



OSCAR LEESER  
MAYOR

TOMÁS GONZÁLEZ  
CITY MANAGER

TRACEY JEROME  
DIRECTOR

CITY COUNCIL  
ANN MORGAN LILLY, DISTRICT 1  
LARRY E. ROMERO, DISTRICT 2  
EMMA ACOSTA, DISTRICT 3  
CARL L. ROBINSON, DISTRICT 4  
DR. MICHEL R. NOE, DISTRICT 5  
CLAUDIA ORDAZ, DISTRICT 6  
LILY LIMÓN, DISTRICT 7  
CORTNEY CARLISLE NILAND, DISTRICT 8

MUSEUMS & CULTURAL AFFAIRS

The City of El Paso Hispanic Cultural Center Subcommittee  
Thursday – March 26, 2015 – 1:00 p.m.  
City Hall, Main Conference Room

**REVISED  
MINUTES**

1. **Call to Order.** Meeting was called to order at 1:04 p.m.

2. <b>Roll Call.</b>	<u>Board Member</u>	<u>Present</u>	<u>Absent</u>
	Rafael Adame		X
	Jesus "Cimi" Alvarado	X	
	Ruben Chavez	X	
	Fermin Dorado	X	
	Jaime Esparza	X	
	Rosa Guerrero	X	
	Hector Gutierrez	X	
	Carlos Hisa	X	
	Enrique Moreno		X
	Barbara Perez	X	
	Cindy Ramos-Davidson		X
	Gustavo Reveles	X	
	Silvestre Reyes		X
	Belen Robles		X
	Maya Sanchez	X	
	Nestor Valencia	X	
	Theresa Ware-Asbury	X	

CITY CLERK DEPT.  
2015 APR 15 PM 2:52

Others present: Tracey Jerome, Ben Fyffe, Sylvia Firth, Irene Ramirez, Bryan Crowe and Misty Monteros.

3. **Public Comment.** The following members of the public commented: Dr. Manuel Feliberti

4. **Review the Creating Resolution.** Sylvia Firth explained that this group is akin to what would normally be called an ad hoc advisory committee of the City Council and Council has the discretion to appoint a committee. In this case, it is a subcommittee of the BOAC intended to provide information to the BOAC, and Council has also made allowances for a direct report from this committee. It is important to note that the Hispanic Cultural Center Subcommittee has always been referred to as such and members were asked to be mindful of the name. She briefly discussed the ballot language and the ordinance, mentioning that the body of the ordinance lists the full name and the ballot language is much briefer in summary and form, which is not at all uncommon. There is no legal consequence to the fact that the ballot did not say Hispanic Cultural Center. The quorum for this group will be 9, and the group is subject to the Open Meetings Act because all meetings will be telecast, properly recorded and open to the public. Sylvia briefly reviewed the duties of the committee; the floor was opened for questions and general discussion followed.

5. **Presentation of data regarding the Hispanic Cultural Center from the report that was prepared by the City's consultant, AMS.** Ben Fyffe presented an overview of where the project is at this point via a PowerPoint slideshow. Members were taken through a timeline of the Hispanic Cultural Center beginning in November of 2012, when the Quality of Life bond was voted on, and ending in March of 2015, when Council amended the creating resolution to allow for greater freedom from the BOAC, greater authority for this subcommittee to elect its own leadership and also to mandate the initial preliminary report in April. Ben next provided members a distilled version of the report specific to the Hispanic Cultural Center, in which baseline projections were for a standalone Center. He briefly discussed models considered, budget, model assumptions, operating model, operating

revenue, operating expenses, facility model and suggested distribution of activity. The floor was opened for questions, and general discussion followed.

A request was made for additional documentation that would show how the City arrived at the \$5.8M figure for the project, and Ben replied he did not have any of that information, but would go back through archives to see what was available. A question was raised regarding the City's contribution to the Plaza Theater and whether it was no more than 50%. Ben replied that he couldn't speak to the Plaza, but could speak to cultural facilities run through the department, in which there is a compact with municipal museums for operating expenses to come from the City's budget and programmatic expenses to be raised through fundraising. A member asked what the City's contribution to the History Museum was, and Ben noted he would get a breakdown for all three museums and provide it to the committee for review. Another member noted that the City initially fronts 100% of the money for construction and operations before the 50% comes in through fundraising; Ben replied that was correct, bond funding would cover construction, planning and implementation with 50% of the operating cost being City operations and 50% being revenue coming in from fundraising and grants. A question was raised regarding whether or not the City is attempting to look at applying for grants, and Ben replied that conversations are being had with the El Paso Community Foundation, who is willing to act as a fiscal agent for a private-sector group willing to step up and fundraise for the Hispanic Cultural Center.

**6. Presentation on the existing and ongoing City commitment to Hispanic arts & culture through exhibitions, presentations and preservation.** Ben Fyffe asked that with the limited budget, members make sure any programming or amenities that are proposed in recommendations to the BOAC or City Council are augmenting services, facilities and amenities that the City is already doing or has in place rather than replicating. He asked that members think about this budget and get the most value for our community, artists and taxpayers. Ben noted that as part of City Council's strategic plan for 2015, there is a goal that aims to enhance El Paso's quality of life through recreational, cultural and educational environments. More specifically, it aims to create innovative recreational, educational and cultural programs. The Museums and Cultural Affairs Department, working with that goal in mind, has a very long history of presenting, creating and preserving Hispanic culture for our citizens and visitors. Members were walked through this history via a PowerPoint slideshow while Ben briefly discussed the parts that the El Paso Museum of Art, the El Paso Museum of History, the Public Art Program, the Cultural Funding Program and presenting programs have each played. Ben opened the floor for questions, and general discussion followed.

A member inquired as to whether the purpose of the History Museum is to incorporate and reflect diversity of other cultures that are not included in the Hispanic Cultural Center, and Ben replied that the mission of the History Museum is to reflect all people who have lived in and been contributors to the border region. It was suggested that the purpose of the History Museum should be better clarified and also clarify why it is necessary to have a separate Hispanic Cultural Center so as not to alienate the rest of the contributing cultures that have been a part of building El Paso. Ben replied that the ordinance that enacted the ballot initiative is for a Hispanic Cultural Center. He went on to say this is a great opportunity for the History Museum to shine and get the message out there that this beautiful facility currently serves approximately 30,000 people and is open to presenting these kinds of stories. A question was raised regarding the size of the History Museum, and Ben replied it is approximately 66,000 square feet. An inquiry was made about the cost of the History Museum at the time of its funding, and Ben replied that he didn't know but would get the information. It was asked whether or not there was demographic information for all of the museums and Ben replied he could provide the back-up used to pull the Hispanic numbers, but had nothing else available at this time. A member inquired as to why 80% of Chalk The Block artists are Hispanic and Ben replied that last names were used to identify artists as Hispanic along with articulation of the topics presented in their work. It was asked what about that activity attracts an 80% Hispanic demographic, and Ben replied that the program was about breaking down any perceived barriers to participate in arts and culture. We want people who go to a museum opening and a person who would never go to a museum opening to both come to that event. It was asked if the \$5.8M number was put together by consultants or if Council just pulled it out of the air and Ben replied that the number was actually on the ordinance that led to the ballot, adding that consultants worked with the budget we said had been allocated and told us what we could do with it. A member expressed that the cost per square foot for building was way off and noted it probably needed to be tripled. It was also expressed the land/soft costs were off as well. Ben noted that this is consideration of new construction on land the City has purchased and encouraged members to think about ways to maximize the budget or create strong options for City Council as alternatives. It was asked if AMS would ever appear before the committee, as they were tasked to come up with specific recommendations regarding the cultural center, and whether or not there is a way to get more information from them beside what was in their summary report. Ben replied they are not based here and their portion of the contract has been finalized. Bryan Crowe noted that the committee could choose to engage them, but due to the fact that they have completed their requirements under the contract, there would probably be a modest fee to have them engaged, and added that City Council is aware there may be a need to engage as part of this process. A member requested access to back-up information, such as who they spoke to by name and the data they developed to come up with the summary report. It was asked what the recommendation would be, based on the data developed, how members can go forth and be smart about their tasks before going forward. Ben suggested members think about what makes an exciting cultural center while keeping in mind the structure is more nimble with more opportunity for the development of emerging artists at all levels and disciplines. A question was raised in regard to the amount

allocated for land acquisition for the Hispanic Cultural Center, noting that \$250,000 had been heard from a reliable source. Ben replied that \$1.7M was the recommendation presented to Council and Bryan Crowe clarified that the only thing that exists in terms of a defined budget is the total project budget, which is \$5.75M. There is not a set number for land acquisition.

**7. Discussion and Action on meeting schedule.** Ben Fyffe began with a recommendation for the third Wednesday of each month at 3pm, which also provides time to meet in April prior to the April 28<sup>th</sup> preliminary report to Council. General discussion followed as there was general concern about not having time to prepare a comprehensive report for Council before then. Ben clarified that the first report could include decisions on leadership within the group and by-laws, which was articulated at the last Council meeting. He further explained there should be some thought on the tasks at hand and working groups assigned to each of those tasks. Ben requested a motion to set the next meeting for Wednesday, April 1<sup>st</sup> at 1pm. Mayor Maya Sanchez moved to set the meeting for next Wednesday; Barbara Perez seconded; all members voted in favor, none opposed, and motion passed unanimously.

**8. Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at 2:33pm. Next meeting scheduled for April 1, 2015.

Approved for content by:  
Ben Fyffe, City Staff Liaison

Respectfully submitted by:  
Misty Monteros, Administrative Assistant  
Museums & Cultural Affairs Department

CITY CLERK DEPT.  
2015 APR 15 PM 2:52