



The following are minutes for the meeting of the **City of Las Cruces Quality of Life Policy Review Committee** held at 3:00 p.m. May 24, 2023, in City Hall, Conference Room 2007A.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councilor Tessa Abeyta – District 2 – Chair
Councilor Becki Graham – District 3 - Vice-Chair
Councilor Becky Corran – District 5

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Dr. Marlena Fraune, Ex-Officio Member
Diego Medina, Ex-Officio Member

OTHERS PRESENT:

Sonya Delgado, Assistant City Manager
Carol A. Brey, Quality of Life Director
Rebecca Slaughter, Quality of Life Assistant Director and PRC Staff Coordinator
Robert Nunez, Interim Parks and Recreation Director
Sergio Ruiz, Administration Policy Analyst
Claudia Chavez, Acting Recreation Deputy Director
Garland Courts, Museums Deputy Director
Catrina Godinez,
Sarah Booth, Library Deputy Director
Gregory Shervanick, Member of the Public

- I. **CALL TO ORDER** - Chairwoman Abeyta called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. Roll was called, and a quorum was established with all members present.
- II. **CONFLICT OF INTEREST** - Chairwoman Abeyta read the conflict-of-interest statement. *“Does any member of the City Council or any member of City staff have any known conflict of interest with any item on the agenda?”* All members present indicated there were none.
- III. **ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA** - A motion was made by Councilor Graham and seconded by Councilor Corran to approve the agenda. Roll was called and the agenda was accepted by the committee members present.
- IV. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** - Chairwoman Abeyta requested a motion for approval of the meeting minutes from the January 25, 2023, meeting. A motion was made by Councilor Graham and seconded by Councilor Corran to approve the minutes. Roll was called and minutes were approved by the committee members present.
- V. **ACTION ITEMS: America 250– Presented by Garland Courts, Museum Deputy Director:** Mr. Garland Courts began his presentation defining America 250 as the

Semiquincentennial, 250th anniversary, of the found of the United States of America. Mr. Courts stated that he anticipates not just be a celebration but to be a reflection on who we are and where we have been. A commission was established by congress and is charged with orchestrating the largest and more inclusive anniversary observance in U.S. history. Mr. Courts continues with a video created by the commission to highlight America 250. America250.org has been set up to discuss what is currently happening with upcoming events and programs. The committee hopes there will be 100,000 events nationwide. Mr. Courts has previous experience with these types of events, as a participant in the New Mexico Centennial and wants to make sure that Las Cruces is part of this major event. Majority of events that will be focused on will happen in Philadelphia and Washington DC, but there were settlements in this area when this country was founded. Mr. Courts stated would like for us to focus on the people and history of this area was founded and highlight those stories. Current notable partners include; Library of Congress, Smithsonian Institute, National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, Institute of Museum and Library Services, United States Department of Education, United States Department of Education, United States Department of State and various other organizations including state tribal and local partnerships. Mr. Courts stated how the events are finance but he is aware that there is potential funding available. The commission is made up of: 16 private citizens, 4 U.S Representatives and 4 Senators, along with 12 ex officio members representing all three branches of Government. (Executive, Legislative, Judicial). The committee is chaired by Rosie Rios and she served as the 43rd Treasurer of the United States. Mr. Courts informed the committee that the National Endowment for Humanities has established lesson plans and ways for teachers to reach out to schools and ways to build education plans about this event. These include topics other than just the drafting of the Declaration of Independence. Mr. Courts presented the below list to the committee.

Essays on the American Revolution

A Voter's Guide to Post-French and Indian War Policy

Quelling the Whiskey Rebellion

Debating America's Defense of Independence Abroad

Women and the Abolition Movement

African American Suffragists

Chinese Americans and School Desegregation

The Seattle General Strike of 1919

The NAACP's Mission to Forge a More Perfect Union

The Indian Citizenship Act and American Citizenship

The Japanese Struggle to Own Land in California

Heroines of the Civil Rights Movement

These trainings will show the ways we have changed and grown as a country. The commission holds many community conversations. These are designed to be inclusive for a variety of participants and topics. Mr. Garland continued to state that he began looking for the New Mexico State Commission, and who would be overseeing the organization of this event. Unfortunately, he was not able gather information on an established commission. Mr. Court stated that he experienced this before with the New Mexico Centennial. There was no commission to oversee the planning and it was not started till months before the event date which was problematic. Mr. Courts stated that now is the time for the Commission to be established for the planning of the Semiquincentennial. Mr. Garland inquired if the City should form a local committee, and this could be an avenue for the State to establish a commission. The City can start collaborating now with the local schools by sharing the "Building a More Perfect Union", in particular the community schools; partnering with the Library to get a reading list, start conversations, potential of starting book clubs related to classic American literature or contemporary topics of the United States; partnering with Senior Programs to start speaking with older generations to start an oral history book, their stories will not be from 250 years ago but it gives us an opportunity to collect their stories now; partnering with NMSU and their Museums to establish forums for public dialogue, focus and potentially display art exhibits that focus on what was here at that time. A lot of these celebrations were focused on what was happening on the east coast during that time, but we want to focus on what it was like here. Rio Grande collection has already stated that they will house any stories that have been collected and hold them in their repository. Farm and Ranch Museum has also stated their interest in partnership related to this event. The Semiquincentennial is in 2026. As we are in 2023, we will need to begin the planning phases now. Councilor Graham stated that she could get Mr. Courts in contact with the Museum Director from White Sands Missile Range (WSMR). Mr. Courts further stated that Fort Seldon is having the 50th Anniversary of being added to the New Mexico Historic sites system and he is going to use that event to see if they would like to be part of this event. Councilor Corran stated that she agrees that starting a local committee is a great idea. Councilor Graham added that KRWG would be a good source for local histories. Chairwoman Abeyta recommended involving Diego Medina, Ex-Officio Member to collaborate with Piro/Manso/Tiwa Tribe. Capturing stories from their elders and ensure that we are telling the stories in an equitable fashion and have the stories from all communities. Mr. Courts stated that they are currently working with Mr. Medina on an exhibit and they will ensure to discuss this collaborative opportunity with him. Chairwoman Abeyta further added that if we do set a local committee and showcase planned events, we can capture it as being leaders of this event. Chairwoman inquired if the 4th of July events would match the theme with the America 250. Mr. Courts stated that he believed that it would focus on the anniversary. Chairwoman Abeyta further added that it would be great if we were to begin notifying other organizations in the community of the planned themed event. Ms. Rebecca Slaughter stated that there is an existing list of organizations that participated in the NM Centennial parade that she will be able to provide as a starting point. Chairwoman Abeyta thanked Mr. Courts for his presentation.

VI. DISCUSSION ITEMS Quality of Life CIP– Presented by Carol A. Brey, Quality of Life Director: Ms. Carol Brey began presenting to the committee a summary of the Quality of Life (QOL) Capital Improvement Program (CIP) projects for the upcoming fiscal year, pictured below.

- **Munson Center Expansion** (\$3.2 million)
- **Sage Café Expansion** (\$930,000)
- **Benavidez Flooring** (\$127,500)
- **Frank O'Brien Papan Dining Room Flooring** (\$35,000)
- **Meals on Wheels Vehicles** (\$110,000)
- **Branigan Cultural Center Improvements** (\$123,088 + \$165,000 for planning)
- **MONAS/MOA atrium redesign** (\$50,000 design)
- **Security/Tech Upgrades at Downtown Museums** (\$210,000)
- **Roof work at RRM, MONAS, MOA** (\$400,000+)
- **Las Cruces Public Libraries Master Plan & Building Program** (\$111,000)
- **Public Art for Go Bond projects** (\$340,000)
- **Public art maintenance in downtown area** (\$15,000 +\$75,000)

Ms. Brey informed the committee that the \$165,000 shown in the presentation was not 100% completely dedicated to Branigan Cultural Center Improvements. Ms. Slaughter further added that Chris Faivre, Economic Development has been generous with Tax Increment Development District (TIDD) funds. Mr. Faivre stated that he may be able to allocate TIDD funds to complete the project. Since the Museum System received Legislative Appropriations this year, it would be spent on development and planning. A building assessment was completed approximately 10 years ago. This assessment will be used to have architects plan out which projects would be best completed first and pay for each project as they are completed. Museums has been piecemealing the projects as we receive funding. Ms. Brey continued listing other CIP funded projects. Councilor Corran asked if the Library Masterplan could be ready and available prior to the next General Obligation (GO) Bond cycle, so Council can have a clear idea of the needs of the library system. Ms. Sarah Booth stated that the anticipated date for the masterplan should be the end of September. Ms. Brey continued her presentation with listing QOL future projects, pictured below.

- **Main Branch (Thomas Branigan Memorial Library)**
 - Needs major structural repairs
 - Needs significant renovation and expansion
- **Sage Café Branch**
 - Needs expansion
 - Short-term plans drawn to open space up between two rooms for better safety/flow
- **Munson Branch**
 - No room to grow
- **Master Plan Underway**
 - Square-foot per resident calculation
 - Need at least one new branch in our community

Ms. Brey stated that the Branigan Library is in need of significant structural repairs. While the library has had two expansions over the years, these have been small and with what funding was available and not necessarily on what was fully needed. There is currently a small branch at the Sage Café. There is potential of expanding the Sage Café past its current location within the Senior Programs and having an established library branch. Ms. Brey further stated that there is no room to grow at the Munson library branch. The masterplan consultants have stated that at least one new branch in our community is needed. Councilor Corran stated that she feels that the city has been in need for library expansion, and she will be in support of requests for future growth. Chairwoman Abeyta added that with the CIP, there are good years and conservative years. She would like to see that these items are planned so that the needs are being met even in the lean years. She would rather see one or two projects being completed fully, rather than twenty projects being piecemealed over the years.

Ms. Brey next identified future projects for the Las Cruces Museums System, pictured below.

- **Railroad Museum** (Alameda-DEPOT Historic District)
 - Needs exterior repair work to maintain integrity
- **Railroad Museum Reinterpretation** (exhibit overhaul)
 - Potential Jr. Bill project - education and tourism based
- **Museum Flooring (MoNaS and MOA)**
 - Will request funding once cause of damage is determined
- **Collections Storage**
 - Currently in rented facility
 - Could be shared with Records Retention if separate spaces maintained
- **Future of Museum of Art**
- **MoNaS Nature Center Redesign** (for ADA and animals)

Ms. Brey discussed that Council passed a resolution in May 2009 designating the old post office, currently Municipal Court, as the future home of the Museum of Art. Ms. Brey stated that while it is an impressive historical building, it is in bad shape. There are other options for expanding the Museum of Art and the Museum of Nature and Science in their current location. We know that we have wonderful exhibits and exhibit opportunities, but do not have the proper exhibit space to do what we dream of doing. Mr. Courts stated that there are different opportunities to expand where we are at and utilizing funds to build there rather than trying to retrofit a facility that will need a lot of work. Ms. Slaughter added that the limitations to what we are able to display due to lack of space is a disservice to the community. In addition to the limited exhibit space, much of the space in these areas are given to provide public programs that staff are having to share cramped workspaces. A lot of space has been given to the public areas that staff areas are very limited, sharing desks and workspaces. This then makes it difficult to provide programming. Needs to be some give somewhere. The old post office/Municipal Court is on the State Historic Register but not on the Federal. The consultants who looked at said the only way to make it viable for anything once the court leaves, is to "gut it to the walls" and start over. The mechanicals are bad, the electric is bad,

the water is bad, everything is bad. Councilor Abeyta asked why a resolution to make it the Museum of Art, as it feels like it was not the right space. It was originally supposed to be the Nature and Science Museum and they never moved, so changed it. Part of making downtown a much more dynamic space, bring more cultural things downtown, and fact the museum needed more space. The Museum of Art lacks a place to have a permanent collection of Las Cruces and regional artists, as well as traveling exhibits. Catch-22 of people won't give us art because we do not display it, and cannot store because we cannot show it and do not have our own permanent collections. Last project is the nature center redesign for Museum of Nature and Science. Mr. Court stated the Museum of Nature and Science came in when they converted the bank and has now been there 10-11 years. Good to refresh.

Next was shown photos showing the Railroad Museum, showing the worn paint on the window, and the door with a piece sticking out. The doors are in terrible condition, and security is an issues. There was a break-in at the Railroad Museum earlier this month and that was when it was discovered that the cameras were not working very well. The next photo, as they were removing the portico from the Branigan Cultural Center, now that wood is not there, just holes in the wall. There is a design for this now and have the wood, so that project can proceed soon hopefully.

Need to find funding for construction at the Sage Café expansion, 4,000 square foot to create a multipurpose room for exercise equipment, a whole host of programs without having to use the dining area, which is all that is out there presently. Hope to do a master plan for senior programs in FY25, need to assess all facilities, for which Sonia Saldana feels strongly about. This will help to know what we are dealing with in terms of future planning and not doing piecemeal. Kitchens really need to be looked at, and all need expansion, Munson and Benevidez for sure. Also talking with transit about senior transportation. There is a bus to pick up people to come to eat. Also have Dial-a-Ride. Also discussion purchasing another bus through transit as the current bus is aging, and then we would help pay for it's operation. Munson center floor needs replacing every 10-20 years. Bathroom renovations. Exploring purchase of Eastside Center as it is currently rented, and limited to what can be done there. The owners might be interested in selling. Meals-on-Wheels vehicles every year we request those.

Concept drawings shown of the Sage Café currently and the expansion. Also the Munson Center concept drawings currently and the expansion, which is also a multipurpose room. There is funds for the Munson Center. The Sage Café we have funding for design and some funding for the construction expansion, but need about \$2 million.

The public art program, the Animal Services Center art ready to install. Fire Station #3 the artwork is installed. There were some future projects also shown, Klein Park, East Mesa Complex.

VII. DISCUSSION ITEMS Kids Programming - Presented by Claudia Chavez, Acting Recreation Deputy Director: Claudia Chavez showed some visuals of the programs they have. Youth programs as athletics, which is all offered through Meerscheidt and various facilities. Afterschool program which has six sites through the public schools. Offer CAPS through community partnerships and sometimes on demand. Summer recreation programs starts in nine days which is a short summer, a six week program, all middle schools, due to the schools changing their calendar which school starts July 19th. Teen Connection program is housed at Frank O'Brien Papen Center, and use the East Mesa Recreation Center. They do a lot of field trips, daily trips. The Weed and Seed Program on Tornillo at the Safe Haven A. Fielder Memorial Building. Pre-COVID athletic program had 5,980 participants throughout all age groups. After COVID, 7,367 participants, and more added programming. Afterschool program has 716 pre-COVID, and currently 720. Afterschool program is limited number of spaces at each school site. CAPS are partnerships have in the community, NMSU, aviation program, archery. There were 55 pre-COVID and 40 now. Stopped doing CAPS as in competition with the money makers at the schools. Summer recreation had 180, and now 240, increase capacities this summer from 60 to 70 at each site. Teen Connection, 64 before COVID and now 108. This program is up and rising in 2018-2019, and has expanded since then. Weed and Seed, outgrown the facility, but maintain 70 participants at that location. Fees and charges, they go to Council on June 5th, and asking \$5 increase for athletic leagues and cheer which includes eight games and jerseys. Afterschool program pre-COVID was \$400 per semester, in the fall and spring, this year proposing \$100 per semester. CAPS, if full day they were \$100, half day \$50, looking at \$20. The reason for the difference is trying to incrementally return to fee base program. Summer integration program, \$200 per session, and there was one per month, but now with shortened summer, coming back at \$40 per session. Teen Connection and Weed and Seed there is no fee, but because of the demand at Weed and Seed it is income based by Health and Human Services through the State. Also offer Youth Scholarship program for those that cannot afford. They have to meet criteria and 120 per fiscal year, and looked at on case-by-case, one-on-one. They have many community partners that offer other activities in the community. Bannon White sports for middle schools, Century 21 is a grant at public schools that offers the SEMAA program. Creative Kids is a private afterschool program. Christian Leads offers variety sports, another private program in the afterschool. Family Youth Innovations Plus offers a program in some of the elementary. Las Cruces Youth Soccer Association. Partner with Organ Mountain Pickleball to offer free of charge for 20 kids to learn. Endzone is private entity that offers sports to youth also. Southwest Basketball League. State Girls Youth Softball. Youth Baseball Association. Youth Soccer League. In comparison to other programs, such as Boys and Girls Club, we are reasonable, as they range from \$65 for the summer program to \$110 for private daycares per week per child.

It was mentioned there is partnering with Lynn Middle School and NMSU to have 15 kids for a week, to add to the list. Robert Nunez meet for the aquatics programs and discuss A to Z for preparations for the summer and the pools. They are identifying all third graders to come through the aquatic facilities to learn swimming. Use this as a PE component. They have 48 lifeguards and can open all facilities in


a safe manner. Looking to offer swim teams for the beginner, to learn and to progress.

VIII. FUTURE DISCUSSION ITEMS AND TASK LISTING:

None.

IX. NEXT MEETING DATE - June 28, 2023.

X. ADJOURNMENT - A motion to adjourn was made by Councilor Corran and seconded by Councilor Graham. Roll was called and all members present approved. Meeting adjourned at 4:10 p.m.



Chairperson

10/25/23

Approved