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HISTORICAL MONUMENT**

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COMMISSION MINUTES

Thursday, May 13, 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: 2:02 PM by President **Louie**. Commissioners present: **Alarcon, Garcia, Marez, Núñez**. Also present: General Manager Arturo Chavez, Assistant General Manager Edgar Garcia, El Pueblo Staff Ailene Ignacio, El Pueblo Staff Michelle Garcia-Ortiz, El Pueblo Staff Emily Wooten, and Deputy City Attorney Cheryl Soriano.

1. WELCOMING REMARKS

Commissioner Louie welcomed those in attendance.

2. ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM

Commissioners Ibarra, Samarjian, and Thomas were absent. A quorum was established.

6. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS. (Taken out of order)

6.1 Commissioner Marez motioned to approve the El Pueblo Commission Meeting Minutes of April 22, 2021. Commissioner Núñez seconded.

Public Speakers: None.

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

Commissioner **Thomas** joined the meeting at 2:06 PM.

6.2 Commissioner Thomas and Mr. Chavez were experiencing technical difficulties. Ms. Soriano suggested moving forward with General Public Comment before returning to Discussion and Possible Action Items.

3. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

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

6. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS (Continued)

6.2 Mr. Chavez introduced discussion on the report given by Commissioner Thomas on March 11, 2021. The Department's report had not been completed, but was anticipated to be complete for the next Commission meeting. Commissioner Thomas expressed that as a person who works with trees, he looks for the long term solutions. He noted that he had not been able to connect Mr. Chavez with Rachel Malarich, the City Forestry Officer. Commissioner Thomas said he would make that introduction that day.

6.3 Mr. Chavez moved on to present discussion related to the release of a request for proposals to identify a non-profit to provide programming at El Pueblo that promotes Mexican culture, art, and history. He noted that one thing that an institute or non-profit does is to push out more information on Mexican culture and arts, which has been absent from El Pueblo. In the past, there was an organization on site linked to the Mexican Consulate providing services to the public on site. Discussion has been held with Commissioners Marez and Louie to try to move forward with finding a group to provide these services for the Pueblo at large. The Department along with the City Attorney put together a request for proposals. Commissioner Marez noted that LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes is a Los Angeles County run facility and that there are museums on site dedicated to the Chinese American and Italian American experiences, but that there was none dedicated to the Mexican American experience. There have been events and art exhibits in the past and he hoped that moving forward these would expand. Commissioner Louie shared that from his understanding LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes focuses on Chicano history and background in the history of Los Angeles. He asked Commissioner Alarcon to expand on the nuances between the Chicano and Mexican experience. Commissioner Alarcon noted it is important to honor the founding of the City of Los Angeles and felt this would be a good start in bringing education and history to the already amazing cultural events sponsored by the Merchants. She noted this would have an impact on generations and visitors from around the world. Mr. Garcia shared that LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes has a section dedicated to 18th and 19th Century history with artifacts on loan from El Pueblo. He shared with Commission that he reminds Staff that visitors to El Pueblo do not see the site with the same eyes. To visitors, he said, there is no distinction between County and City. He said it is his intention as Assistant General Manager to further integrate LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes into the cultural institutions at El Pueblo. Mr. Garcia also stated that, when the Avila Adobe reopens, it is his intention to treat the non-historic sections of the Adobe as a Visitors Center encouraging visitors to the other museums on site. Commissioner Marez echoed Mr. Garcia's hopes to expand the relationship between El Pueblo and LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes. Commissioner Núñez agreed that there is a need for a Mexican Cultural Center at Olvera Street. She complimented the Partners on site who create curriculum to further the understanding of the complexities of Los Angeles' history and hoped to see a place for teachers to access resources around the history of Mexico in Los Angeles. Mr. Garcia shared that John Echeveste, the Executive Director at LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes has announced his retirement at the end of the calendar year. Mr. Chavez clarified that this discussion was related to identifying a non-profit to provide programming and Mexican Culture on site. He noted that the Commissioners discussed a museum, but that this was not the intention of this item. He expressed concern at the lack of identity, but hoped the efforts of Mr. Garcia to transform parts of the Avila Adobe into a Visitor's Center would help address this issue. The Commissioners thanked Mr. Chavez for the clarification of language on the discussion. Mr. Chavez hoped to start this movement by focusing on a non-profit to help with programming. Addressing a question from Commissioner Núñez, Mr. Chavez noted the elimination of a Curator position at El Pueblo, but explained that there is a History Division at El

Pueblo. Commissioner Louie noted the recommendation by the Civic Memory Working Group for a City of Los Angeles Museum and City Historian. He believes it would be ideal for the City Historian at El Pueblo blending these activities together. Ms. Soriano clarified that the Department is looking for instruction to prepare and present a Request for Proposal (RFP) to be considered at a future Commission meeting. Commissioner Núñez so motioned. Commissioner Alarcon seconded.

Public Speakers: Denise Lugo, Valerie Hanley, Edward Flores, Jose Antonio Aguirre, Rosario Calatayud Serna, Bernardo Feldman, and Emily Martinez.

Ms. Soriano repeated that it was moved to instruct the Department to prepare and present an RFP to the Commission for their consideration at a future meeting date.

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

6.4 Commissioner Louie introduced the discussion on a letter to be written in support for a proposed memorial to the Anti-Chinese Massacre of 1871. Mr. Chavez noted this discussion was held at the previous meeting with several presentations in support of the memorial. This would be a letter informing the City Council and Mayor's Office of the Commission's desire to move forward with establishing a memorial at El Pueblo. Commissioner Louie moved that the Commission instruct the Department to prepare and transmit a letter to the Mayor, City Council, and other related Departments indicating the Commission's support of the creation of a memorial of the Los Angeles Massacre of 1871 at El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historic Monument and urges the Mayor and City Council to immediately begin discussions with related City Departments to bring this memorial to fruition. Commissioner Marez seconded.

Public Speakers: Jim Jang, Valerie Hanley.

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

4. COMMUNITY REPORTS.

Jennifer Rivera of the Los Angeles Aerial Rapid Transit (LA ART) Project was present to provide the Commission with an update on the project. Commissioner Louie reminded the Commission that he is a consultant on the project and would recuse himself from the meeting.

Commissioner **Louie** left the meeting at 3:08 p.m.

Commissioner Alarcon asked Ms. Rivera to proceed with her presentation. Ms. Rivera informed those in attendance of two (2) upcoming community meetings. The first meeting to be held on Thursday, June 3, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.. The second meeting was scheduled for Saturday, June 5, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. Both meetings will be held via Zoom and translated into Spanish, Cantonese, and Mandarin. She said she would share details with Mr. Chavez to be forwarded to the Commissioners as well as updates available on the website. Launched in Fall of 2020, LA ART is a new rapid transportation system proposed from Union Station to Dodgers Stadium. The project announced two (2) proposed alignments called the "Broadway" and "Spring" alignments, following the respective streets. Unlike the "Spring" alignment, the "Broadway" alignment would not move through Los Angeles State Historic Park. She noted they have received many comments from the public on their preferred route and concerns about any possible impact to the park. She noted that individuals in the Chinatown area would like the project to propose a station in or near Chinatown. Finally, they have received comments concerning

accessibility and fare rates. She emphasized that no price has been set and dispelled rumors of high prices. She noted that this will be addressed at the upcoming meetings. She reiterated the meeting dates and shared hopes to present a new design based on the feedback they have already received. Ms. Rivera shared her commitment to communication with the Commission. Commissioner Alarcon asked if there are alternatives available to community members who are unable to attend these meetings. Ms. Rivera stated that invites will go out in a variety of ways. She noted a social media campaign to explain how to register for these events. Those who have already signed up for updates will be sent text messages. LA ART plans on sending out a mailer to the neighboring communities as well. Commissioner Thomas expressed concern about communication based on his previous experience on large scale projects. He hoped that the community and constituents be given ample information and time during the process to provide input. He requested that the Commission be notified of deadlines for comments. Commissioner Thomas also requested that the City Council District 14 (CD14) office provide updates on the LA ART project as a neutral government agency. Ms. Rivera understood Commissioner Thomas' perspective and felt his requests were reasonable. She noted the draft Environmental Impact Report would likely come out in Fall or Winter of 2021. She shared that the community outreach and meetings currently being held are done in the spirit of transparency, are outside of the usual cycle, and are not required. Mr. Chavez noted that Helen Amelga of CD14 was in attendance and heard Commissioner Thomas' requests. Mr. Garcia stated that the Department's understanding is that LA Metro would be the lead government agency for the environmental project. Mr. Chavez clarified that it would be appropriate for the Council office to provide input.

Public Speakers: Emily Martinez, Valerie Hanley.

Commissioner Louie returned to the meeting at 3:30 p.m.

Commissioner Núñez thanked the Commission for allowing her to present on the history of Cinco de Mayo. She hoped to stress the importance of bringing to the public consciousness the true story of Cinco de Mayo reviving the long forgotten civic memory of the event and how it impacted the United States of America. Commissioner Núñez's presentation focused on the relationship between Cinco de Mayo and the United States Civil War, noting that these events were parallel struggles in the fight for equality and social justice. She touched on the Mexican War of Independence. The Sentimientos de la Nación which underscored the Mexican movement abolishing slavery and eliminated racial distinctions between castes with equal justice under the law. She shared that while this reform was taking place in Mexico, President James Polk of the United States was expanding slavery and encroaching on Mexican territories. She said that this, in part, triggered the Texas Revolt against Mexico and led to the United States eventually invading Mexico. The battle, which Commissioner Núñez said was condemned by both Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant, ended with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. The treaty promised that all Mexican citizens in the ceded land would keep their land, that all schools and government agencies would be bilingual, and that all Mexicans who chose to stay would become full citizens of the United States. When the United States Civil War broke out in 1861, Commissioner Núñez shared, a California battalion fought for the Union under the leadership of General Andres Pico. She stated that Mexican citizens now living in the United States were instrumental in defending the resources of the Gold Rush and land in the American South West from the Confederacy. At the same time, Mexico was facing an invasion of French troops. The Battle of Puebla was fought on May 5, 1892, where a small army of Mexicans with inferior weapons defeated the well-armed French Army twice their size. She argued that this victory not only boosted morale for those in Mexico, but also the Californios actively fighting the Confederate Army in the United States. She emphasized the importance of Latino Associations which helped fund both the fight against the French in Mexico and the Union in the Civil War. She shared her personal connections to these events through her family. Commissioner Núñez told of the great respect between President Abraham Lincoln and President Benito Juárez. When the Civil War ended, she explained, the United States was able to begin assisting

Mexico in their continued fight against French invasion and dictatorship. While President Juárez declared Cinco de Mayo as a national holiday, it is more widely celebrated in the United States. The first major Cinco de Mayo festival was held in Los Angeles, and Commissioner Núñez argued that the civic memory of the importance of the event was lost due to the erasure of the Mexican experience and culture in education. She hoped to see the history of Cinco de Mayo be rediscovered and that its ties to the same civil issues still facing us today would be underscored. Commissioner Louie praised her presentation. Commissioner Alarcon thanked her saying her work spoke to the heart and soul of the community. Commissioner Marez echoed Commissioner Alarcon's sentiments.

Commissioner **Garcia** left the meeting at 4:00 p.m.

Helen Amelga of CD14 shared with the Commission that Councilmember De Leon introduced a motion on May 12, 2021 to the Budget and Finance Committee to waive rent for El Pueblo Merchants from January 21, 2021 through June 30, 2021. She will continue to keep the Commission up to date as the motion moves through the committee and the exploration of options moving past June 30, 2021. She noted they hoped for a gradual increase in rent payments to avoid a large impact on Merchants. She shared her email (Helen.Amelga@lacity.org) for anyone interested in contacting her.

Public Speaker: Valerie Hanley, Emily Martinez, Pete Martinez.

5. GENERAL MANAGERS REPORT

Mr. Chavez began his report by acknowledging that May is Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month. He also announced that John Wirfs, the current President of the Cultural Affairs Commission, would be joining the El Pueblo Commission to replace Commissioner DiCostanzo.

Mr. Chavez introduced El Pueblo Staff Ailene Ignacio and El Pueblo Staff Michelle Garcia-Ortiz for a presentation on Gender Equity. Ms. Ignacio shared that Los Angeles became one of the first cities to adopt the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), a human rights treaty that ensures gender equality. As a result of this, Mayor Eric Garcetti developed the Report on the Status of Women and Girls in partnership with Mt. St. Mary's College and the Commission the Status of Women, the first of its kind comprehensive study detailing the data on the specific manifestations on Gender Inequality in the City. Mayor Eric Garcetti signed Executive Directive 11 forming the City's Gender Equity Coalition. Departments were called to create gender equity action plans and assign gender equity liaisons to participate in the coalition. She noted many of the achievements that followed this directive. Next, Ms. Ignacio explored El Pueblo's Gender Equity through the lens of metrics and operations. Just over half of El Pueblo's staff identify as women, thirty-eight percent (38%) of staff identify as men, and eight percent (8%) identify as non-binary or gender non-conforming. Moving to look at the Primary Olvera Street Merchants, Ms. Ignacio noted that more than half identify as women. She emphasized that Olvera Street continues to be a driving force for local and destination visitors alike. Finally, she explored the El Pueblo Commission. In July of 2018, the majority of Commissioners were men. By July 2020 El Pueblo's Commission achieved gender parity. As of April 2021, just under thirty-eight percent (38%) of Commissioners identify as women. From 2018 to 2020 the Department was able to successfully increase supervisory training for El Pueblo women and nonbinary staff as well as promote an El Pueblo women staff member to a supervisory role for interns. El Pueblo also increased the number of women performer participants in its Entertainment programming, and hired a woman identifying participant from the El Puente Bridge home as a part time museum guide. In the current term, the Department has two (2) goals. First, to partner with the Department of City Planning's Office of Historic Resources. She noted that it has since been determined, with the help of the Assistant General Manager that the Women's Historical Context is a document that is fixed and cannot be changed. This presentation to the Commission was one of the ways in which the Department

hoped to achieve this goal. The next goal was the primary goal determined for the Department by the Mayor's office: the creation of an exhibit or tour highlighting Los Angeles women of influence. Ms. Ignacio was pleased to announce this goal complete. The tour is entitled "The Historic Women of El Pueblo." It is a digital tour highlighting female pioneers in Los Angeles history. Ms. Ignacio introduced Ms. Garcia-Ortiz to conduct a brief tour highlight. Ms. Garcia-Ortiz shared that this is a glimpse into one of three free, digital, interactive tours currently offered by El Pueblo. She stated Los Angeles has had the privilege of being tremendously impacted by many women throughout its history. This tour seeks to highlight a select few that have ties to El Pueblo and early Los Angeles. The first woman of note was Toypurina, a member of the Gabrielino-Tongva tribe that led a rebellion at Mission San Gabriel in response to the suffering of the Indigenous people there. She was 25 years old and pregnant at the time. Next, Ms. Garcia-Ortiz highlighted Bridget "Biddy" Mason, a woman of color brought to California while enslaved. Ms. Mason fought and won her freedom in the California courts and went on to become a philanthropist, a frequent visitor to the Pico House, and one of the first black female property owners of Los Angeles. Another woman featured in the tour is Eloisa Martinez de Sepulveda, a businesswoman of the 1800s who owned everything from cattle to residential and commercial businesses. She owned the Sepulveda House, which is a partially adobe, partially Charles Eastlake Victorian building and one of the only Victorian buildings in Los Angeles that is still in its original location. Finally, she highlighted Shifra Goldman, an art historian of Mexican Muralism and civil rights activist. Ms. Goldman met with David Alfaro Siqueiros in the 1960s and later played a pivotal role in the conservation of the América Tropical mural. Those interested may reserve tours by contacting EPTours@lacity.org. Ms. Ignacio encouraged individuals to sign up for the free, facilitated tours and provided the phone number of the tour office (213-628-1274) for more information. Finally, Ms. Ignacio highlighted El Pueblo's future commitment to gender equity, including further interpretation of women both historically and in the present in El Pueblo's respective museums and other spaces deemed appropriate and relevant. The Department hopes to enhance experiences at the Avila Adobe and the Sepulveda House Museum to provide more information on the strong influence that women had on these now historic landmarks. Ms. Ignacio emphasized the importance of recognizing that, while the Department has already achieved so much, they strive to continue to build upon our successes to maximize the commitment to gender equity both at El Pueblo and in the City. Commissioner Louie praised the presentation and expressed pride in what the City and the Department has achieved. Commissioner Nunez complimented their work highlighting the diverse powerful women who have made an impact on Los Angeles. Mr. Chavez noted there are additional tours that would be highlighted at future meetings.

Mr. Chavez noted that operations have continued to move forward well, with about fifty-five (55) Merchants opening their doors. Major obstacles have been faced by the larger restaurants regarding space and staffing. He noted El Paseo's plans on re-opening shortly. The Museum of Social Justice was currently hosting a Black Lives Matter exhibit in front of the Biscailuz Building. Sharing that the exhibit will be on display at the Plaza until June 8, 2021 with live performances streamed online.

Mr. Chavez stated that the El Pueblo hearing for the Budget was held with the Budget and Finance Committee on May 3, 2021 where the Department was asked several questions regarding rent waivers and implementation moving forward after the start of the new fiscal year. The initial proposal was for El Pueblo to have funding for marketing. He quoted the Chair of the Budget of Finance Committee as referring to this request as a "very meager amount." The Committee inquired what would be done with that funding and Mr. Chavez reported it would be used to further market El Pueblo. Mr. Chavez shared that he has attended meetings regarding social media and further promotional efforts. The Angeleno Card Program will be launched from El Pueblo, which assists Los Angeles residents in financial need. The budget is still up for approval. Mr. Chavez reminded the Commission that El Pueblo lost one (1) full-time position, but were granted the ability to fill two (2) of the positions lost to the supplemental retirement program.

Mr. Chavez moved on to provide a Security Report to the Commission. He noted there has been a significant increase in the number of security incidents. He stated three hundred and thirty-nine (339) incidents were reported in April 2021, almost double the amount reported the previous year. He clarified that El Pueblo was closed during that period. Major incidents reported include pan handling, smoking, and trespassing. He also noted an increase in disturbing the peace and aggressive behavior. He shared the Department has an upcoming meeting with the LAPD Senior Lead Officers and Allied Universal Security on May 25, 2021 to review incidents and request additional assistance. Allied has indicated the program to assure guard circulation would be implemented in May. Security was increased by one officer from Thursday through Sunday with positive results.

Finally, Mr. Chavez confirmed that Councilmember Kevin De Leon introduced a motion the previous day seconded by Councilmember Monica Rodriguez. The motion followed through on the request from the Commission to waive Merchant rents from January 2021 through June 2021. He noted some sections of the motion indicate that any rents previously paid will be credited toward future rent and that the City Attorney will be requested to modify the contracts with El Pueblo merchants to effectuate the rental waiver. Mr. Chavez felt confident that this would pass Council. The final request in the motion was to discuss rents after July 1, 2021. He noted that discussions would occur between the Merchants, CD14, CAO, and the Mayor's Office in the coming weeks.

Commissioner Louie thanked Mr. Chavez for his efforts to move forward the waiver on Merchant rents. Commissioner Alarcon thanked Mr. Chavez and his team for the presentation, updates, and reports. She noted that in her research she has not found another location waiving rent in the same manner. Commissioner Núñez echoed Commissioner Alarcon's sentiments and hoped that the history of the Merchants would be included in the continued work.

Public Speakers: Edward Flores, Emily Martinez.

7. NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL COMMENTS

Valerie Hanley shared that there is a Community Impact Statement regarding El Pueblo and rent forgiveness. She noted that it has been placed on previous agendas but has not yet been addressed. She shared that the next Neighborhood Council meeting is scheduled for May 18, 2021.

Public Speakers: None.

8. COMMISSION BUSINESS

Commissioner Marez thanked Councilmembers De Leon and Rodriguez for their work on the motion on Olvera Street Merchant rent waivers. He noted that the support came from City Council District 14 and City Council District 7, indicating city-wide support for the historic value of Olvera Street.

Public Speakers: None.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Marez moved to adjourn. Commissioner Núñez seconded.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 4:40 p.m.