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CALIFORNIA



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EL PUEBLO DE LOS ANGELES HISTORICAL MONUMENT

ARTURO CHAVEZ
General Manager

125 PASEO DE LA PLAZA, SUITE 300
LOS ANGELES, CA 90012

TEL: (213) 485-6855
TDD: (213) 473-5535
FAX: (213) 485-8238

COMMISSION MINUTES **Thursday, April 22, 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: 2:03 PM by President **Louie**. Commissioners present: **Alarcon, Ibarra, Marez, Núñez, Samarjian, Thomas**. Also present: General Manager Arturo Chavez, El Pueblo Staff Darlene Lopez, and Deputy City Attorney Cheryl Soriano.

1. WELCOMING REMARKS.

Commissioner Louie began the meeting in memory of George Floyd. He said acts of hate have no place in America. He commended the jury for weighing the evidence and arriving at a just verdict. Commissioner Louie said it was critical that, as a nation, we remember the name of George Floyd and march forward towards true justice. The Commission is ready to work with elected officials, stakeholder organizations, and local leaders to prevent further acts of ignorance, hate, and injustice in order to build a more perfect union. He asked those in attendance to join him in a moment of silence to recognize and celebrate justice, peace, and Mr. Floyd.

Commissioner Louie shared that Commissioner Sal DiCostanzo has been promoted and will be leaving the Commission. Commissioner DiCostanzo has been an active member of the Commission for seven (7) years and has taken part in some of the most challenging decisions they have faced. He thanked Commissioner DiCostanzo for his service to the community on behalf of the Commission and the City.

Commissioner Louie introduced the newest member of the Commission: Irma Beserra Núñez. Commissioner Núñez has been a renaissance woman for the City of Los Angeles, serving as an advocate, organizer, and historian. He warmly welcomed her aboard. Commissioner Núñez said that it is an honor, she thanked the Mayor for his belief in her and his work. She worked with Mayor Garcetti and General Manager Arturo Chavez while she taught at the Glassell Park Senior Center before they would work together again to advocate for senior education. They compiled a multiethnic coalition to save adult education. She was appointed in 2014 to Commission on Community and Family Services and in 2016, to the Human Relations Commission. She shared her work alongside Abigail Marquez and

Capri Maddox. She thanked Francisco Ortega for his guidance on all her Commissions. She was elected Second and then First Vice President of the Human Relations Commission. She worked with her fellow Commissioners to address hate crimes against Latinos with the Mexican Consulate and the Los Angeles Mission College. She worked with her fellow Commissioners to address hate crimes against the Asian American community, hate crimes against the Black community, and critical immigration issues. She shared that her mother instilled in her the knowledge that her family has lived in California for over two-hundred and fifty (250) years. The entire South-Western portion of the United States was part of Mexico and residents lost their land due to Mexican opposition to slavery. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo promised an establishment of bilingual education and government agencies and that Mexican citizens would keep their land and become full citizens of the United States. However, Mexican residents were all treated as illegal aliens. As a cultural arts educator she taught multicultural dance history. She spoke to the power of the arts to teach people to be proud of who they are and celebrate the diversity of the community. Commissioner Núñez shared her personal and well-documented family history. She said it is important to understand that Mexican Americans are a multi-ethnic culture that is predominantly indigenous. She took part in the first bilingual, bicultural Chicano teaching project at California State University, Los Angeles. She feels this appointment has brought her full circle and is excited to utilize all her skills to support El Pueblo, the Merchants, the Partners, and the Community.

2. ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM.

Commissioner Garcia was absent. A quorum was established.

3. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT.

Public Speakers: Lisanne Magdaleno Lee, Emily Martinez.

4. COMMUNITY REPORTS. None.

5. GENERAL MANAGERS REPORT.

Mr. Chavez began his report discussing operations and the 2020-2021 budget. The Academy Awards is being held at Union Station and large portions of El Pueblo has been booked as additional space for production. Over the previous weekend, the Academy Awards teamed with Shared Harvest, City Council District 14 (CD14) and El Pueblo to host a vaccination clinic at Placita Dolores. The event was a well-organized success. Shared Harvest's team of doctors and community organizers are all people of color seeking equity at vaccination sites. The Clinic staff was attentive during the observation period with live musicians, snacks, and gift bags for those in attendance. The queue went from Placita Dolores wrapping all the way around the Pico House. The majority of Merchants are open. The large restaurants on the street are working toward reopening. The Mayor's Office of Economic Development's LA Optimized program has partnered with the Olvera Street Merchants Association Foundation (OSMAF) to improve their website and boost business. The Mayor is scheduled to visit Olvera Street on Friday, April 23, 2021. The website is promoting "S.E.E. Olvera Street." S.E.E. standing for Shop, Eat, and Explore. He stated there has been no change on the 2021 Budget, but a full report would be available for the next meeting. Department Budget hearings are being held now. El Pueblo lost one (1) full time position in the new budget, but were granted additional marketing funds. The Department may rehire two (2) of the full-time positions lost in Accounting and Property Management. Additional funding for the creation of a General Plan was rejected.

Los Angeles remains in the Orange Tier of Covid19 restrictions. The History Division has begun work on reopening the museums. However, the Department has lost ten (10) Museum Guides, leaving only

twelve (12) remaining. Management is in discussion on hiring more Museum Guides. The initial reopening plan accounts for two (2) museums, the Avila Adobe and Plaza Firehouse, to be opened in late May. Events are still not permitted on site, but the Department has received many inquiries. Cinco de Mayo is usually a large event on site, but restrictions do not allow for gatherings at this time. Commissioner Louie clarifies if the Chinese American Museum and the Italian American Museum of Los Angeles and América Tropical Interpretive Center cannot open due to lack of Museum Guides. Mr. Chavez stated that his understanding is that the Chinese American Museum is not interested in reopening at this time. The Italian American Museum of Los Angeles is willing to reopen, but there is a lack of Museum Guides to staff the museums. Management is actively discussing hiring additional Museum Guides with the City.

The Department is continuing discussions with CD14 and the Mayor's Office regarding the Merchant rent waiver. There has been no action from the Council at this point. There has been positive consideration by CD14, and it appears that there will be an immediate action taken in the near future.

City Council did introduce a motion to change the ordinance regarding the Olvera Street Merchants Advisory Committee (OSMAC) to remove inactive business designations in favor of designations by business size. It also called to remove the mention of the Friends of the Pueblo Committee as other groups serve similar purposes. The Department plans on seating the committee with the understanding that the official ordinance change will take some time.

Mr. Chavez previously reported that the Department met with LAPD and Allied Universal Security. Agreements were reached regarding sharing of information between the organizations. A request was made for increased LAPD presence at the Monument. Mr. Chavez met with Sgt. Michael Flanagan who oversees the Senior Lead Officers. Sgt. Flanagan confirmed that the only foot beats currently active are in Chinatown and Little Tokyo. Chinese American Museum Executive Director Michael Truong has requested additional security for the museum and Sgt. Flanagan indicated that he would have a foot patrol pass through to El Pueblo. Additionally, the Department was able to secure an additional Allied Universal security guard over the weekend. Over the previous weekend an incident occurred where an individual with a shovel broke windows along Main Street. This individual broke into Chiguacle and stole the cash register from the business. Reports of the incident were made to LAPD. Commissioner Louie inquired about previous discussion of bicycle patrols and an improved circulation strategy. Mr. Chavez stated that Allied Security will be implementing a new circulation technique indicating when security officers have been to each station. Mr. Chavez hoped to have a full report on this program at the next meeting.

Mr. Chavez continued to provide an update on the report from March 11, 2021 on the status of the trees at El Pueblo. Commissioner Thomas made five (5) recommendations in his report. These included: (1) to replace the dead Moreton Bay Fig tree with a Coastal Live Oak; (2) plant or fill all empty tree wells; (3) trim all Ficus trees on the site as needed; (4) remove and replace dead Pepper trees on Main Street; and (5) request an assessment from a Tree Risk Assessment Qualification (TRAQ) certified arborist. The Department will take this on and create a full report taking into consideration a previous report created under former General Manager Chris Espinosa.

Finally, Mr. Chavez provided a status update on the Bridge Housing. The Department has been meeting regularly with the Mayor's Office and CD14. The Mayor's Office will present on this topic during a May Commission meeting. The Bridge Housing is one of the first of its kind in the City of Los Angeles, occupying El Pueblo Lot #5. It was slated as a three (3) year program.

Commissioner Núñez inquired if the Department had considered digital programming for Cinco de Mayo. Mr. Chavez shared that the Department has hosted digital programming during the pandemic. Cinco de

Mayo is not traditionally an event presented by the Department, but rather the space is contracted out. Commissioner Núñez suggested partnering with another organization to promote their event. She also suggested working with the non-profit TreePeople for resources with trees on site. Finally, she inquired if the Mayor's Office presentation would discuss the LeaseUp program and Bill AB-71: the Bring California Home Act. She recommended having these on a future agenda.

Commissioner **Samarjian** left the meeting at 2:42 PM.

Commissioner Thomas recommended that the Department reach out to Rachel Malarich, the City's new and first City Forestry Officer. He shared that part of her role is to bring Departments together and he noted she might be a good resource to El Pueblo.

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

6. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS.

6.1 Commissioner Louie took the approval of the meeting minutes of March 11, 2021 and April 8, 2021 separately.

Commissioner Marez moved to approve the minutes of March 11, 2021. Commissioner Núñez seconded.

Public Speakers: None.

Vote: Louie, Yes; Alarcon, Yes; Ibarra, Yes; Marez, Yes; Núñez, Yes; Thomas, Yes. The motion carried.

Commissioner Núñez moved to approve the minutes of April 8, 2021. Commissioner Alarcon seconded.

Public Speakers: None.

Vote: Louie, Yes; Alarcon, Yes; Ibarra, Yes; Marez, Yes; Núñez, Yes; Thomas, Yes. The motion carried.

6.2 Commissioner Louie introduced discussion of the Mayor's Office Civic Memory Working Group Report and the creation of a memorial at El Pueblo Historical Monument for the victims of the Los Angeles Anti-Chinese Massacre of 1871. Commissioner Louie invited the chair of the Civic Memory Working Group, Christopher Hawthorn, to present briefly on the report to the Commission. Mr. Hawthorn is the Chief Design Officer for the City of Los Angeles. Mr. Hawthorn thanked Commissioner Louie for the invitation. He shared how much he appreciated Commissioner Núñez's words on the importance and complexity of history. The group was brought together to connect with the national conversation about commemoration and controversial monuments and memorials. The group wanted to organize discussions particularly connected to the history of Los Angeles. Los Angeles is a city that has long thought of itself as the City of the Future, the headquarters of the Hollywood dream factory, and depended on a certain amount of boosterism and civic identity. He stated that Los Angeles, like many other places, has pushed aside difficult narratives of history. The group brought together historians, tribal elders and leaders, designers, community leaders, and City government to meet and create a report with eighteen (18) key recommendations and roundtable discussions. All of that material can be seen at civictimemory.la. He encouraged those listening to look there for the report in its entirety. He stressed that the group studied similar models in other cities and the most important conclusion they came away with was that any recommendations for memorials needed to be proceeded with community discussions on those issues. The Group's top recommendation was to take the report out to various communities across the City seeking guidance and input. The recommendations are meant to be a first

step in a productive and ongoing dialogue engaging with the difficult moments in our history as well as celebrating the triumphant ones. Commissioner Louie stated that in reading the report it seemed many of the recommendations seemed aimed at El Pueblo as the birthplace of Los Angeles, home to Father Serra Park, ongoing relations with the Indigenous peoples of the area. He noted the recommendation for the City to have a City Historian as a curator of the history of Los Angeles and a City of Los Angeles Museum. He also noted the recommendation for a monument to the Anti-Chinese Massacre of 1871. Commissioner Núñez congratulated the Mayor for building this Group and the Group on the work completed. She offered her support and input moving forward. She expressed concern about the celebration of our culture, but the shying away from the struggles, atrocities that have been endured, and the powerful individuals who have risen above them with hope and faith. Commissioner Louie introduced former City Councilman Mike Woo to speak to the specific recommendation for a memorial to the Anti-Chinese Massacre of 1871. Former City Councilman Woo is also an educator and a well-recognized individual in the City of Los Angeles and amongst the Chinese American community. Former Councilman Woo thanked the Commission for having him. He was born and raised in Los Angeles, but he, like many other Asian Americans, was never aware of the Massacre that took place in 1871. He said it was not discussed perhaps out of the hope of preventing further anti-Asian violence. In 2012, the LA Times Book Editor asked him to write a review of a new book about the Massacre which opened his eyes and mind to the horrific mob killings that happened near El Pueblo. He fast forwarded to the recent resurgence of anti-Asian violence in 2020 and 2021. A number of articles appeared in March of 2021 discussing the Massacre and he realized that October 24, 2021 will mark the one-hundred and fiftieth (150) anniversary of the atrocity. Further, he said it is time to properly memorialize the Massacre in a way that would have an impact. In his opinion, a successful memorial needs to be highly visible, highly accessible, and secure from vandalism. He was pleased to see recommendation seventeen (17) in the Civic Memory Working Group's report pertaining to commemorations and a memorial to the Anti-Chinese Massacre of 1871. Mayor Garcetti gave his support to the creation of a memorial in his State of the City Address. In the last few weeks, former Councilman Woo has been in discussions with Mr. Hawthorn to propose ideas and participate in their implementation. He has also reached out to Supervisor Solis and LA Metro to discuss possible physical memorials. He believes there will be widespread support for this and stated a Commission vote endorsing participation in the creation of a City memorial to the Anti-Chinese Massacre of 1871 would be most welcome. Commissioner Marez thanked both speakers for their presentations and said he looks forward to working with them moving forward. Finally, Commissioner Louie welcomed Gay Yuen, President of the Board of Directors for the Friends of the Chinese American Museum. Ms. Yuen was invited to share the work the Chinese American Museum has done for years. Ms. Yuen thanked the Commission for the opportunity to speak and extended a kind invitation to Commissioner Núñez for tea to discuss their shared experience as bilingual educators. She discussed the Anti-Chinese Massacre of 1871 that occurred on the doorsteps of the Chinese American Museum. She noted that for many years the incident was "M.I.H." (Missing In History). She congratulated the committee for the development of their inclusive report. Ms. Yuen shared a personal story about Commissioner Louie. In 2009, Commissioner Louie visited the site as a new Commissioner with his son and silently commemorated and paid their respects to the victims of the Massacre. The next year Commissioner Louie did the same with more participants. The third year this occurred El Pueblo partnered with the Chinese American Museum to hold a real commemoration of the incident. From that day on the Chinese American Museum and El Pueblo have partnered to commemorate October 24th with the laying of wreaths and reading the names of those who were murdered ensuring they are not forgotten. When she saw the emphasis the Report laid on 1781, she was moved and pledged support in any project or monument the committee wishes to move forward on. Ms. Yuen shared that 2021 is the one-hundred and fiftieth (150th) anniversary of the Massacre. The Chinese American Museum has been preparing for over two (2) years for this event. 2020 saw the commemoration as a digital event with over two hundred (200) people in attendance. This year the plan is to make the commemoration unforgettable. It will be an entire week of programming including panels, discussions, a stage-play, a symphony, and films interpreted in terms of the current Anti-Asian violence

and hate. To make their work lasting, Ms. Yuen has reached out to the Public Broadcasting Service to create lesson plans and teacher training material that include the Anti-Chinese Massacre of 1871. For two and a half (2.5) to three (3) years they have set aside a portion of the gravel lot near the Garnier Block to be a memorial garden to the victims of the Massacre. She emphasized that this plan does not negate the creation of other monuments. Commissioner Núñez thanked Ms. Yuen for her work and reminisced about shared friends and mentors. She praised Ms. Yuen's work on the creation of a model for teaching the struggles and celebrations of different cultures. She noted that education is the key to opening people's hearts and minds.

Commissioner **Samarjian** returned to the meeting at 3:18 PM.

Commissioner Louie motioned to have the Commission instruct the Department to draft a motion directed to the City Council to support the recommendation of a monument to the 1871 Massacre asking the Council to proceed with all haste to bring about that memorial. Commissioner Marez seconds.

Public Speakers: Emily Martinez, Lisanne Magdaleno Lee.

Vote: Louie, Yes; Alarcon, Yes; Ibarra, Yes; Marez, Yes; Núñez, Yes; Samarjian, Yes; Thomas, Yes. The motion carries.

7. NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL COMMENTS. None.

8. COMMISSION BUSINESS.

Commissioner Marez requested a detailed presentation on reopening with pictures and a walkthrough of El Pueblo. Commissioner Louie clarifies this request for an outline of the strategy and reactivation of El Pueblo as a whole. Mr. Chavez reminded the Commission that Olvera Street is open. He noted that Chanel 35 came to El Pueblo and produced an entire video promoting that Olvera Street is open. He confirmed he would present detailed information at the next meeting.

Commissioner Núñez agreed with Commissioner Marez. She also requested further information on El Pueblo's implementation of the CDC's guidelines and enforcement. She continued to recommend the addition of the LeaseUp program and AB-71 as homelessness is a huge issue for the Monument. Finally, she requested the Department plan for extensive educational programming and celebrations for Hispanic Heritage Month and offered her support and participation. Commissioner Louie assured her that she does not have to wait until a Commission meeting to reach out to Mr. Chavez.

Commissioner Samarjian requested an overview of how safety precautions will be communicated to the public to maintain safety as occupancy rates expand.

Commissioner Louie addressed previous discussions regarding the creation of a strategic plan. He noted that Management is open to convening that discussion.

Commissioner Marez thanked Commissioner DiCostanzo for his friendship and dedication to the Commission. He noted that Commissioner DiCostanzo was instrumental in the creation of the previous strategic plan and said he would leave a mark on any moving forward. He welcomed Commissioner Núñez to the Commission. Commissioner Núñez thanked everyone for their welcome.

Commissioner Thomas reiterated his request for an update on the Gondola project. He noted that an outreach team was in Solano Canyon over the weekend. Mr. Chavez noted that a presentation is planned for the final meeting in May. Commissioner Louie notes that he will not participate as he is a

consultant to the group.

Public Speakers: Edward Flores, Lisanne Magdaleno Lee.

10. ADJOURNMENT.

Commissioner Núñez moved to adjourn. Commissioner Samarjian seconded.

Vote: Louie, Yes; Alarcon, Yes; Ibarra, Yes; Marez, Yes; Núñez, Yes; Samarjian, Yes; Thomas, Yes.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:49 PM.