHD) for the term period of October 1, 2020 through September 30, 2021 and further authorizing the City Manager to execute any and all documents resulting from the award of this grant. The amount of the award will be determined by HHSC.

Richard Chamberlain, Interim Health Director, requested that staff adopt this resolution with the amendment that a three-to-one match be required for the breast and/or cervical cancer application.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2020-R-087 with the amendment as requested by staff.

Moved: MPT Torres

Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

28. Consideration to award contract FY20-018 to the sole bidder Martinez Pharmacy, Laredo, Texas for pharmaceutical services for the Health Department's different programs and Employee Wellness in annual amount up to \$122,000.00. This contract is for a period of two (2) years with an option to renew for one additional two (2) year term and upon mutual agreement of the parties and subject to future appropriations. Funding is available in the respective departmental budget.

Motion to approve.

Moved: Dr. Marte Martinez

Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

**POLICE: STAFF SOURCE CLAUDIO TREVINO, CHIEF OF POLICE**

29. 2020-R-078 Authorizing the City Manager to ratify and enter into an

agreement and accept reimbursement from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection/U.S. Border Patrol Treasury Forfeiture Fund of up to \$300,000.00 for joint operations for overtime expenses. The City of Laredo is required a match that will be \$96,000.00 for a total amount of \$396,000.00. Funding is available in the Special Police Fund.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2020-R-078.

Moved: Dr. Marte Martinez

Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

30. 2020-R-079 Authorizing the City Manager to submit a Continued Grant Application for the FY2021 grant year in the amount of \$1,105,670.00 to the Texas Motor Vehicle Crime Prevention Authority to fund the Laredo Auto Theft Task Force for the period of September 1, 2020 through August 31, 2021. This grant pays for salaries and supplies for the LPD Auto Theft Unit in the amount of \$685,000.00; and the city's local match is \$420,670.00, which is available as a transfer in from General Fund. Funding is available in the Auto Theft Task Force Fund.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2020-R-079.

Moved: Dr. Marte Martinez

Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

31. 2020-R-080 Authorizing the City Manager to renew one individual Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Laredo Police Department and the Texas Joint Counter Drug Task Force (JCDTF). The Police Department's participation is part of the community service provided to our citizens and our partner law enforcement agencies with no cost to the City of Laredo.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2020-R-080.

Moved: Dr. Marte Martinez

Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

32. 2020-R-081 Authorizing the City Manager to enter into and execute a Memorandum of Understanding between the Laredo Police Department and the United States Secret Service (USSS) for the purpose of establishing a task force known as the USSS Task Force. The USSS Task Force will work together with other federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to expand the national network of Electronic Crimes Task Forces (ECTF) for the main purpose of effectively and efficiently making a significant impact on electronic (cyber) crimes.



Motion to adopt Resolution 2020-R-081.

Moved: Dr. Marte Martinez

Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

**UTILITIES: STAFF SOURCE RIAZUL MIA, UTILITIES DIRECTOR**

33. Authorizing the City Manager to award a construction contract to the lowest responsible bidder, Associated Construction Partners, Ltd., Boerne, Texas in the amount of \$3,902,000.00 for the Unitec Wastewater Treatment Plant Phase I Expansion - FY2020 Project. The contract time is three hundred and ninety (390) working days. Funding is available in the 2017 Sewer Revenue Bond.

Motion to approve.

Moved: Dr. Marte Martinez

Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

34. Authorizing the City Manager to approve Change Order #1 - a credit in the amount of (\$625,232.00) to the contract and reducing retainage payable balance of \$123,988.40 by \$44,940.73. Accepting the project as complete, and releasing retainage and final payment in the amount of \$79,047.67 to Pepper Lawson Waterworks, LLC., Texas for the South Laredo Wastewater Treatment Plant 12 to 18 MGD Expansion Project. This change order is a credit to the contract for unused remaining portion of allowance, reduction in the scope of work as well as credit to the City by the contractor for under sizing the capacity of the Aeration Basin for the project. The revised retainage payable is \$79,047.67. The final contract is \$21,479,768.00, and contract period is 1,091 calendar days. Closing is subject to TWDB approval. Funding is available in the 2015B Sewer Revenue Bond-TWDB and the Retainage Payable Account.

Motion to approve.

Moved: Dr. Marte Martinez

Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

35. Consideration to renew annual contract FY19-064 with Rafter P. Transport, Floresville, Texas, in an amount up to \$700,000.00 to provide hauling and disposal services of approximately 5,500 cubic yards of wastewater bio-solids from the City of Laredo South Wastewater Treatment Plant to San Antonio which is an approved State of Texas TCEQ registered solids disposal facility. All services will be secured on an as needed basis. The term of this contract shall be for a period of one (1) year beginning as of the date of its execution. There was no price increase during the last extension period. This is the first of three extension periods. Funding is available in the Utilities Department - Wastewater Treatment Division budget.

Motion to approve.

Moved: Dr. Marte Martinez

Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

36. Consideration to renew annual contract FY19-065 with Square E. Services, Los Fresnos, Texas, in an amount up to \$750,000.00 to provide services in the maintenance of all the wastewater's treatment plants SCADA monitoring and electrical controls under preventative maintenance and emergency response objectives. Pricing is based on a flat hourly rate for management, technician, system integrator, journeyman electrician, and a professional engineer. All services will be secured on an as needed basis. The term of this contract shall be for a period of one (1) year beginning as of the date of its execution. There was no price increase during the last extension period. This is the first of three extension periods. Funding is available in the Water Works Department Fund - Water Treatment Division.

Motion to approve.

Moved: Dr. Marte Martinez

Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

37. Consideration to renew annual contract FY19-059 with Nick Benavides, Laredo, Texas, in an amount up to \$75,000.00 for landscaping and maintenance services for various wastewater treatment plants and for the water treatment plant. This contract establishes a cost per cycle rate to include, but not limited to, the collection of trash, debris, litter, and mowing trimmings. All services will be secured on an as needed basis. The term of this contract shall be for a period of one (1) year beginning as of the date of its execution. There was no price increase during the last extension period. This is the first of three extension periods. Funding is available in the Water Works and Waste Water Departments Budget Funds.

Motion to approve.

Moved: Dr. Marte Martinez

Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

38. Authorizing the City Manager to approve Amendment #1, to the professional engineering consultant services contract with LNV, Inc. Laredo, Texas for the Replacement of Lyon Street Ground Storage Tank in the amount of \$351,200.00. The revised contract amount, including this Amendment #1 is \$905,700.00. Funding is available in the 2019 Water Revenue Bond.

Riazul Mia, Utilities Director, explained that this amendment is to finalize the design and make the arrangements necessary to provide water.

Cm. Altgelt asked if any local contractors were available to help with this. Mr. Mia reminded him that LNV is a local contractor, to which Cm. Altgelt

disagreed. Cm. Altgelt noted that LNV has a local office but actually live and operate out of town and do not pay taxes in Laredo. He asked Council to select the next best firm that is actually local.

MPT Torres clarified that LNV has already been paid to start this contract; the item is for an amendment to that agreement because LNV was already selected and the project needs to move forward. The amendment will prevent the interference of water services. Dr. Marte Martinez agreed but noted that Cm. Altgelt brings up a valid question of what Council actually considers local versus nonlocal, especially if that is a selection criteria that staff uses to make a recommendation.

Mr. Mia noted that many contractors use local subcontractors; there are often highly specialized projects that the City bids out in which there are no local firms who can perform that work.

Cm. Altgelt asked staff to add an item to the next Council meeting agenda under District VII to define the definition of local companies.

Motion to approve.

Moved: MPT Torres

Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

39. Authorizing the City Manager to execute a contract utilizing the BuyBoard Cooperative Purchasing Program pricing (Buyboard Proposal Code No. 582-19) to Southern Trenchless Solutions, of Weslaco, Texas for the Relocation of the 12-inch Water Line at Killam Industrial Park Boulevard in the amount of \$234,302.57. Funding is available in the 2019 Water Revenue Bond. Money for the project will be reimbursed by Webb County City of Laredo Regional Mobility Authority.

Motion to approve.

Moved: Dr. Marte Martinez

Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

END OF CONSENT AGENDA

## **XI. STAFF REPORTS**

40. Discussion with possible action on ongoing audits and/or irregularities identified by the Internal Auditor including the potential assignment of other and/or additional auditing duties; and any other matters incident thereto.

Motion to accept the Internal Auditor's report.

Moved: Dr. Marte Martinez

Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

41. Discussion with possible action to consider a second request for an extension of Injury Leave with pay in accordance with 143.073 (b) of the Texas Local Government Code for Patrol Officer Jorge Leven. Human Resources and Police Department recommend extension. Total number of days out as of May 02, 2020 pay period: 310 days.

Motion to approve.

Moved: Cm. Gonzalez

Second: Cm. Rodriguez

For: 6

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Cm. Mercurio Martinez and Dr. Marte Martinez were not present.

42. Staff report on the status of the Economic Development Committee; and any other matters incident thereto.

This item was discussed in conjunction with Item # XV. H. 1.

## **XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Motion to go into executive session.

Moved: MPT Torres

Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

43. Request for Executive Session pursuant to Texas Government Code 551.071 to discuss the pending Declaration of Taking and Complaint in Condemnation filed in Case No. 5:20-CV-00031; styled United States of America v. 982.6894 Acres of Land, More or Less, situated in Webb County, State of Texas and City of Laredo et al; pending in the United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas, Laredo Division; and return to open session for possible action.

Following executive session, Mayor Saenz reported that no action was taken.

## **XIII. RECESS AS THE LAREDO CITY COUNCIL AND CONVENE AS THE LAREDO MASS TRANSIT BOARD**

Motion to recess as the Laredo City Council and convene as the Laredo Mass Transit Board.

Moved: Cm. Rodriguez

Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For: 6

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Cm. Mercurio Martinez and Dr. Marte Martinez were not present.

44. 2020-RT-07 Amending resolution #2020-RT-04 by replacing various equipment including two (2) Bus Lifts, one (1)

Sweeper/Scrubber, Bus and Van Security Cameras and Recorders, Audio and Visual and Maintenance equipment for the purchase of one (1) Medium-Duty bus for the fixed-route bus service. The equipment will be purchase through the CARES Act grant program that is 100% federal and no local match required. The FTA grant application in the amount of \$415,500.00 under the Section 5339 Bus and Bus Facilities Program authorized by the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act will be for the purchase of three (3) paratransit vans and one (1) Medium Duty Bus as amended. The fifteen (15) percent local match for this grant in the amount of \$77,822.00 is funded with the Transit's Sales Tax.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2020-RT-07.

Moved: Cm. Gonzalez

Second: Cm. Rodriguez

For: 6

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Cm. Mercurio Martinez and Dr. Marte Martinez were not present.

#### **XIV. ADJOURN AS THE LAREDO MASS TRANSIT BOARD AND RECONVENE AS THE LAREDO CITY COUNCIL**

Motion to adjourn as the Laredo Mass Transit Board and reconvene as the Laredo City Council.

Moved: Cm. Rodriguez

Second: Dr. Marte Martinez

For: 7

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Cm. Mercurio Martinez was not present.

#### **XV. GENERAL COUNCIL DISCUSSIONS AND PRESENTATIONS**

##### **A. Request by Mayor Pete Saenz**

1. Discussion with possible action on itemizing how the CARES Act monies will be prioritized and utilized once received; and any other matters incident thereto.

Teclo Garcia, Economic Development Director, explained that the formula for receiving CARES Act monies for municipalities with populations under 500,000 people was \$55 per person in the population. For larger cities, the allocation was about \$176 per person; larger cities received their monies directly while smaller municipalities are to receive their monies in portions through the state, who were to apportion the monies appropriately. After receiving the first 29% of the funding, the remaining monies are disbursed on a reimbursement basis. The first 20% that has been received are to be spent on masks, overtime for COVID workers, technology, and other similar expenditures.

Rosario Cabello, Deputy City Manager, noted that the City has spent a little over \$3 million on COVID-related expenses to-date; staff has determined what expenditures will not be reimbursed with this relief funding, such as the food line items that the City has been using to provide food and meals. FEMA will not reimburse this line item, either. As the City is going to receive \$2.9 million, this will offset the \$3 million in expenditures. However, she noted that the main problem identified by staff is the lack of revenues coming in to the City as a result of COVID; revenue shortfalls will not be covered by the CARES Act or FEMA. However, she clarified that the City has more expenses that are not reimbursable; the first \$2.9 million of the funding has no restrictions on it regarding spending, but the rest will. She reminded Council that the City is not done making COVID-19 expenditures because the pandemic is still ongoing.

Mrs. Cabello reported that the loss in revenue to-date for the Bridge System alone totals \$6 million. The largest expense that the City has made to-date is COVID-directed payroll. Staff is using operating monies at this time, so Departments will fall short at the end of the year; management intends to refund these Departments at that time.

Robert Eads, City Manager, noted that management made the conscious decision that they cannot make investments like small business loans or workforce redevelopment plan without the securement of the remaining \$12 million. Now that those funds are coming, the City can make a plan towards those efforts as well as the continued COVID expenses of staff.

MPT Torres recalled Council approving \$250,000 or so from the City's reserves for staff to draw upon. Mrs. Cabello confirmed that this was approved, but noted that every COVID-related expense will be reimbursed, so that \$250,000 should be able to go back into the reserves. The Departments are stabilizing because management stopped much of their expenses and frozen a lot of positions or vacancies. Travel and contractual services have also been suspended unless approved as critical, so Departments are saving a lot of money in this respect. There are a lot of needs among the Departments, but staff are very frugal in their operations. She confirmed that the utility assistance program is not included as a reimbursable or covered expenditure at this time because management wanted to ensure that the City's basic operations expenditures were covered first.

Mr. Garcia noted that the City can ask for reimbursement for the utility assistance program costs but clarified that the restriction is that the funding must be for direct COVID-related expenses, and 25% of what the City uses can be for non-direct expenses.

Dr. Marte Martinez reminded Council that the utility assistance program has only resulted in about \$200,000 for the City. Riazul Mia, Utilities Director, could not confirm the financial impact (estimating it to be around \$45,000) but confirmed that the Department is not getting much public response to utilize the program.

Mr. Eads reiterated that the area that is going to struggle most and must be assisted first is the General Fund; this is the same among other cities as well. If there is anything left over, he suggested that Council consider a multi-meter reimbursement structure for the Utilities Department or other fund.

Dr. Martinez voiced his understanding that the Enterprise Fund remains relatively healthy and that the utilities assistance program is going to make or break the fund balance. He encouraged Council to separate the General Fund from other funds and to focus on the General Fund, which has the large looming shortfall. He noted that FEMA *must* pay for certain expenses in an emergency situation; their funds are separate from the CARES Act monies and directed towards particular line items. He suggested that the City pursue FEMA funds for 75% of the City's COVID expenses and then pursue CARES Act for the remainder. CARES money can be used in a more diverse way, so using FEMA for those specific line items first will give the City more "bang for its buck" and allow it to use CARES funds for more indirect COVID uses.

Mrs. Cabello noted that there is a deadline to spend CARES Act funds of December 31, 2020; however, FEMA funding and reimbursement has no deadline and is ongoing. She added that receiving FEMA dollars takes a while. Nobody knows if there will be a third round of CARES funding or not; there is currently disagreement as to whether or not that will happen. She iterated her intention to make sure that there will be reimbursement for what management knows for sure now.

Dr. Martinez noted that the reserve drawdown is the citizens' money, not the City's; the citizens need assistance during this time, and if Council needs to draw down again to meet those needs then he would strongly encourage that.

Mayor Saenz noted his intention for this item was to see where specifically the City intended to spend this money, noting that staff could bring the matter back to Council at the next meeting. Mr. Garcia reminded Council that any economic stimulus projects or workforce training projects that would be reimbursable would have to be for citizens who have been displaced by COVID-19; it would not apply to someone who was unemployed beforehand. Staff can work with Texas Workforce Solutions to confirm that those individuals meet the criteria for such a program.

Motion to direct staff to bring this item to the next Council meeting.

Moved: Dr. Marte Martinez

Second: MPT Torres

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

## **B. Request by Council Member George Altgelt**

1. Discussion and possible action regarding the procurement for construction of the Santa Maria "Pista de Avaniil" Active Transit Lanes; and any other matters incident thereto.

Danny Magee, Traffic Director, confirmed that 90% of the plans have been submitted to staff with some minor adjustments to be done before the plans are completed. A cost estimate given to staff qualifies for funding available through Community Development. The area is along Santa Maria Avenue from Chicago Street to Del Mar Boulevard. Cm. Altgelt initiated a motion to commence the procurement process.

Cm. Balli voiced his support of the motion only if the name is going to be spelled correctly.

Motion to commence the procurement process for the actual construction of the Santa Maria "Pista del Albañil" Active Transit Lanes.

Moved: Cm. Altgelt

Second: Dr. Marte Martinez

For: 7

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Cm. Gonzalez was not present.

2. Discussion and possible action to have limited activities outside of the Recreation Centers regarding the use of City mountain bikes and /or any other activities wherein people can be and REMAIN socially distanced; and any other matters incident thereto.

Cm. Altgelt stated that the City has acquired a respectable fleet of mountain bikes over the years, and mountain biking is an activity where an individual can remain socially distant from other riders. Mountain bikes are in high demand across the country at this time, but the City has plenty that can be checked out to citizens for their use. If there is an efficient way to do this without tying up human resources, he suggested that the mountain bikes be available for public use on trails and out-of-doors by distributing them equally throughout all districts. He initiated a motion to make mountain bikes and any other City resource available for public recreational use in which social distancing can be maintained.

MPT Torres noted his support of this item if the Parks staff implements the proper protocols for sanitizing the bikes so that they are not a contamination risk to the public. Robert Eads, City Manager, confirmed that staff would make this commitment.

Cm. Balli noted that a public comment at the last Council meeting made a salient point in which the commenter asked why tennis is a permitted activity when the players share the tennis ball but skateboarding, which is a non-contact solo activity, is still prohibited. He suggested an amendment to consider reopening the skate parks as well. Cm. Altgelt agreed and amended his motion accordingly.

Cm. Rodriguez agreed that skateboarding is an individual activity and should be permitted. He clarified that the recreation centers are closed and cautioned parents not to allow their children to play outside of empty recreation centers, especially without the parent present. Cm. Altgelt



deferred to management and Parks staff to determine the best way to most effectively address that matter.

Cm. Altgelt directed the public to the Planning Department webpage for an online survey for the Recode Laredo project to make improvements to the City's active transport.

Dr. Marte Martinez voiced his concern over reopening skate parks, noting that as a frequent visitor to North Central Park, he sees young skateboarders who may be the only individuals on their skateboards but are gathered very closely together while they ride. They shake hands and follow each other very closely on the ramps, which is very different than mountain biking which is more of a solo activity. He cautioned Council that if skate parks are going to reopen, then spacers or social distancing cues should be implemented to help encourage preventive measures; moving too quickly will create a slippery slope that the City may not be prepared to handle at this time. He voiced his opinion that skateboarding is more of a team activity than mountain biking.

Cm. Balli noted that the same contact and gathering occurs with skateboarding as it does with tennis and golf, both of which are permitted activities. There is no difference between the three other than the fact that the difference in the people who participate in these activities.

Cm. Altgelt amended his motion to direct the Parks Department to provide proper signage on preventive measures for any outdoor recreational activities like mountain biking, skateboarding, tennis, and golf.

Juan J. Gomez, Parks & Recreation Director, reported that staff intends to spread out the City's 55 bikes across the different trails across the city. Helmets will be provided with the bikes, and personnel will be present to clean and wipe the bikes between riders; the personnel will be current staff, meaning that the Department will not have to hire any new employees for this purpose. He agreed that skateboarders tend to congregate amongst each other and stated that staff can provide signage or markers that encourage social distancing in the event of skate parks being reopened.

Dr. Victor Treviño, health authority for the City of Laredo, voiced the reality that the community will have to reopen eventually but noted that it must be mitigated in a way that keeps the public safe. While he and the medical advisory committee can recommend mitigating measures to maximize public health and safety during reopening the economy, he asked Council if the City can reasonably enforce those measures. Monitoring these measures and activities is his primary concern; if they can be monitored, then he would feel confident in permitting the activities as suggested.

Motion to make City mountain bikes, skate parks, and any other City resource available for public recreational use in which social distancing can be maintained and direct staff to provide the proper signage on such preventive measures for these activities, as amended.

Moved: Cm. Altgelt  
Second: MPT Torres  
For: 7

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Cm. Gonzalez was not present.

### **C. Request by Council Member Roberto Balli**

1. Discussion with possible action to approve pending district art projects; and any other matters incident thereto. (Co-Sponsored by Mayor Pro-Tempore Alberto Torres, Jr.)

Cm. Balli recalled that Council directed that different bond project dedicate 2% of their funds for art; this concept in reality can be seen at the Martha Narvaez City Hall Apartments, but there are a few other projects that do not seem to incorporate the public art requirement, such as the reconstructed Fire Department on Houston Street or the Building and Planning Department building purchase and subsequent improvement at Houston Street and Santa Maria Avenue. Both of these buildings are highly visible, which make them ideal for a public art project.

Ramon Chavez, City Engineer, confirmed that the fire station on Houston Street has already been completed, but staff will ensure that their 2% funding for public art is incorporated. The same will be done for the Building and Planning Department building.

Cm. Balli noted that a police station is also being placed Downtown which is a highly visible spot for public art. MPT Torres voiced his understanding that the Fine Arts & Culture Commission has left several art projects pending; the COVID-19 pandemic has set many projects behind.

Maria Soliz, Library Director, confirmed that at this time, the Fine Arts & Culture Commission is not awarding any funds because they are concentrating on the strategy for a master plan.

Cm. Rodriguez reminded Council that throughout the public art discussion, South Laredo is hardly mentioned outside of Downtown. He asked that Council provide the Commission with priorities for their funding. MPT Torres agreed, suggesting that Council provide the Commission with direction to start awarding these funds and provide a timeline to do so, allowing them to reconvene their meetings virtually.

Cm. Balli clarified that the intention of the funds were to go directly into every construction project itself. Dr. Marte Martinez countered that the original motion was to create a fund upon the sale of the bond so that all monies in the fund would go toward projects based upon a master plan; it was designed to go to projects all across the City. He voiced his opinion that the Council should let the master plan be developed.

Cm. Vielma agreed with Dr. Martinez's understanding of the original motion, as did Robert Eads, City Manager. He noted discussions with the Convention & Visitors Bureau regarding developing an Arts & Culture

Division within the Department to display the rich history of Laredo with cohesive artistic and cultural efforts.

Cm. Altgelt recalled a master plan that would help keep the local public art cohesive, which is important. However, he noted that time is also of the essence, and these projects should be planned sooner rather than later. He encouraged Council and staff to move post-haste but to do so with proper planning that turns Laredo into an art destination for visitors.

Mrs. Soliz explained that the Commission just began working with CultivArte on the strategy for the master plan. Funding was requested for the master plan last year but was not secured; therefore, the Commission is working on a strategy to complete it. Dr. Martinez disagreed, recalling that funding was provided and stating that the master plan should have already been RFQ'd and completed months ago.

Rosario Cabello, Deputy City Manager, recalled that the funding for the master plan was supposed to come out of the 2%. Dr. Martinez initiated a motion to direct staff to go out for RFQs on the public art master plan and to provide a \$10,000 match for the Risk Division's federal and state grant application for art within the City. In response to Cm. Rodriguez's suggestion that the Council allow public and private individuals to apply with the Fine Arts & Culture Commission to provide free public art with approval, Dr. Martinez amended his motion accordingly.

Mrs. Soliz explained that the original asking price for the master plan was \$80,000 and the Commission was told that they could not use the 2% for a master plan.

Cm. Vielma asked for an amendment to include the Arts & Culture Division within the Convention & Visitors Bureau, to which Dr. Martinez agreed.

Motion to direct staff to go out for RFQs on the public art master plan and to provide a \$10,000 match for the Risk Division's federal and state grant application for art within the City and to allow the public to apply to the Fine Arts & Culture Commission to provide free public art after approval and to direct staff to research an Arts & Culture Division of the Convention & Visitors Bureau, as amended.

Moved: Dr. Marte Martinez

Second: MPT Torres

For: 7

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

#### **D. Request by Council Member Rudy Gonzalez, Jr.**

1. Discussion with possible action to instruct the City Manager to authorize the repainting with new school logo of the water tank at 2106 Mexico Ave located in front of United South High School; and any other matters incident thereto.(pending funding)

Cm. Gonzalez confirmed he would forward an email with the intended design to management.

Robert Eads, City Manager, noted that a maintenance budget exists for water tanks, which the City is responsible for in terms of upkeep. If this project exceeds that budget, he cautioned Council to consider using district priority funding.

Riazul Mia, Utilities Director, stated that staff is preparing bids for all the water tanks.

Motion to approve pending funding available as presented by staff.

Moved: Cm. Gonzalez

Second: Cm. Rodriguez

For: 6

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Cm. Vielma was not present.

2. Discussion with possible action to instruct the City Manager to establish a committee to create a City of Laredo employee(s) of the month program; and any other matters incident thereto.

Cm. Gonzalez noted the high quality performance of City staff and noted that a committee established to create and oversee an employee of the month program would be a worthwhile endeavor.

Melina Bermudez, Human Resources Director, explained that the City had a recognition program in 2008, though it fell into inactivity. She proposed a monthly or quarterly recognition program where coworkers, supervisors, and Directors can nominate an employee in their Department based on their work performance, behavior, attendance, and other factors that go above and beyond. This will assist the Human Resources Department in recognizing employees for a succession of positions that can include supervisory, Assistant Director, or Director. She asked that the committee be comprised of the Mayor or designee, City Manager or designee, a staff member of Human Resources, and two Department Directors that would alternate either quarterly or monthly, depending on how often the program would hold recognitions. Awards could include gift cards, parking space for the month or quarter, and a certificate of recognition or trophy/medal.

Cm. Gonzalez noted his intention to recognize employees monthly given the size of the City workforce; he noted that recognizing as many employees as reasonably possible would be best. Mrs. Bermudez confirmed that staff can calculate that number as a recommendation; she also noted that if an employee is nominated but is not selected that month or quarter, their nomination will be retained for consideration for up to six months so that they can continue to be considered.

Motion to direct staff to develop a plan and report back to Council within the next two Council meetings.

Moved: Cm. Gonzalez

Second: Cm. Rodriguez

For: 6

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Cm. Mercurio Martinez and Dr. Marte Martinez were not present.

#### **E. Request by Council Member Vidal Rodriguez**

1. Discussion with possible action to instruct the City Manager for a 4th of July Firework Extravaganza in South Laredo; and any other matters incident thereto. (Co-Sponsored by Council Member Rudy Gonzalez, Jr.)

Cm. Rodriguez reminded Council that the City needs to try to return the public life to as normal a routine as possible; he clarified that the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Firework Extravaganza in South Laredo may not be held in the same manner that it was in years past, but it is a popular event in its third year and gains traction every year. He suggested that staff could host this event again this year with spectators watching the fireworks display in their cars.

Cm. Gonzalez asked for management's recommendation for bringing in a fireworks display, noting that the various interactive games and features that used to be a staple of the event might not be possible this year. He also asked for guidance on how the City might manage vehicle control for this event.

Robert Eads, City Manager, noted that while staff can work through the logistics of this event with Council, his main concern at this time is funding. Cm. Rodriguez clarified that funding was already allocated at the beginning of the budget cycle.

Dr. Marte Martinez noted that budget aside, the country is highly divided and needs to be reminded, now more than ever, that we are one nation with an Independence Day celebration in Laredo. He stated that this city is one of the most patriotic cities in the United States and that fireworks should be displayed this year as it has been done every year for the last decade.

Cm. Gonzalez explained that three years ago, 4<sup>th</sup> of July events were held in three locations; three events were also held two years ago, and last year the City reduced the number to two events. Cm. Rodriguez initiated a motion to approve two 4<sup>th</sup> of July events with fireworks display, one in North Laredo and one in South Laredo, that include social distance measures.

Mr. Eads confirmed that \$10,000 is budgeted for the Independence Hills event for this year; that is the only event that has been budgeted for an Independence Day event.

Juan J. Gomez, Parks & Recreation Director, explained that the fireworks display at Uni-Trade Stadium is typically paid for by the Tecolotes; last year, they split the cost with the City. The Tecolotes are not planning to play this year until August 1, 2020, so they will not be in town on July 4 to share costs or pay for the fireworks display.

Mr. Eads noted that even if the City works out the budgetary issues for a fireworks show at Uni-Trade, there would not be spectators in the stands; attendees would have to stay in their vehicles as well.

Dr. Martinez asked members of the private sector to contact the City to sponsor these events with financial assistance. The citizens deserve some respite in the midst of this pandemic. Mr. Eads stated that HEB usually sponsors fireworks events by splitting the costs with the city; this was done in the other City where Mr. Eads worked previously. He confirmed that staff would reach out to them on this matter.

Cm. Altgelt suggested that the City refer to the holiday as Independence Day rather than 4<sup>th</sup> of July to commemorate the significance for the occasion. Cm. Balli agreed.

Motion to approve two Independence Day events with fireworks display, one in North Laredo and one in South Laredo, that include social distance measures and to instruct the City Manager to find funding sources, as amended.

Moved: Cm. Rodriguez  
Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For:                                  Against:                                  Abstain: 0

- 2. Discussion with possible action to direct staff to allocate \$50,000.00 for the illumination project in District II; and any other matters incident thereto. District Priority Funds will be used for this project.

Motion to approve.

Moved: Cm. Rodriguez  
Second: Dr. Marte Martinez

For: 8                                  Against: 0                                  Abstain: 0

**F. Request by Mayor Pro-Tempore Alberto Torres, Jr.**

- 1. Discussion with possible action on an update regarding grant applications, funds awarded/acquired, and status of division performance; and any other matters incident thereto.

Motion to direct staff to provide Council with a list of grants that the Grant Division under the Economic Development Department has applied for as well as what has been received, not received, or pending by Friday, June 5, 2020, and to table this item for the time being.

Moved: MPT Torres  
Second: Cm. Balli

For: 7                                  Against: 0                                  Abstain: 0

Cm. Gonzalez was not present.

2. Discussion with possible action to establish proper protocols and a plan of action for a potential second wave of COVID-19; and any other matters incident thereto.

MPT Torres commended the preventive measures taken by the City on the guidance of the health authority and medical advisory committee during a time with a steep learning curve. He asked that management and the health authority develop plans for the anticipated second wave of COVID-19.

Dr. Victor Treviño, health authority for the City of Laredo, encouraged the City to continue reinforcing the importance of changing the public's behavior in response to COVID-19. As the community approaches influenza season, vaccinations should be strongly encouraged as over 35 million people become infected with the seasonal flu every year in the United States. Because the country is expecting a second wave of COVID-19 infections in conjunction with seasonal flu, a retightening and renewed enforcement of social distancing and other preventive measures would be highly advisable. The City can request more flu vaccines for the upcoming season due to the risk of COVID-19 and should calculate how many vaccines will be given out by the private sector. Education regarding vaccinations will go a long way to encouraging a reluctant community to receive their vaccines. He recommended hiring more contact tracers to at the Health Department to help determine if there will be an increase of infections.

Dr. Marte Martinez stated that CARES Act funds can be used to hire multiple epidemiologists to help with this endeavor. Richard Chamberlain, Interim Health Director, agreed and noted that grant opportunities may be available in addition to the CARES Act funding. Staff is working with the local colleges to bring intern students to come onboard as approved contact tracers through a program via Johns Hopkins University. Staff submitted a request for some funding provided by the Texas Department of State Health Services, but that request has not yet been approved; there has not been an official budget or award presented to staff.

Dr. Martinez noted that if there is not a way to certainly prevent or rid the community of COVID-19 infections, then the City should increase efforts to prevent or rid the community of influenza. Mr. Chamberlain stated that the General Fund has purchase 3,000 vaccinations every year for the flu season; ideally, staff would like to increase that number threefold in preparation of this flu and COVID season, though he voiced uncertainty as to that possibility. He confirmed that the Health Department will receive 15,000 vaccinations for children through Texas Vaccines For Children (TVFC).

Dr. Treviño noted that positive cases increased between Friday and Sunday from about 11% to 12%, clarifying that this may only be a slight variation rather than an increasing trend. To Cm. Rodriguez's question as to whether the City should cancel Little League season, he stated that everything has to be thoroughly reviewed for mitigation measures before being opened or permitted. If a sport or activity like Little League cannot be

mitigated, then he would recommend cancellation this year.

Juan J. Gomez, Parks & Recreation Director, confirmed that the Department is receiving many phone calls about starting leagues for the summer, and he clarified that each league has different guidelines that further complicates the issue. He voiced his opinion that staff would have to standardize guidelines to apply to every league in every City park that must be followed if a league is to form this year. He noted that most leagues have not started to-date, and the ones who have started tend to be private leagues. Dr. Treviño encouraged Council to err on the side of caution.

Cm. Rodriguez clarified that even if leagues are not allowed to have games or tournaments this year, they may not necessarily be prohibited from practicing as long as they maintain social distancing and the other recommended measures. He initiated a motion to cancel all leagues until such a time that Governor Abbott permits league sports to organize.

Robert Eads, City Manager, reminded Council that they and management made the collective decision to close facilities or activities for the summer; he asked that Council make this decision as it relates to summer months only so that it would fall in line with the other Council directives. Cm. Rodriguez withdrew his motion and asked for management to recommend the motion for Council action.

Motion to cancel all leagues until such a time that Governor Greg Abbott permits league sports to organize.

Moved: Cm. Rodriguez  
Second: MPT Torres  
Motion withdrawn.

Dr. Martinez initiated a motion to cancel all leagues until the end of the summer, August 30, 2020.

Motion to cancel all leagues until the end of the summer, August 30, 2020.

Moved: Dr. Marte Martinez  
Second: Cm. Altgelt  
For: 6                              Against: 1                              Abstain: 0  
    Cm. Rodriguez                      Cm. Mercurio Martinez  
    MPT Torres  
    Cm. Vielma  
    Dr. Marte Martinez  
    Cm. Altgelt  
    Cm. Balli

Cm. Gonzalez was not present.

Mr. Chamberlain stated that staff is using contact tracing software with patient consent that tracks the patient's symptoms on a daily basis. Aside from that, the Health Department has partnered with the Texas



Department of State Health Services to start employing the use of a new contact tracing app known as Trace Texas to provide more information quickly, again with patient consent.

Cm. Vielma suggested that as part of the educational campaign for COVID-19, staff stress the importance of logical and critical thinking when reviewing the number of positive cases. Dr. Treviño agreed that knowledge is power and if community members know what is going on, they can adapt to the changing circumstances. Ignorance contributes to the anxiety that the community experiences.

To MPT Torres's question if the City is ready for a second wave of COVID-19 cases, Dr. Treviño stated that the community is *not* ready but is doing good to-date; officials need to emphasize what will come. Some members of the public do not believe that a second wave is actually coming because so many businesses are reopening and measures are being relaxed. Therefore, they do not accept a second wave and will like be unprepared for it. The City will be prepared to respond to the second wave if the preventive measures are still encouraged.

Dr. Martinez noted that the City needs to develop its plan of attack for the second wave of COVID-19, including budgetary and itemized needs for Council action. Dr. Treviño confirmed that he would meet with the medical task force to itemize and prioritize the list of steps that need to be taken as well as what needs to be avoided.

MPT Torres suggested that Council hold a workshop and have the task force present to Council as they prepare for the second wave of COVID-19 infections during flu season. He initiated a motion to this effect.

Cm. Balli voiced his support of this motion and noted that the City cannot be caught unprepared for this situation; it must begin immediately, and Council must be updated regularly from now until the fall.

Motion to hold a workshop and direct the medical task force present to Council at that time on a plan of action for the anticipated second wave of COVID-19 infection during flu season.

Moved: MPT Torres

Second: Dr. Marte Martinez

For: 7

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Cm. Gonzalez was not present.

3. Discussion with possible action to allow the reconvening of meetings of city boards, committees, and commissions; and any other matters incident thereto.

MPT Torres initiated a motion to direct management to evaluate the City's boards and commissions and provide a recommendation as to which ones should reconvene their meetings, either virtually or in-person.

Motion to direct management to evaluate the City's boards and commissions and provide a recommendation as to which ones should reconvene their meetings, either virtually or in-person.

Moved: MPT Torres

Second: Dr. Marte Martinez

For: 7

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Cm. Gonzalez was not present.

## **G. Request by Council Member Nelly Vielma**

1. Discussion with possible action to explore ways of reducing the tax burden for real property owners by reducing the current tax rate for 2020-2021 Budget; and any other matters incident thereto. (Co-Sponsored by Mayor Pete Saenz)

Cm. Vielma noted that among the economic hardships that residents have had to face during this pandemic, like displacement, unemployment, or extra expenses, the last thing that anyone at the City wants is for someone to lose their home during this time. She recommended lowering the tax rate to something that will provide a savings to help families in the community. Staff would have to calculate the financial impact on the City and see how a lower tax rate would affect the budget.

Gilberto Sanchez, Budget Director, noted that staff needs the state to provide a worksheet for their use because the state has issued a cap of 3.5%, which will already have an impact on the City's budget and provide a benefit to the taxpayer. Without that worksheet, any numbers that staff provides Council will not be accurate. The next budget cycle will already be very complicated given the City's contractual obligations to entities such as the Fire and Police Departments.

Mayor Saenz conceded that the City has contractual obligations but noted comments that he has received asking who is truly looking out for the taxpayers, especially at this time when they are truly hurting.

Cm. Rodriguez suggested issuing a resolution to the Webb County Appraisal District noting that Council is in favor of a tax reduction. Mayor Saenz countered that the Appraisal District only sets property values, not tax rates.

Robert Eads, City Manager, noted that Cm. Rodriguez is the representative on the appraisal board and noted a desire to bring a resolution to the board to freeze rates as a collective. He agreed with Cm. Rodriguez's sentiment that all taxing entities can work together to try to freeze their own tax rates for a bigger collective effort to the taxpayer.

Cm. Vielma noted that rising property appraisals are creating a false market in Laredo, which will result in more foreclosures. She initiated a motion to direct management and budget staff to bring a report on the potential tax rates that the City can implement along with the financial

impacts.

Mayor Saenz noted that during the collective bargaining with the Fire Department, they be asked for the willingness to yield some of their demands or terms in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis, reminding all parties that they are one team and working for the sake of the citizens of Laredo.

Dr. Marte Martinez cautioned Council that basic City services, like utilities, cannot be disrupted. The steps being taken now, like hiring freezes and closing of facilities, will only save the City now. Making radical financial decisions without knowing the sales tax or ad valorem tax is going to be will create the same snowball effect as the unemployment situation that is currently being seen.

MPT Torres conceded with the sentiment that if the City is cutting services, like recreation centers and facilities, then there is an argument for providing tax relief to the taxpayers as compensation for that reduction of services. However, a year from now when facilities are reopened and services return to normal, he asked if the City will impose the same tax rate or increase it. As much as he would support a tax cut, he noted his concern over how the City will recuperate that loss down the road; whatever is cut this year will lead to protests outside of City Hall when Council votes to raise the tax rate again later. Mayor Saenz countered that the citizens' answer to that question is for Council to stop spending money left and right; every monetary decision ends up burdening the taxpayer.

MPT Torres noted that perhaps the fact that the City is operating at 75% shows that there is 25% of fat to be trimmed; this discussion merits more attention, but it can provide perspective.

Mr. Eads stated that staff will propose options for this issue, such as tax deferment or alternate services. He reminded Council that 63 cents of every dollar goes to Police and Fire right off the top. Every year, the other Departments are asked to find 5% or 10% cuts in their budgets out of the remaining 37%, and every year staff ask management what more they could possibly cut or do to provide savings. The driving and motivating factor is personnel.

Mr. Sanchez reminded Council that to realize their goal, they would have to reduce the tax rates and then later, when they wished to raise the rate, it would have to go through a referendum. MPT Torres recalled that when Council chose the effective tax rate last year, citizens criticized them as saying that the savings to the taxpayer is not even enough money to buy a fast food meal. Another costly area where the City could trim is the retirement incentive program.

Mr. Eads noted that the reduction of those positions shows benefits two or three years down the road; payouts for sick and annual leave usually result in a costly year of the employee's exit. There is no question that insurance rates will increase across the board; certain things have been triggered in the budget that must be maintained and are foregone conclusions.

MPT Torres asked if the City could set a mandatory retirement for a certain age or numbers of service years. Cm. Altgelt asked staff to put an item on the next Council agenda to the effect of a mandatory retirement after a certain number of years of service.

Dr. Martinez cautioned Council that with a 15% or so unemployment rate, 85% are still employed. These employed households are still able to pay their taxes, which will provide services to those who cannot. By enlisting the help of the employed to offer services to the entire community, they can help lift up each other. However, making cuts across the board hurts everybody and results in more cut services.

MPT Torres reminded the workforce that a reduction in force would be Council's last option but asked that management bring back a report of the financial impacts of such a reduction.

Motion to direct management and budget staff to bring a report on the potential tax rates that the City can implement along with the financial impacts to support the resolution as proposed by Cm. Rodriguez for the Webb County Appraisal District and to direct staff to bring back options for a program for displaced citizens for property tax assistance and a reduction in the workforce or cost-ineffective services, as amended.

Moved: Cm. Vielma

Second: MPT Torres

For: 7

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Cm. Gonzalez was not present.

2. Discussion with possible action on amending Article II, Division 8 (Internal Audit office) of the Code of Ordinances for purposes of clarifying the role and authority of the City Auditor in order to produce analytical audit reports with emphasis on providing an independent and objective evaluation of the city's risk exposures, reliability, and integrity of financial and operational information, safeguarding of assets, and compliance with laws, grants, and contracts; and establishing an Audit & Accountability Committee with applicable experience in financial and/or audit matters to provide guidance and oversight of the Office of the City Auditor, and recommendations to council on the risks, efficiencies, improvements, and fiscal responsibility, and any other matters incident thereto.

Cm. Vielma reported that over the last few years, there have been incidents in which issues with contracts, grants, and monies have been identified by the Internal Auditor's Office; several other cities have auditor committees, which could benefit the City of Laredo since no one on Council is an auditor or CPA. She voiced her opinion that Council should consider revamping the Internal Auditor's Office to meet these new challenges and the changes in technology occurring.

Veronica Baeza, Internal Auditor, noted that she discussed the concept of an Internal Auditor's committee, which is a common practice among

comparable cities where the committee serves ad-hoc to provide more direct guidance and oversight over the audit function itself. These committees can also expand on the other responsibilities given to them, from appointments and removals of the Auditor to evaluations of the Auditor to monitoring areas of greater risk so that the Auditor and the committee are on the same page. They can recommend certifications for the Auditor's staff; there are several certifications available, which can be paid for over a couple of years.

Mayor Saenz noted that the importance of a contract compliance officer to review City contracts is of the utmost importance, no matter who or which Department is reviewing the contract. It was very difficult to get answers from prior administration regarding contracts or auditing operations, to which Cm. Vielma agreed. She initiated a motion to approve as worded and have each Council Member appoint a committee member with financial or auditing experience to serve on the committee.

Cm. Rodriguez suggested that the Internal Auditor continue to perform spot checks of cash transactions but reduce the volume to free the Department for larger, more pressing tasks.

Mrs. Baeza noted that the committee can be anywhere from three to six members, which is seen in other cities and are appointed by the Mayor. Mayor Saenz and Cm. Rodriguez countered that having a representative of each Council Member would be preferable.

MPT Torres noted his preference to give the committee the ability to report to Council rather than simply serving as advisors to the Department.

Motion to approve as worded and have each Council Member appoint one person with a finance or auditing background to serve on the committee.

Moved: Cm. Vielma

Second: MPT Torres

For: 7

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Cm. Gonzalez was not present.

3. Discussion with possible action to designate a portion of the CARES Act funds for Economic Development, Workforce Retraining and Small Business Assistance Programs; and any other matters incident thereto.

Cm. Vielma noted that the American Workforce Act has not been passed yet but should be implemented if it does.

Tecló Garcia, Economic Development Director, explained that the first 25% of the CARES Act funds are for people who lost their jobs or had their businesses adversely affected by COVID-19. If so, then they can receive this funding if they apply for it.

No action taken.

## H. Request by Council Member Dr. Marte A. Martinez

1. Discussion with possible action on the status of the Economic Development Committee; and any other matters incident thereto.

Dr. Marte Martinez reminded Council that the intention of this item was to find clusters of small businesses to stimulate the economic engine of the community for the City to potentially invest in for a speedier recovery.

Teclo Garcia, Economic Development Director, thanked the business leaders and citizens of Laredo who participated on this committee. The Committee provided multiple detailed recommendations, particularly the need for small business assistance; he noted four condensed recommendations that he would also support as a staff recommendation. Using the CARES Act to assist small businesses would be advantageous to the community, and he noted that Laredo is primed to take on manufacturing at this time; the City can leverage its logistics industry to work in tandem with manufacturing. A trade expert noted the community's trade stability with both China and Mexico, which is an asset. The committee suggests creating a strike force/task force to assess the City's current manufacturing circumstances and then move forward with that endeavor. The assessment is key to determining what Laredo will actually manufacture as well as the workforce skill, space, buildings, land, and geographical position. These questions need to be addressed before the City moves forward; the task force will also determine if the manufacturing industry is even aware that Laredo wants their business to move into the community.

Mr. Garcia noted that the expansion of the residency program at Laredo Medical Center is worth exploring. The committee recommends creating some Laredo area project priorities lists and distribute that list to staff as well as bringing TAMIU and Laredo College together for regular meetings with City officials in an attempt to plan and prioritize the needs and opportunities in the community. The last recommendation is to continue the City's Wi-Fi initiative to bring technology to the community with any possible expansion and to expand the environmental initiatives for Laredo's sustainability, wellbeing, and economic objectives. He noted that more detail on these recommendations have been provided to Council for their review.

Dr. Martinez initiated a motion to accept and implement the committee's recommendations as presented. Cm. Vielma commended the recommendation and information regarding manufacturing opportunities for Laredo. She clarified that many local graduates do not have the accolades or skillset to pursue manufacturing careers and asked that the committee provide structure as to the responsibility of various parties in ensuring a skilled and qualified workforce for the manufacturing industry to move into Laredo. The Viva Laredo Comprehensive Plan identifies research and development as a valuable industry to move into the area, as well; Mr. Garcia reminded Council that this report is a working document and not a final recommendation. The committee will continue to assess the opportunities available to the community given skill levels and assets.

Cm. Vielma voiced her opinion that the Laredo International Airport is part of Port Laredo, asking that the airport's cargo and operations be included in the committee's reviews and assessments as well. Cm. Mercurio Martinez agreed, noting that the airport should be treated with the same weight and consideration as the land port. He asked that the committee meet more often in the future to bring about recommendations such as these.

Mr. Garcia agreed, noting his wish to see the group divided into subgroups to make meetings more accessible, as it is hard to get these 13 business leaders available at the same time to meet.

MPT Torres voiced Council's wishes to see Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the division and attracting economic development overall, as well. Dr. Martinez reiterated Council's intention to immediately start a manufacturing hub in Laredo for medical personal protective equipment (PPE). The geopolitical tension with China is real and meaningful, and Laredo has to be ready to encourage their businesses to come to Laredo, who has incredible resources working to its advantages.

Mr. Garcia agreed with Dr. Martinez's points but reminded Council that the manufacturing industry does not know that; the City must get the word to the industry so that Laredo is on their radar for consideration. Through his work with the Laredo Economic Development Corporation (EDC), the community has grown a niche in the cold storage industry that equates to about \$10-16 million in investments and creates at least 140 new jobs to start, all of which will pay at least \$13 per hour with full benefits. Dr. Martinez commended Mr. Garcia on this niche market being created, particularly the creation of jobs in the biggest unemployment event in the history of the United States.

Robert Eads, City Manager, added that the City is not abating property tax for the cold storage niche. Even during the pandemic, Laredo has been contacted by businesses in the cold storage industry for opportunities in the area.

Motion to accept and implement the Economic Development Committee's recommendations as presented.

Moved: Dr. Marte Martinez

Second: Cm. Mercurio Martinez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

2. Discussion with possible action to create Wetland Mitigation Bank within North Central park to accommodate any and all future wetland mitigation project as require by the US Army Corps of Engineers under section 404 permit requirements and reroute a portion of effluent water through this proposed wetland to address the flooding issues around Orange Blossom Loop; and any other matters incident thereto.

Dr. Marte Martinez noted a flooding issue around Orange Blossom Loop in

which almost 800,000 gallons of effluent circulate directly into a sewer pipe; after rains, that sewer pipe fills up and causes flooding. By rerouting some of that effluent, the flooding issue can be mitigated. He stated that staff also has the opportunity to create a wetland mitigation project at this time; using effluent to create a wetland in North Central Park allows the City to then borrow off of the wetland for any mitigation projects for creek systems.

Riazul Mia, Utilities Director, confirmed that effluent going into the storm water drain caused those pipes to reach capacity faster and therefore flood during rains. Staff intends to divert half of the flow from the storm drain and then use that diverted effluent to create the wetland in North Central Park. That section of the park was burned, so the wetland will enhance the area with the return of wildlife and creating an attraction for developers. Rerouting the effluent has funding available through the Utilities Department.

Motion to approve.

Moved: Dr. Marte Martinez

Second: Cm. Gonzalez

For: 8

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

## **XVI. ADJOURN**

Motion to adjourn.

Moved: Dr. Marte Martinez

Second: MPT Torres

For: 7

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Cm. Gonzalez was not present.