

**City of Laredo
Special City Council Chambers
M2006-SC-15
1110 Houston Street
Laredo, Texas 78040
November 9, 2006
12:15 p.m.**

I. Call to Order

With a quorum present, Mayor Raul G. Salinas called the meeting to order.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Raul G. Salinas led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. Roll Call

In attendance:

Raul G. Salinas,	Mayor
Mike Garza,	Council Member, District I
Michael Landeck,	Council Member, District III
Johnny Amaya,	Council Member, District IV
Johnny Rendon,	Council Member, District V
Gene Belmares,	Council Member, District VI
Juan Chavez,	Council Member, District VII
Juan Ramirez,	Mayor Pro Temp, District VIII
Gustavo Guevara, Jr.,	City Secretary
Larry Dovalina,	City Manager
Cynthia Collazo,	Deputy City Manager
Jaime Flores,	City Attorney

Motion to excuse Council Member Garcia.

Moved: Cm. Belmares

Second: Cm. Ramirez

For: 7

Against:

Abstain:

IV. Staff Reports

1. Discussion with possible action on the City's Legislative Program's goals and objectives.

Jessica Hein, Director of Communications and 9-1-1 Services, introduced Ronnie Cantu as the Legislative Liaison. Ms. Hein stated that the primary reason for the meeting is so that the City Council can meet and greet our state legislative consultants.

She stated that City's legislative program goal is to get legislation passed at the state level that is favorable to the City of Laredo. She indicated that they have worked with the City's Department Directors, Legislative Committee and City Council. She said that the Legislative Committee Agenda was passed for both the federal and state side. She mentioned that the meeting for the federal side will take place next week. She also mentioned that the State agenda was adopted by the City Council at the end of the fiscal year and staff is now aligning the issues internally and externally. Ms. Hein indicated that the agendas have been reviewed by the office of State Representative Richard Raymond; State Senator Judy Zaffirini, and State Representative Guillen.

Some follow-up meetings will be held with these offices and assist in the coordination of sponsoring the bills. She mentioned that the legislative session starts in January and pre-filing of bills begin November 13th through January, 2007. She indicated that they can track issues submitted such as House bills or Senate bills that affect any of the legislative agendas through the Gallery Watch Software Program. They will assist in tracking it. She stated that there is an internal matrix that will be able to track it within the organization. Ms. Hein said that it will be kept up to date and they will provide reports to the City Council. She indicated that they will be in close contact with the consultants in Austin at all times. She also indicated that they will need the City Council, Mayor, and City Managers to provide testimony and attend committee hearings when sessions start.

Cm. Garza inquired about the tone of the legislators in terms of the items.

Ms. Hein stated that there was an overall sense that there is very good information in the Legislative agendas, however, there are some items that are not as feasible as others.

Cm. Landeck commented that it would have been wise to invite the members of the

Legislative Committee of Council Member to participate in that meeting with management, consultants, staff and others. He also stated that certain decisions and advice must be given on the spot and all the issues related to legislation are City Council issues. He emphasized that they must make sure that they integrate the committee much more. He pointed out that he was not aware of the meeting that was held in the morning and he chairs the committee and in return he wants everyone to be informed and the Council will be informed.

Ms. Hein responded that any policy decisions will be brought to the committee.

Cm. Landeck added that he wants the committee to be present in the meetings even if policy decisions are discussed or not, in order to be able to participate in the meeting between administration and the consultants.

Cm. Garza asked about the timeline on legislation done over the years because some of the items are repetitive. He inquired about how the newer Council Members could see how long we have stayed with an issue in order to be familiar with it.

Ms. Hein informed Council Member Garza that there is an internal tracking spreadsheet that tracks the year when the item was entered into.

Cm. Garza also inquired if it would show if the item got to a certain level such as it being floored or defeated.

Ms. Hein stated that was not tracked before but from now on it will.

Cm. Landeck asked if it could be tracked backwards.

Ms. Hein commented that it could be done.

2. Status Report from Austin Legislative Consultants which are Robert Strauser, Andrea McWilliams, and Mario Martinez.

Mario Martinez, part of the Legislative Consultant team, introduced himself and the consultant team. He stated that he has been part of the legislative process for years. He mentioned that Robert Strauser started in 1969 working with the Texas Legislature and Andrea McWilliams started in 1989 working with the Texas Legislature. Mr. Martinez stated that he began in 1975 through continual sessions. He mentioned that they are independent consultants representing their own firm, but working jointly with the City of Laredo. He appreciates the understanding, direction and guidance, along with the Council, to work on a bipartisanship level which makes his job easier. He commented that we have a Republican leadership of control at this time, but there are direct floor leaders and chairmen of respective committees of Senior Standing Committees that are Democratic members both in the House and the Senate. He commented that as it was discussed earlier there are new initiatives that will be put in place by working with the management team and with the Legislative coordinators. He stated that he looks forward in following directions that will be informative so that the Council and community leaders will be informed to provide information to their constituency.

Ms. McWilliams reported that there was an election at the House and the Senate and they do remain in control of the Republican but the Democrats did have a net gain of 5 in the House. The partisan makeup of the Senate remains the same. She mentioned that they are planning a Laredo Legislative Week from January 21st through January 25th, 2007 and she encouraged everyone to come and see the process and talk to local elected officials. She stated that they are big supporters of our delegation in Austin with their seniority and the committee assignments that they bring for the City of Laredo are a very big help. Pre-filling a bill starts November 13th, 2007. She directed a comment to Council Member Michael Landeck about being involved. She stressed that they want him to be involved and that they want to report on a regular basis to the staff to make sure that all the council members feel that they are very involved in the process, since they have to report to their constituency and they will be very sensitive to that.

Mr. Stauser commented that he worked on a report with Mr. Martinez at the last session that detailed every action taken in the program. He mentioned that it was done 18 months ago. He also mentioned that he looks forward to working with the Council and will always be available. He stated that there is no community this size in the state that has a member of Appropriations and Senate Finance as we do and we are very lucky for that.

Mayor Salinas stated they he had the opportunity to visit with Assistant Deputy Secretary of State Buddy Garcia that was made possible by Mr. Martinez which was very fruitful. He noted that we will work both sides of the House and Senate and work for what is good for our community. He also noted that the constituents are important and want the best for our community and we will work on bipartisan.

The Mayor also asked him to work very hard and he stated that he appreciated his commitment and his good work.

Mr. Martinez assured the Mayor that he has their combined commitment in representing the City and the constituency of Laredo. He pointed out that staff handed out a hand out of legislative process procedures. He asked the Mayor and Council Members to review it so they can be able to understand the legislative process, procedures, and dateline. He mentioned that they are readily available as a combined unit to be responsive to their calls. He stated that there will be a process where every Friday during the legislative session a conference call will be made to the City leadership as a status report and a written report will also be submitted. He commented that at the next legislative meeting new initiatives will be laid out for guidance and direction for favorable passage and acceptance of them.

Cm. Garza echoed what the Mayor said. He stated that he is not a Republican or Democrat but a Laredoan first. He commented that the most important thing is to get things done regardless of party affiliation. He mentioned that some of the people he represents are specifically on the lower social economic ladder and he will do whatever it takes.

the Mr. Martinez stated that he was excited to work together as a joint effort with the council and the legislative delegation.

City's 3. Discussion with possible action on possible Legislative assignments for the consultants in Austin.

Cynthia Collazo, Acting City Manager, informed the Mayor and Council that this item is not necessary.

4. Discussion of 2007 Legislative trips to Austin and Washington, D. C.

Cynthia Collazo, Acting City Manager, announced that the trip to Austin will be from January 21st through January 25th, 2007. She will continue to update them on the details of the trip.

Mayor Salinas encouraged the councilmen to attend the Austin trip if not for the whole time, but at least for part of the time, so they can have input and to visit with their respective legislators and senators.

Ms. Collazo also announced the Washington trip which is scheduled for March 3rd through 7th, 2007.

Mayor Salinas encourage the council members again to attend these trips as well. He noted that there will be a new Speaker of the House and new chairmanships. He commented that they will try to meet with as many people as possible. He is concerned about Homeland Security and a lot of issues that affect our city since we are on the border. He said that he had discussed with Council Member Belmares and other council members to streamline some of the attendees to insure the City saves money, but we will make sure that those that need to go will go. He said that they will knock on doors and that we have a great team and staff. We will not be the forgotten city and we want results that can be done by personal contacts.

Council Member Belmares added that in recent years, the federal funding is coming down from the state and the state is the one giving it out. He added that this trip to Austin is much more important than it has been in the past, because of the necessity to go to these agencies and legislatures to get our fair share of money for the City of Laredo. He encouraged everyone to make this trip, because of the fact that the money rests in the hands of the Governor or the agencies that are represented such as TxDT.

Council Member Garza added that they focus not only on the City's issues, but support other agencies like TxDoT and seize the opportunity that comes up.

Council Member Belmares also added that they promote other agendas as well as the school districts for the benefits of our constituency. It has been our practice not just to visit legislators, but the agencies as well in Washington and Austin, because they play a big role in how money is spent and how policies are driven.

Council Member Garza commented that those trips be a part of our budget and is very justifiable.

private Ms. Collazo asked if Council was saying that they not solicit funds from the private sector who have supported these events in the past.

Council Member Garza emphasized that is was just a personal opinion and was not making a motion.

Council Member Belmares suggested that this should be addressed to the committee. He stated that those entities are our constituents, such as the banking

industry for instance. He mentioned that the Transportation Associations have an agenda that is tied into our bridges and they lend their support to our agenda through their committees.

Mayor Salinas added that we have to be very cautious how and who spends the money. He said he does not want any conflicts and they will abide by the Code of Ethics. He noted that this discussion will be held at the committee level and will be reviewed very carefully.

Council Member Landeck agreed to work with the Code of Ethics to formulate certain things. He applauded Council Member Belmares on the leadership he provided to the Legislative Committee stated that it is not the legality of it, but the perception of it and any support coming in will not open the door any wider to anyone else. It should be done out of good will and support.

Mayor Salinas stated that it is very clear that we are going to abide by the law and they are not going to sway at all.

Ms. Collazo commented that staff has accounted for everything in the past. She added that they proceed for staff to place an item for the committee to entertain both trips.

Mayor Salinas stated that as long as they are transparent and as long as they let the public know what they are doing, and it's within the realm of legality, it's fine.

V. Executive Session

The City Council hereby reserves the right to go into executive session at any time during this public meeting, if such is requested by the City Attorney or other legal counsel for the City, pursuant to his other duty under Section 551.071 (2) of the Government Code, to consult privately with his or her client on an item on the agenda, or on a matter arising out of such item.

VI. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn.

Moved: Cm. Belmares

Second: Cm. Landeck

For: 7

Against: 0

Abstain:

0