

**MERCEDES CITY COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING
SEPTEMBER 14, 2021 – 6:30 P.M.
MERCEDES CITY HALL – COMMISSION CHAMBERS**

MEMBERS PRESENT:	Oscar D Montoya	Mayor
	Joe Martinez	Mayor Pro-Tem
	Leonel Benavidez	Commissioner
	Jacob Howell	Commissioner
	Jose M. Gomez	Commissioner
STAFF PRESENT:	Alberto Perez	City Manager
	Martie Garcia-Vela	City Attorney
	Joselynn Castillo	City Secretary
	Kristine Longoria	City Secretary Assistant
	Javier Chapa	I.T Director
	Ervin Vilchis	I.T Liaison
	Joaquin Hernandez	Public Works Director
	Nereida Perez	Finance Director
	Roy Quintanilha	Chief of Police
	Blanca Sanchez	Asst. Chief of Police
	George Diaz	Police Officer

1.) CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Mayor Montoya welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M.

2.) ESTABLISH QUORUM

All members of the Commission were present which constitutes a full quorum.

3.) INVOCATION

Commissioner Howell said the invocation.

4.) PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Montoya led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

5.) OPEN FORUM

- a. Mr. Leonel Benavidez sent a message of gratitude to the first responders for attending to the fire that occurred at the Mayors home. Mr. Benavidez stated he wants this to be a message of unity and support for one another. Asked the Citizens to keep the first responders in their prayers. Mr. Benavidez stated that he requested that the facebook post be taken down.
- b. Ms. Esmer Guerrero spoke on behalf of the elderly on the tax rate and water rate. The elderly was not aware of the raise in the taxes and water bill. The elderly is not up to date with the media and are hurting the citizens. Ms. Guerrero stated that the Commission need ample time to review the budget. The Commissioners are the citizens voice and should not be stopped from speaking. The Commission need to review the contracts and look after the well-being of the citizens.
- c. Ms. Dalia Gonzalez spoke regarding the City budget. Ms. Gonzalez stated that she is tired of hitting potholes and the loans (CO's) will help the city. The commissioners that vote against the people also voted to go with the highest bidders for a couple of contracts. Ms. Gonzalez stated that Capisallo Terrace needs help and citizens have lost their belongings several times due to flooding and lack of sewer services.

6.) ITEMS ON THE REGULAR AGENDA

No one signed up to speak on an agenda item.

7.) SECOND AND FINAL READING OF ORDINANCE NO. 2021-11 ADOPTING THE 2021 TAX RATE.

Mayor Montoya read the Tax rate Ordinance for all the citizens attending. Mayor Pro-Tem Martinez motion to approve the second reading. Commissioner Howell seconded the motion. Upon a called vote, the motion passed with Commissioner Benavidez and Commissioner Gomez voting against. Commissioner Benavidez stated that the Commission did not have the dialog of the 1, 2, or 3 cents increase. Commissioner Howell stated that this is a tough decision, but there are many issues that need to be addressed to fix the issues with roads, drainage and infrastructure. Commissioner Gomez addressed the tax payers. The budget could not be balanced because there were more expenditures than revenues. Commissioner Gomez stated that if personnel or other items need to be cut then that's what the City needs to do. He stated they need to be stewards to the Citizens. Mayor Pro-Tem Martinez stated that the sewer plant is sniffing city funds. He stated that this issue was brought up years ago and now the City is in the current predicament. Mayor Pro-Tem Martinez stated he is ready for any repercussions but he wants the city to have the money to fix the issues. Mayor Montoya stated that he was thinking of the poor that cannot pay for a tire repair. The Mayor stated that he whole heartedly is thinking of the poorest of the poor.

8.) SECOND AND FINAL READING OF ORDINANCE NO. 2021-12 ADOPTING THE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021-2022.

Ms. Esmer Guerrero asked if the City will be getting help from the County on the drainage issues. Mayor Montoya stated that the monies everyone is talking about is for the Drainage district. Mayor Pro-Tem Martinez motioned to approve. Commissioner Howell seconded. Upon a called vote, the motion passed with Commissioner Benavidez and Gomez voted against.

9.) SECOND AND FINAL READING OF ORDINANCE NO. 2021-13 ADOPTING THE WATER AND SEWER RATES FOR 2021.

Mayor Montoya read the Ordinance to the public. Commissioner Howell motioned to approve. Mayor Pro-Tem Martinez seconded the motion. Commissioner Benavidez stated he wants a balanced approach on financial decisions on projects. The City is going to get things done but does not agree on how things will be done. Commissioner Howell stated he is in favor but may need to make adjustments in the future. The water and sewer fund is costing the city and the utility fund should be sustaining itself. Mayor Pro-Tem Martinez asked if the City will be having the water rate study at which Mr. Perez stated it has been posted and will present it to the Commission after the bids are received. Commissioner Gomez stated that the Utility fund is its own fund and should sustain itself. Upon a called vote, the motion passed with Commission Gomez and Benavidez voting against.

10.)DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION TO DIRECT CITY MANAGER/FINANCE DIRECTOR TO SET A DELTA VARIANT (COVID-19) FINANCIAL OPERATIONS PLAN IN PLACE TO OFF-SET CORE CITY INFLATION AND REVENUE LOSSES. *OPERATION DV PLAN.

Commissioner Howell presented to the Commission a chart pursuing Big Box Retail stores. The COVID-19 virus has affected the City's revenues and want to offset the city revenue losses. Commissioner Howell states that continuing to push for stores to come to Mercedes in case the city gets in a financial bind due to the COVID-19 Delta Variant. Operation DV (Delta Virus) plan in place. Commissioner Howell motion to move forward with the DV plan. Mayor Pro-Tem

Martinez seconded the motion. Commissioner Howell stated this is to put a plan in place in case we are hit with another COVID rise that impacts the economy. He added that he would like a cost analysis for the City to see how much we could lose if the City is impacted again. Commissioner Benavidez stated he would like to be involved with the analysis. Upon a called vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Montoya thanked the Mercedes Fire Department and Police Department for assisting him on his house fire. Thanked La Feria, Weslaco, Pharr FD for helping combat the fire. He thanked and is extremely appreciative of the Citizens of Mercedes for defending his family, the support for his family. Mayor Montoya thanked his son for staying calm in the face of danger and carrying his mother out in the wheel chair and his father. Thanked Alyssa De Leon for her bravery and running into the burning home.

Commissioner Benavidez stated he would like staff to maintain the areas by the inlets.

11.)ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Benavidez motion to adjourn. Commissioner Howell seconded the motion. Upon a called vote, the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:22 p.m.