COMMISSION MINUTES
Thursday, February 25, 2021
2:00 p.m.

*Members of the public who wish to speak to the Commission during the meeting must submit a “Request to Speak” form to the Board Secretary prior to the commencement of the public comments for each agenda item of interest. Comments by the public on matters not identified on the agenda, but within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Commission will be heard during the item designated as “Public Comments Period.” The length of public speaking time is two minutes, unless the presiding officer grants some other amount of time.

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Sign Language Interpreters, Communication Access Real-Time Transcription (CART), Assistive Listening Devices, or other auxiliary aids and/or services may be provided upon request. To ensure availability, you are advised to make your request at least 72 hours prior to the meeting you wish to attend. Due to difficulties in securing Sign Language Interpreters, five or more business days notice is strongly recommended. For additional information, please contact: Property Management, (213) 485-9777 – voice and TTY.

Meeting called to order at: 2:01 p.m. by President Louie. Commissioners present: Alarcon, Garcia, Ibarra, Marez, and Thomas. Also present: General Manager Arturo Chavez, Assistant General Manager Edgar Garcia, El Pueblo Staff Ailene Ignacio, El Pueblo Staff Darlene Lopez, and Deputy City Attorney Cheryl Soriano.

1. WELCOMING REMARKS.

Commissioner Louie welcomed those in attendance wishing all a Happy Lunar New Year.

2. ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM.

Commissioners Collado, DiCostanzo, and Samarjian were absent. A quorum was established.

Commissioners Collado and Samarjian joined the meeting at 2:04 PM.

Commissioner Louie moved to continue Agenda Item 6.2 regarding Board Report No. 21-005 related to the adoption of Rules for the Board of El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument Authority Commissioners to a future meeting. Commissioner Garcia seconded. Vote: Louie, Yes; Alarcon, Yes; Collado, Abstained; Garcia, Yes; Ibarra, Yes; Marez, Yes; Samarjian, Yes; Thomas, Yes. The motion carried.

3. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT.

Public Speakers: Valerie Hanley, Emily Martinez, Lisanne Magdaleno Lee.

4. COMMUNITY REPORTS.
4.1 Joe Vidana of Allied Universal Security provided the Commission with a security update. He noted an increase in robberies, burglaries, and assaults in the Downtown Central area. He stated that Allied Universal has increased training for personnel on all shifts. He stated that incidents decreased on site during 2020, but that Allied Universal continues to observe and respond to calls from Olvera Street Merchants. He shared several serious assaults on Allied Universal security officers that required medical attention. He stated that, while LAPD was notified, they were unable to respond to most of these incidents. He stated that Allied Universal security officers continue to maintain their professionalism and social distance while escorting individuals off El Pueblo property. Commissioner Louie, referring to the January Security Report provided by Management inquired if sleeping or loitering on property constituted a penal code violation. Mr. Vidana stated that this was rather a directive put forth by the Department with signage indicating this policy. He continued to share that signage is extremely helpful in these situations and shared that security officers attempt to courteously encourage these individuals to move to Plaza Park. When asked by Commissioner Louie, Mr. Vidana explained that there has been a downturn in LAPD presence on site. He stated that in the past LAPD was quick to respond, but this is no longer the case. He noted that the increase of incidents has involved individuals who are new to the area and shared that he hoped incidents would decrease with the removal of the storage containers on Olivares St. This has not been the case. Commissioner Marez requested that presentations include visual aids in the future and inquired about the possibility of utilizing ambassadors to welcome visitors and monitor the area. Mr. Chavez shared that Pit Stop Bathroom attendants in the Gallery Breezeway Restrooms have been instrumental in keeping the area secure.

4.2 Helen Amelga, Deputy Area Director for Council District 14 introduced herself to the Commission and shared that Councilmember De Leon has brought forward an item regarding El Pueblo with additional action taken by the City Council. The City Council has taken action requesting a report from the City Attorney’s Office addressing additional options regarding tenants and rents due. She hoped that the report would find a middle ground not placing a heavy burden on tenants nor the Department. Commissioner Louie asked if this motion was a result of the report from El Pueblo. She stated this was taken in response to the Councilmember’s continued concerns from discussions with stakeholders and the Department.

4.3 Jen Rivera of the Los Angeles Arial Rapid Transit (LAART) gondola project introduced herself to the Commission next. Commissioner Louie disclosed that he is a consultant for the project and as such would not participate in any discussions. Ms. Rivera shared that she is new to the LAART team and charged with performing community outreach in hopes of finding shared interest. She stated she would be happy to coordinate with Management to arrange a full presentation. She shared with those present that she may be contacted at hello@laart.la or (323) 521-4775. Commissioner Thomas shared with Ms. Rivera that he previously requested an update on the LAART project. He stated that, from his previous experience, timing is important, and deadlines may be missed by the public and stakeholders. He hoped that upon her return she would have updates and deadlines for the Commission. Ms. Rivera agreed that this was important and stated that, while there were no pending deadlines, she would ensure there would be a timeline of important dates for engagement in her future presentation. Commissioner Ibarra requested a brief overview of the project. Ms. Soriano stated that the Department would provide the previous presentation on the project to avoid any violations of the Brown Act. Commissioner Alarcon requested that this presentation be forwarded to the entire Commission.

Public Speakers: Emily Martinez, Valerie Hanley, Gina Rodriguez, Lisanne Magdaleno Lee.

5. GENERAL MANAGERS REPORT.

5.1 Mr. Chavez began his report discussing operations and the 2020-2021 budget. The Department is at sixty-one-point five percent (61.5%) of revenue targets. The majority of revenue has come from
facilities usage due to increased filming rentals. All other areas are below their target. Expense is at twenty-three percent (23%) as the Department is taking expenses on a quarterly basis.

5.2 Mr. Chavez continued to address the work being done on the 2021-2022 budget. At a previous meeting regarding the 2021-2022 budget the Department met a nine-point six percent (9.6%) cut. The Department has ten (10) full-time positions. Nine (9) of these positions were filled, but as of February 2021 three (3) staff members retired. This leaves the Department with only six (6) full time staff positions filled. Mr. Chavez pointed to a “double freeze” regarding both a City-wide hiring freeze and a freeze on Systematic Investment Plan (SIP) retirements. The Department is working to see some of these positions unfrozen for the next budget year. The Department has six (6) full-time staff and six (6) part-time staff active. The Department will continue updating the Commission as budget discussions continue.

5.3 El Pueblo saw a total of one hundred and ninety (190) incidents in January with the majority involving unhoused individuals. The types of incidents with the most occurrences were loitering and sleeping on site, panhandling, and trespassing. Security Incidents for the month of February were at one hundred and forty-one (141) with only three (3) calls to LAPD. Mr. Chavez noted that in January 2020 there were two hundred and thirty-six (236) reported incidents. The reports received by the Department indicate a decrease in activity compared to the previous year.

5.4 Mr. Chavez gave a brief update on the status of the Commission’s action regarding a Merchant rent waiver. He stated that the discussion is continuing with all parties with a meeting scheduled for the coming week. He hoped for a resolution in the coming weeks.

5.5 Mr. Chavez shared with the Commission that the Department received the Haynes Grant for the Burnett C. Turner Architectural Collection. Mr. Garcia presented an update on the 5-Year Strategic Plan to the Commission. The previous plan spanned 2016 to 2020. The document was approved on February 11, 2016 with three (3) of the current Commissioners present for that work. He shared that their institutional knowledge will be helpful moving forward with the creation of a new strategic plan. He read the El Pueblo mission statement aloud: “El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument promotes, safeguards, and preserves the City’s birthplace and culturally diverse heritage through the effective management of its commercial and historical resources events.” He went on to share the vision statement outlined in the previous strategic plan as well: “El Pueblo will be recognized as an iconic destination in Los Angeles and regarded internationally as a top tier historical site that supports local culture and inspires repeat visitation.” The previous 5-Year Strategic Plan outlined five (5) themes with a total of sixty-three (63) separate objectives. Mr. Garcia utilized a color-coded system to review the previously outlined objectives. Blue represented pending items that have been put on hold due to the Pandemic. Green were objectives actively being addressed. Red represented items that were completed. Finally, yellow were items that have become infeasible. Mr. Garcia pointed to a few key examples moving through the 5-Year Plan. One objective he highlighted was to promote El Pueblo as a premiere filming destination. He stated he was proud of the amount of filming occurring on site. Mr. Garcia stated that the work completed by previous Management in the acquisition of Los Angeles County owned property in Parking Lot #2 was instrumental in the development occurring north of El Pueblo today. He continued through the list noting various items that were pending and infeasible. Twenty-five percent (25%) of the objectives were completed with thirty-five percent (35%) still active. Nine percent (9%) of the objectives outlined were no longer feasible. He explored the possibility of extending the plan for one year and considering 2020 a lost year due to the impact of the Pandemic. Ms. Soriano suggested that no discussion take place to avoid any violation of the Brown Act. Commissioner Louie requested that this be agendized for a future meeting with a formal presentation.

Public Speakers: Emily Martinez.
6. ACTION ITEMS.

6.1 Commissioner Louie shared that Commissioner Collado was experiencing connection issues and unable to activate her camera. Commissioner Collado moved to approve the Commission virtual meeting minutes of January 28, 2020. Commissioner Thomas seconded. Commissioner Louie stated that the minutes had downplayed the spirited discussion at the meeting, but shared he was comfortable approving them despite that.

Public Speakers: Lisanne Magdaleno Lee.

Vote: Louie, Yes; Alarcon, Yes; Collado, Yes; Garcia, Yes; Ibarra, Yes; Marez, Yes; Samarjian, Yes; Thomas, Yes. The motion carried.

7. NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL COMMENTS. None.

8. COMMISSION BUSINESS.

Commissioner Thomas shared with the Commission and Management that he had taken time to visit El Pueblo and look at the landscaping and trees on site. Commissioner Thomas shared he would like to make recommendations based on Commissioner Louie’s passionate request that Commissioners bring their unique skills and passions to their role on the Commission. Commissioner Thomas shared that he is a certified arborist with decades of experience. He requested staff assistance to provide a background presentation for the historically and culturally significant trees at El Pueblo. He requested time on a future agenda to make this presentation. A request was also made for a formal presentation on the 5-Year Strategic Plan report.

Public Speakers: Emily Martinez, Lisanne Magdaleno Lee, Gina Rodriguez.

10. ADJOURNMENT.

Commissioner Marez motioned to adjourn in memory of Chief Ernest “Ernie” Perez Teutimez Salas of the Gabrieleno Band of Mission Indians Kizh Nation who passed within a week of his wife Virginia Salas. Commissioner Marez shared words that Chief Salas told his son, “when you’re asked who we are, tell them this: We are the living descendants of those natives who once inhabited the vast area of the Los Angeles Basin.” Commissioner Garcia seconded the motion. Vote: Louie, Yes; Alarcon, Yes; Collado, Yes; Garcia, Yes; Ibarra, Yes; Marez, Yes; Samarjian, Yes; Thomas, Yes. The meeting adjourned at 3:36 p.m.