

**CITY OF ALAMOGORDO, NEW MEXICO
CITY COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
6:30 PM, DONALD E. CARROLL COMMISSION CHAMBERS
October 1, 2024**

**SUSAN PAYNE, MAYOR
SHARON MCDONALD, MAYOR PRO-TEM
NICHOLAS PAUL, COMMISSIONER
STEPHEN BURNETT, COMMISSIONER
WARREN ROBINSON, COMMISSIONER**

**JOSHUA RARDIN, COMMISSIONER
MARK TAPLEY, COMMISSIONER
RICK HOLDEN, CITY MANAGER
ASHLEY SMITH, CITY ATTORNEY
RACHEL HUGHS, CITY CLERK**

CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL

Mayor Payne called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM. Roll Call was taken by the City Clerk. Commissioner Paul joined by phone. City Clerk Hughs announced there was a quorum present.

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Invocation was given by Mayor Payne, and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mayor Pro-Tem McDonald.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

**Mayor Pro-Tem McDonald moved to approve.
Commissioner Robinson seconded the motion.
Motion Passed with a vote of 7 - 0 - 0.**

NEW BUSINESS

1. Discuss Upper Canyon and Salt Fires debris at the Otero Green Tree Landfill. (*Dave Nunnelley, Utilities Director and Joe Lewandowski*)

Mr. Lewandowski said this was about the status of the landfill. Most of the debris from the fires and floods is coming to us. Many people think the landfill is the City of Alamogordo's landfill, but it is not. It belongs to two solid waste authorities: the Green Tree Solid Waste Authority, which is Lincoln County, and the Otero County Solid Waste Authority, which is Otero County. There are City staff out at the landfill, but those two solid waste authorities own it. Ten government entities are contributing to one landfill versus one landfill per entity. The City of Alamogordo is the agent hired to run the landfill. Now, back to the Upper Canyon and Salt Flat fires and floods, this was one of the worst and included one thousand four hundred structures. Compare that to the Little Bear fire with three hundred structures. The landfill has been taking debris since July 1st. We knew the volumes would be excessive and beyond what we normally took, so we told them there would be a time period we would take it, and then after about ninety days, we would evaluate it and see how much more we could do. The issue is it has been overwhelming, and we need to build the next cell. We knew that before the fires and had already hired an engineer in May to design Cell Six. We are in Cell Five now. A ten-acre cell looks like a big hole to most, but it has liners, leach systems, monitoring systems, and everything else that makes it cost \$1,500,000. The entire process for a new cell takes twelve to eighteen months and involves Environment Department approval. Back when we contracted with the engineer, we estimated that we had light airspace available. We had a pretty good buffer in the current cell at eighteen to twenty-four months and estimated six to twelve months of overlap to be safe and have space for garbage. Then fires and floods happened. In a normal week, we receive sixty to seventy loads per day. In a normal year, we receive seventy thousand tons of garbage. From July 1st to September 23rd, we received three thousand and eight hundred and seventy-nine loads, and thirty-nine thousand and ninety-four tons of garbage came through. That is about six hundred tons a day on top of our normal volume. We took in fifty-nine thousand tons; again, compare that to a normal year when we receive seventy thousand tons of garbage. The problem is Cell Five's life and ensuring there is space for solid waste and routine garbage. The cleanup is a long way away from being done. Past fires were not like this. FEMA wants them to take six inches off the ground plus the burnt debris, which is why the tonnage is so heavy. We will have to cap it to ensure we can get to the next cell. As of Monday, we will limit them to forty vehicles of fire loads per day. We have space to take that much, plus the regular garbage, and still meet the timeline for the next cell. If they want to up their loads after we build the next cell, we can take almost anything they want to send, but we may have to start building Cell Seven earlier than normal. We will notify DRC on Monday, who has trucks up there for the fire. Landfill staff have done a great job of handling everything. They only have four employees when they should have eight. I know there was talk of opening it six days a week, which would be great if we had another cell. We are permitted one hundred and sixty acres, but we bought four hundred and

twenty-eight acres. You won't run out of space regarding the landfill. This immediate situation just hit at the wrong time, and we have to ensure there is room for routine garbage.

Assistant City Manager Hernandez asked Mr. Lewandowski to elaborate on an application that went to the State and was denied. Mr. Lewandowski said they have been pushing the equipment they have. The Commission has likely rarely talked about the landfill because it takes care of itself and has cash reserves. We don't do any financing. However, with the equipment working as hard as it is, we may have to replace some. DRC Emergency Services is the main group coordinating the cleanup, and they have different subcontractors. They offered to bring in another bulldozer to help us out, which would be greatly appreciated and needed. They asked the State to pay for the additional bulldozer. They were initially told it could be done. Then they were told no. We may be able to talk to our state representatives about that and see what can be done. Multiple funding agencies have told us no. It is not a great amount. They were offering a D8 Bulldozer with an operator for \$260 an hour, which is a great deal that won't bankrupt anyone funding the projects. If our bulldozers go down, that's it, and we are done. We will not take any fire loads, just garbage. Fire loads will be on hold until we can get something in there.

Commissioner Rardin asked staff to draft a letter for the Commission to sign, which could then be sent to the state representatives. Maybe we can request that they put pressure on NMED to move this application forward. Have we looked at leasing another bulldozer? Mr. Lewandowski said we could find and lease one. What I mentioned before was the perfect resolution with an experienced operator with their own piece of equipment. That means more than renting a bulldozer and sticking someone on there. The landfill hired a new operator, but he needs to be brought up to speed. DRC Emergency Services has expert operators who can move around. I'll get the contacts for the funding agencies that DRC asked. Commissioner Rardin asked if that was federal or state government. Mr. Lewandowski said it was a combination of federal and state working together. The New Mexico Environment Department is not the one that said no. They just oversee us to ensure the haulers are handling it properly. We don't need any action. This is all within staff's purview. We wanted to keep the Commission up to date. Commissioner Rardin asked if we had reached out to Otero County because they have some D7's and D8's sitting there. We may be able to borrow one of those. Mr. Lewandowski said if we have to. I am hoping to work out an agreement with DRC. The bulldozers we have are specially equipped for landfills. Most won't lease you a normal bulldozer because of the damage that can happen in a landfill.

Assistant City Manager Hernandez said the landfill is amazing and well-maintained. She encouraged the Commission to go with Utilities Director Nunnelley and take a tour to learn more about it.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

2. Recess into Executive Closed Session in compliance with 10-15-1(H)(2)NMSA (as amended) to discuss: Limited Personnel Matters (City Manager).

Commissioner Burnett moved to recess into Executive Session.

Mayor Pro-Tem McDonald seconded the motion.

Motion with a vote of 7 - 0 - 0.

RECONVENE INTO OPEN SESSION

3. Take any action as a result of the Executive Closed Session.

Commissioner Robinson moved to reconvene into Open Session.

Mayor Pro-Tem McDonald seconded the motion.

Motion Passed with a vote of 7 - 0 - 0.

Mayor Payne asked if someone wanted to make a motion to appoint Stephanie Hernandez as Acting City Manager with an effective date of October 14th.

Commissioner Rardin moved to make that motion.

Mayor Pro-Tem McDonald seconded the motion.

Motion Passed with a vote of 7 - 0 - 0.

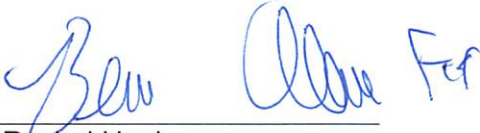
ADJOURNMENT

**Mayor Pro-Tem McDonald moved to adjourn at 7:55 PM.
Commissioner Burnett seconded the motion.
Motion with a vote of 7 - 0 - 0.**



Mayor Susan Payne

ATTEST:



City Clerk Rachel Hughs

(Prepared by Dylan Aleshire, Deputy Clerk)
Approved at the Regular Meeting held on October 22, 2024.

