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COMMISSION MINUTES

Thursday, April 8, 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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Meeting called to order at: 2:05 PM by President **Louie**. Commissioners present: **Ibarra, Marez**. 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 and stated the meeting would move forward despite fewer than five (5) Commissioners being present.

2. ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM.

Commissioners Alarcon, DiCostanzo, Garcia, Marez, Samarjian, and Thomas were absent. A quorum was not established.

3. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT.

Public Speakers: Lisanne Magdaleno Lee, Edward Flores, Greg Berber, Valerie Hanley.

Commissioner **Garcia** joined the meeting at 2:08 PM.

Commissioner Louie shared with Ms. Hanley that he and Management met with LAPD in the previous forty-eight (48) hours. He noted that LAPD was aware of illegal vending and were willing to come to El Pueblo and remove the vendors.

4. COMMUNITY REPORTS.

Valerie Hanley shared that Olvera Street Merchant Association Foundation (OSMAF) reached out to the Archdiocese of Los Angeles regarding the cancellation of the Blessing of the Animals event. She confirmed that OSMAF would be placed on the Archdiocese's schedule for the 2022 event. OSMAF is looking toward October and the annual Dia De Los Muertos event at El Pueblo. She noted they would be reaching out to El Pueblo staff to determine what events may take place. She shared that she understood El Pueblo's museums may open in the near future and hoped that this would bring more visitors. Ms. Hanley stated that weekends have been better for Merchants. She noted that restaurant spaces are doing better than retail spaces. She concluded that the Neighborhood Council would meet in two (2) weeks where grievances would be heard. She shared for those interested that the meeting date is still being finalized, but that it would be listed on the EmpowerLA calendar.

Commissioner **Thomas** joined the meeting at 2:15 PM.

5. GENERAL MANAGERS REPORT.

Mr. Chavez began his report discussing operations and the 2020-2021 budget. He noted that a full operations report would not be completed until April 10, 2021. He stated the Department is at sixty-eight percent (68%) of expected revenue. He noted that the majority of revenue has come from Facilities usage for events and filming. The next major event occurring on-site would be Oscar's space rental, utilizing the South Plaza, Sanchez Street, portions of the Kiosko, Placita Dolores, and Plaza Park. He shared a more in-depth report would be provided for the next meeting. Mr. Chavez stated that the weekends have seen about fifty (50) puestos open for business with Our Lady Queen of Angels Catholic Church active. Mr. Chavez noted that LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes opened that day with plans to be fully operational by April 15, 2021. Commissioner Louie inquired how the change the Orange tier would impact El Pueblo's museums. Mr. Chavez confirmed that museums may reopen at fifty percent (50%) indoor capacity and that the Department is currently performing inventory check and preparing for reopening and discussion with on-site Partners. He noted that El Pueblo would need to hire more Museum Guides to be fully operational. He stated there is no set date for museum reopening at this time. Commissioner Louie inquired about two large restaurants on Olvera Street, El Paseo and La Golondrina. Mr. Chavez stated El Paseo is currently preparing for reopening, but had not received word on La Golondrina.

Mr. Chavez gave a security report. Allied Universal Security has been contending with an increasing number of incidents. The majority of incidents reported involved trespassing and panhandling. With an increase of visitors on site there have been more reports of disturbing the peace. Mr. Chavez confirmed Commissioner Louie's earlier comments on a meeting with LAPD. He noted that Commissioner Louie, the Department, Allied Universal Security representatives, met with Senior Lead Officers from LAPD to discuss the ongoing security concerns at El Pueblo. The Department has added an additional Allied Security Officer from 12 PM to 8 PM on weekends. The Department will have regular meetings with LAPD, expanding to include representatives from LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes and Our Lady Queen of Angels Catholic Church. The Department also met with the Mayor's Office to discuss the need for increased LAPD presence on site. Mr. Chavez noted that the only LAPD foot patrols still active in the Division are in Chinatown and Little Tokyo given the recent violence against the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. He noted that El Pueblo posted a statement in solidarity with the AAPI community condemning the ongoing violence. Mr. Chavez shared that the Department is continuing to push LAPD with the understanding that there are limited resources available. Commissioner Louie shared that LAPD stated that based on crimes reported, El Pueblo appears to be one of the safest places in the City. He noted that under reporting of crimes is an ongoing problem for El Pueblo. Commissioner Louie said LAPD requested security incident reports from El Pueblo to help demonstrate the need for additional deployment. At the meeting, LAPD expressed concern for security's circulation on site. Bicycle patrols and timed area scans were both discussed and deemed possible by

Allied Security to assure circulation of security officers. Commissioner Louie thanked Mr. Chavez for his efforts in arranging the meeting. Mr. Chavez hoped the meetings would keep clear communication between El Pueblo and LAPD.

Mr. Chavez noted that Commissioner Marez shared he did not have a secure connection to attend the meeting.

Mr. Chavez stated the Department has had several meetings with the Mayor's Office and City Council District 14 (CD14) representatives to discuss the Merchant rent waiver. The waiver is still on the table, but both the Mayor's office and CD14 are aware of the unanimous recommendation from the Commission to waive Merchant rent from January 2021 to June of 2021. He hoped to see a resolution soon. When asked by Commissioner Louie for additional steps Commissioners could take to expedite the waiver, Mr. Chavez suggested Commissioners contact the City Councilmember directly. Any motion on this item would have to be a Council action. Mr. Chavez noted that CD14 has been very busy, but emphasized this was an important issue to address.

Mr. Chavez noted that the Department hoped representatives from the Department of Water and Power (DWP) would be able to attend the meeting to share an update on the future El Pueblo water museum. Unfortunately, DWP representatives were unable to attend. In lieu of a full presentation from DWP, Mr. Garcia provided a brief overview of the project. Mr. Garcia noted that Commissioners who have been with El Pueblo for a few years would recall ongoing discussions for a water exhibit on site. The Zanja Madre, or "Mother Ditch", runs through El Pueblo and the earliest water works in Los Angeles were on site in the mid-1800s. A previous water exhibit showcasing an exposed section of the Zanja Madre at the Avila Adobe museum was closed due to lack of ADA accessibility. During planning for the canopy protecting the América Tropical mural on site, another section of the Zanja Madre was discovered. The space below the mural has been vacant for over ten (10) years. A decision was made by previous Management to allow DWP to utilize the space for a new Water and Power museum. Mr. Garcia shared that the DWP staff working on the project are extremely dedicated to providing a top-quality museum experience that fulfills the Master Plan's goals of integrating education and commercial spaces on site. Working in partnership with the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles, the ADA accessible space allows visitors to see an exposed portion of the Zanja Madre, a history of the Los Angeles aqueduct and figures involved, interactive exhibits for children and adults, and water tastings. They are hoping to begin construction Winter 2021 with an expected opening in Fall or Winter of 2022. Mr. Garcia stated DWP has a full staff working on the project, meeting weekly with the Department for project updates. He was unable to speak to the funding for the project, but assured Commissioners that DWP would provide a full presentation to the Commission.

Public Speakers: Valerie Hanley, Public Speaker 1.

Commissioner Louie stated that he hoped the Department would be working with on-site non-profit partners and the Merchants to see how the Oscars presence may benefit the site.

6. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS.

6.1 As a quorum was not present, Commissioner Louie continued the approval of the El Pueblo Commission Meeting Minutes of March 11, 2021 to a subsequent meeting.

7. NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL COMMENTS. None.

8. COMMISSION BUSINESS.

Commissioner Louie noted that the Department was in the process of developing a motion based on Commissioner Thomas' previous request regarding trees on site. Mr. Chavez noted that this should be prepared before the next meeting and Commissioner Thomas to contact the Department if he had anything to add to the motion.

Commissioner Louie requested, on behalf of Commissioner Marez, to hold a discussion about the Mexican Cultural Institute with Management.

Commissioner Louie noted that he would like to bring a recent Los Angeles Times article regarding the Chinese Massacre of 1871 for discussion before the Commission. Ms. Soriano clarified that she would like to schedule a meeting with Management to determine how to properly place the item on the agenda. Commissioner Louie emphasized that it was critical to address the institutionalized racism that has been expressed through violence both historically and currently.

Mr. Chavez confirmed for Commissioner Louie that discussion would be brought forth regarding the Bridge Housing located at Lot #5 on site.

Finally, Commissioner Louie noted that his previous request for a certificate of appreciation for former Commissioner Gerlie Collado may have to be delayed given the pandemic restrictions impact on the City.

Public Speakers: Lianne Magdaleno Lee, Public Speaker 1.

Ms. Soriano clarified that requests for documents could be noted both directly to the Department and during Commission Public Comments.

10. ADJOURNMENT.

Commissioner Louie adjourned the meeting at 3:04 PM.