

**MERCEDES CITY COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MAY 21, 2024 – 6:30 P.M.
MERCEDES CITY HALL – COMMISSION CHAMBERS**

MEMBERS PRESENT:	Oscar D. Montoya Sr. Ruben J. Saldana Armando Garcia Joe Martinez	Mayor Mayor Pro-Tem Commissioner Commissioner
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MEMBERS ABSENT:	Jacob Howell	Commissioner
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STAFF PRESENT:	Alberto Perez Martie Garcia Vela Joselynn Castillo Javier Ramirez Meredith Hernandez Richard Morin Marisol Vidales Michael Rocha Juan Vasquez	City Manager City Attorney City Secretary Asst. City Manager Asst. Finance Director Recreational Director Library Director I.T Specialist I.T Tech
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1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

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

2. ESTABLISH QUORUM

Three members were present which constitutes a quorum. Commissioner Martinez arrived during open forum. Commissioner Howell was absent.

3. Invocation

Commissioner Saldana said the invocation.

4. Pledge of Allegiance

Commissioner Garcia led in the pledge of allegiance.

5. Open Forum-

- Mr. Joe and Mary Cano thanked Mr. Perez and Mr. Ramirez for the opportunity to speak and requested assistance in obtaining a new van for Amigos del Valle. The current van has a non-functional air conditioner, is not ADA compliant, lacks a wheelchair lift, and has mechanical issues. Ms. Cano noted that people from the center are concerned because they want to attend events but are unable to due to disabilities and the cramped space of the van. The city last purchased a van in 2009, and they requested the city to issue RFP's for a new van. Commissioner Martinez arrived during this discussion.

6. PRESENTATIONS:

a. Proclamation for El Fenix Café

Mayor Montoya spoke about the award received from the historical commission for El Fenix Café remaining open during the COVID-19 pandemic. He read the proclamation in honor of the café. Ms. Dalia Carr expressed gratitude, mentioning her parents' dream to pass on to their children and emphasized the good nature of the people of Mercedes who know them personally. She stated that she is honored to receive the proclamation. Additionally, she mentioned that they are closed on Mondays but remain open on holidays, operating from 7:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

b. Presentation by Aztlan Animation Studio & Educational Institute

Mr. Lupe Casarez gave a brief presentation about the upcoming launch of phase one of their project, which includes a summer program aimed at at-risk populations. This phase involves introducing the public to art through a collaboration with the library, merging technology with the community to offer art and education via animation. Phase two will incorporate illustration and animation into story development, while phase three will bring in cartoonists and illustrators to inspire youth to pursue both introductory and professional training in animation, illustration, and product development. In response to a question, Mr. Casarez stated that the program can be adjusted to fit any age group and, although they focus on at-risk populations, it will be open to everyone.

c. Presentation update on Capisallo Terrace Project

Mr. Ramirez stated the Capisallo Terrace Project is almost complete. The engineer could not make the meeting today. The sewer collection line, all the connections are up to the lots and the lift station is complete. The next step is connecting the properties to the service lines. They are about three weeks away from being done. The sewer line is installed and are working on replacing 800 leaner feet of curb and gutter. The street should be complete in the following two weeks.

d. Presentations on summer programs for the library and rec center

Ms. Marisol Vidales on the Summer Reading Program:

Ms. Marisol Vidales informed the Commission about the summer reading program at the library, themed "Adventure begins at your library" for children, young adults, and adults. Participants need a library card in good standing. Registration began on May 20, 2024, and the program runs from June 3 to June 28, 2024. The program includes toddler challenges with raffle submissions, a reward for children who read 15 books, and a requirement for adults and teens to read three books and provide

summaries. The program also features craft days and movie days. Although they have raised over \$1,000, they aim to raise \$4,000 for an end-of-year event. Additionally, a free technology camp for ages 11 and up will be provided, with training for library staff to sustain the program.

Mr. Richard Morin on Summer Programs:

Mr. Richard Morin spoke about various summer programs offered by the city in partnership with United Way, which has audited them and approved a full allocation of \$35,000 for next year. The summer program runs from June 3 to August 8, 2024. It includes a summer food nutrition program open to the community from June 3 to July 16, 2024, with MYB donating meals for children afterward. They have partnered with the library and fire department to provide tours for children. The foster grandparent program offers mentoring and tutoring, and the Jr. Staff program teaches job skills. There is a free game room for kids, youth soccer leagues for ages 5-12, a men's basketball league, and co-ed volleyball for adults. They need TASSO officials for adult league officiating.

Mr. Lee Puckett on the Aquatics Program:

Mr. Lee Puckett, the pool manager, provided updates on the aquatics program. The pool has new filtration systems and three new motors, with a total of seven lifeguards for the year. Swimming lessons and pool party bookings will run from June 5 to August 9. They are experimenting with modified hours and considering later pool hours, though there are concerns about lighting for late hours. Mayor Montoya noted that the pool was built in 1980.

7. ORDINANCES/RESOLUTIONS:

a. Approval of first reading of ordinance 2024-04 regarding Recreation center fees

Mr. Richard Morin proposed an increase in the fees for the summer program. The current fee is \$50, and the requested new fee is \$70. Commissioner Martinez motioned to approve the ordinance with the fee increase. Commissioner Garcia seconded. Upon a called vote, the motion passed unanimously.

8. CONSENT AGENDA

a. Approval of Minutes for Meeting(s) held April 16, 2024 and May 7, 2024

b. Approval of items for surplus to be auctioned

Commissioner Martinez motioned to approved both items under consent agenda. Commissioner Garcia seconded. Upon a called vote, the motion passed unanimously.

9. MANAGEMENT ITEMS: *Present, discuss, consider and possibly take action regarding:*

a. Approval to authorize Financial Advisors to go out for CO funds

This item was postponed for the next meeting.

b. Basketsful request for donation

This item was tabled due to no one from Basketsful being present.

c. Request for vehicle from Amigos Del Valle

Mr. Perez stated we need to get with legal to make sure this can be done. Commissioner Martinez stated that at their last meeting amigos del valle from other locations are requesting similar items from the cities the other locations are at. The commission advised to come back with more information.

d. Public hearing regarding solid waste fees

Mayor Montoya opened the public hearing at 7:32 p.m. There were no comments. Mayor Montoya closed the public hearing at 7:34 p.m.

i. Approval of first reading of ordinance 2024-05 regarding the solid waste fees

Mayor Pro-Tem Saldana motioned to approve the first reading of the ordinance and forgo the reading. Commissioner Martinez seconded. Upon a called vote, the motion passed unanimously.

e. Approval of appointment to the Mercedes Historical Preservation Commission.

Ms. Vidales stated they received two applications from Ms. Kristen Gutierrez and Mr. Jordan Reyes-Kennedy. Ms. Kristen N. Gutierrez is an Attorney and Ms. Vidales recommended appointing Ms. Gutierrez for the attorney position on the board and have Mr. Jordan Reyes-Kennedy assist when needed. Commissioner Martinez motioned to approve Ms. Vidales' recommendation. Commissioner Garcia seconded. Upon a called vote, the motion passed unanimously.

10. BIDS/CONTRACTS: *Present, discuss, consider and possibly take action regarding:*

a. Approval of contract with Televon

Mr. Michael Rocha informed the commission about issues with the Police Department's move, which required contacting Televon. While Televon is currently working on the servers, they need additional help with hardware. The proposed amendment will change their monthly retainer from \$7500 to \$4500 and shift their role from maintaining the servers to assisting with hardware maintenance. Commissioner Martinez motioned to approve the amendment, and Commissioner Garcia seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Approval of agreement with North Alamo Water Supply Corporation for Mile 2 E Meadows Subdivision

Mr. Ramirez addressed the commission regarding Mile 2 East Meadows subdivision. It's a subdivision in the City's ETJ with 122 lots. The subdivision will only be provided with sewer services, and water will be supplied by North Alamo Water Supply. The Fire Department will be responsible for the area; therefore, the fire hydrants will be used for filling only. Commissioner Martinez motioned to approve the agreement. Mayor Pro-Tem Saldana seconded. Upon a called vote, the motion passed unanimously.

c. Approval to authorize City Manager to enter into negotiations and execute contract for GIS Mapping Services

Mr. Ramirez stated that the City went out for bids for GIS Mapping and is recommending SAM for the GIS solutions. The city reached out to their references and received positive feedback about their services, noting that SAM's work was on schedule and within budget. Commissioner Martinez inquired if evaluations were conducted for every firm. Mr. Ramirez noted that some engineering firms do GIS work occasionally, while others specialize in it. Two firms primarily focus on GIS. SAM, based in Austin, TX, and other locations, is a national firm specializing in GIS. All firms claim they can handle the work, but SAM performs it daily. Their staff is very knowledgeable and experienced, having completed over 800 GIS projects for water and wastewater. Ms. Erin Allen informed the Commission about SAM's services and showcased one of their projects with another city. She explained how the system works, its capabilities, and how it can help the city save costs by providing detailed reports. Mayor Pro-Tem Saldana motioned to approve. Commissioner Garcia seconded. Upon a called vote, the motion passed unanimously.

d. Approval to authorize City Manager to enter into negotiations and execute contract for Groundwater Availability Study and Supply Well

Mr. Ramirez stated that the City solicited bids for the design and development of a water well and a groundwater availability study. Three engineering firms submitted bids, and two met the criteria: having designed at least three wells and conducted two studies. The firms that met these criteria were Melden & Hunt and Freese and Nichols. Melden & Hunt will subcontract the hydrogeologist, while Freese and Nichols will handle everything in-house. In response to a question, Mr. Ramirez explained that Guzman and Munoz did not meet the criteria listed in the RFQ.

Freese and Nichols was present to answer any questions, noting their experience with a hydraulic study in Pharr. Melden & Hunt, represented by Mike Hernandez, is working on a water development well just east of Mercedes. They provided a brief summary of the cities they have worked with. In response to a question, Mr. Hernandez stated that they collaborate with other firms to secure a hydrogeologist specialist. While they can handle the engineering aspects of well design, the hydrogeologist identifies the best locations for water. Mayor Pro-Tem Saldana motioned to approve. Commissioner Garcia seconded. Upon a called vote, the motion passed unanimously.

e. Approval of agreement with Galindo Auctions

Mayor Pro-Tem Saldana moved to approve the agreement. Commissioner Garcia seconded. Upon a called vote, the motion passed unanimously.

f. Consulting Agreement between the City of Mercedes and Valiant Energy Sources, LLC

Mr. Perez stated that the city currently has a contract until 2028, but they are planning for the future. Valiant aims to assist with addressing the city's lighting issues, including those at the pool and in subdivisions. They are paid by the retail electric provider and offer a turnkey operation. Their services include conducting audits for the city, management, and consulting to help the city save money. Valiant handles PUC taxes, street lighting projects, and the addition of LED lighting. These services are free to the client as they are considered professional services and do not require going through the RFP process. They are compensated 1 Millicent by the light company, not by the city. Commissioner Garcia motioned to approve. Mayor Pro-Tem Saldana seconded. Upon a called vote, the motion passed unanimously.

11. DEPARTMENTAL MONTHLY REPORT

Mayor Pro-Tem Saldana expressed appreciation for the painting of the bridges and noted that the public works report is easier to read. Mr. Perez explained that there is an operational process in place to identify the priority scheme for every work order that comes in. Mayor Montoya inquired about the animal control report. Mr. Perez stated that, in terms of equipment, the animal control department is up to speed. In response to a question, Mr. Perez mentioned that the RC mower is unreliable and will need to be replaced.

Commissioner Martinez motioned to go into executive session. Commissioner Garcia seconded. Upon a called vote, the motion passed unanimously at 8:30 p.m.

12. EXECUTIVE SESSION: *Chapter 551, Texas Government Code, Section 551.071 (Consultation with Attorney), Section 551.072 (Deliberation regarding Real Property), Section 551.074 (Personnel Matters) and Section 551.087 (Economic Development)*

a. Discussion with City Manager regarding personnel matters – Section 551.074

b. Consultation with Attorney regarding update on litigation -Section 551.071

Mayor Montoya called the meeting back to order at 9:56 p.m.

13. OPEN SESSION:

a. Item A from Executive Session
No Action

b. Item B from Executive Session
No Action

c. Item C from Executive Session
No Action

d. Item D from Executive Session

Mayor Pro-Tem Saldana moved to approve the city manager to enter into negotiations. Commissioner Martinez seconded. Upon a called vote, the motion passed unanimously.

e. Item E from Executive Session
No Action

14. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Martinez motioned to adjourn. Commissioner Garcia seconded. Upon a called vote, the motion passed unanimously at 9:58 p.m.