

**CITY OF ALAMOGORDO, NEW MEXICO
CITY COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
6:30 PM, DONALD E. CARROLL COMMISSION CHAMBERS
December 17, 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 6:30 PM. Roll Call was taken by the City Clerk. Commissioner Paul attended by phone. City Clerk Hughs announced there was a quorum present.

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Invocation was given by Stan Richardson of Southern NM Outreach, and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Tapley.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner Rardin said we needed to pull Item 1. Mayor Payne said that Commissioner Paul was not physically here tonight. We will recognize him at the first meeting in January.

Mayor Pro-Tem McDonald moved to approve the agenda as amended.

Commissioner Robinson seconded the motion.

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

PRESENTATIONS

1. Outgoing Plaque for District 1 Commissioner, Nick Paul. *(Susan Payne, Mayor)*

Pulled under the Approval of Agenda.

2. Recognition of Officer Eric Cisneros, Officer Neil Zeck, and Sergeant James Watts for their exemplary actions on July 15, 2023. *(Stephanie J. Hernandez, Acting City Manager, and Ryan Glidden, Deputy Police Chief).*

Acting City Manager Hernandez said she was the Acting City Manager back when Officer Ferguson was shot on July 15, 2023. That day is hard for us to talk about. I want to convey the extraordinary courage displayed by our officers that day. Officers Neil Zeck, Eric Cisneros, and Sergeant James Watts were the first responders on the scene. Under extreme conditions, including active gunfire, severe stress, and witnessing Officer Ferguson go down, they secured the scene, assessed the situation, performed live-saving measures, and apprehended the suspect. Their actions gave Officer Ferguson the best chance at survival and ensured a flawless scene so that Officer Ferguson's family could get justice. At the trial, the defense found no grounds to challenge the handling of the scene until the State Police could take control due to our officers' exemplary work. Today we recognize the outstanding performance of these officers on that night.

Deputy Police Chief Glidden presented Officer Neil Zeck, Officer Eric Cisneros, and Sergeant James Watts with several awards. All were presented with a Meritorious Service Award for a highly unusual accomplishment under adverse conditions with some degree of hazard to life and limb. All were presented with the Chief's Commendation Award for an outstanding performance deserving of recognition by the Chief of Police. All were presented with the Exceptional Duty Award for highly credible accomplishments bringing public acclaim to an employee, department, or the profession. Officers Zeck and Cisneros were presented with the Combat Cross for an act of heroism and imminent personal hazard of life in combat with an armed adversary. Officer Cisneros was presented with the Gallantry Star of Excellent Arrest for an act of distinguished bravery in the arrest of a person who was a major threat to the welfare and community of the officer.

3. Presentation on the Tularosa Basin Regional Dispatch Authority (TBRDA) End-of-Year Wrap-Up: Call

Volume, Successes, and Challenges. (Stephanie J. Hernandez, Acting City Manager, and John Barney, Director)

Director Varney said he was here to give an End-of-Year Report for the Tularosa Basin Regional Dispatch Authority (TBRDA). The TBRDA was established via a Joint Powers Agreement between Otero County, Alamogordo, and Cloudcroft. It was created to serve as a Public Safety Answering Point, or PSAP, for enhanced 911 services aimed at improving response times for accidents, crimes, and natural disasters. It was created in 2021 but did not go live until August 2023. It is managed by a board comprised of four representatives for Otero County, four representatives for Alamogordo, and two for Cloudcroft. The initial cost is evenly split between Otero County and Alamogordo but is based after that on calls for service. The fiscal agent is Otero County.

Call Volume - Calendar Year 2024

The Alamogordo Police Department, as of last week, handled about thirty-four thousand calls. The Alamogordo Fire Department handled about one thousand seven hundred calls. Some of those types of calls include abandoned 911 calls, fire alarms, traffic stops, disturbances, traffic crashes, structure fires, fraud, juvenile issues, stolen vehicles, and mental health welfare checks. The Otero County Sheriff's Office handled about thirty-thousand calls. They have a larger jurisdiction, and the TBRDA assisted Tularosa with call volume because they had issues hiring and retaining officers. The County's Fire, EMS, and eighteen volunteer agencies together, handled about seven-thousand calls. Regarding types of calls, they do a lot of EMS, search and rescue, and suicides, with crime overall going up. The Cloudcroft Police Department handled about one-thousand calls, and their Fire/EMS has done about two-hundred and eighty-seven calls. The types of calls they see are the same, but more parking complaints, property damage, and fire alarms. We also take calls for other agencies like Tularosa's Fire & Police, the DA's Office, US Forest Service, Livestock, Fish & Game, and the National Parks, part of Chaparral, and some of El Paso's 911s. For all those, there were about three thousand police calls. One hundred and fifty-five calls were Fire/EMS.

Year to Date Phone Statistics

There were twenty-eight thousand five hundred and forty-four 911 calls. We processed thirteen thousand eight hundred and twenty-one calls from law enforcement officers. Administration lines were one hundred thousand and four hundred and fifty-eight calls for a total of one hundred and forty thousand and eight hundred and twenty-three calls. I estimate one hundred and fifty thousand calls by the end of the year.

Challenges

A new center was built from the ground up. We are improving a highly efficient standardized workflow. We are making sure to follow the standards of the national program that runs the 911 system along with NFPA Fire Standards. There were training gaps when we merged, but cross-training started before that. When we did quality assurance, there was constructive feedback on how to process calls and professionalism on the phone. Staff were resistant to constructive feedback, so we explained that it was not a disciplinary action but to help improve them. We have improved since that year. We educate the public on the role and capabilities of the center.

Successes

We rewrote policies and protocols and implemented an Emergency Medical Dispatch Program that provides a high level of medical care for people calling 911. Before the ambulance or fire department gets there, we can have the caller start some basic care. We have a better structure now, and we built a mentoring program where we send people to training. We submitted an APCO33 Training Program, which is an accreditation to meet their standards.

Looking Forward

We look to have leadership development, recruiting staff and implementing retention strategies, partnering with other agencies, increasing community outreach, upgrading our technology, improving operational culture, doing more training programs, and innovating.

Questions & Answers

Commissioner Robinson asked where the TBRDA was located. Director Varney said 2351 Eddy Drive in Alamogordo, behind Caliches. Commissioner Robinson asked if tours would be encouraged if members of the Commission wished to see it. Director Varney said yes sir, please reach out to admin@tbrda.org or give us a call. Ask to speak to the Deputy Director or myself. We would love to set up a tour for you.

Acting City Manager Hernandez asked Director Varney to explain what quality assurance was. Director Varney said with quality assurance, we have a list of questions asking us if we are verifying the address and phone number. Those two are the most important things. Quality Assurance is making sure we are following protocol and procedures, treating callers with respect, and ensuring we are gathering information for Police or Fire/EMS. In Quality Assurance, we randomly pick calls to ensure our dispatch is following everything and being held to the highest standard. They need to pass with eighty-five percent. If they do not, we counsel the dispatcher.

PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Joshua Ramsey said he wanted to clear up rumors or misunderstandings about his position regarding the water rates and proposed infrastructure improvements. As I have stated many times, improvements to the water system are urgently needed. I understand the problem was not created overnight, but it has festered and burst. So the question is, how do we fund the \$160,000,000 needed for improvements while causing the least harm to community members? I have heard this discussed as \$30 a meter, which I believe is a disingenuous way to examine this problem. Every dollar spent locally multiplies itself as it moves through our community. This reduction in total purchasing power for the community will negatively affect the local economy. Constituents around the City, including myself, were alarmed when we received our water bills for July. The constant and pervasive communication from the City was a thirty-percent increase, but many accounts saw more significant increases, especially high-use consumers. My bill more than doubled. After diligently studying the government rates proposal, I have some concerns. Due to the alteration in wastewater billing, the actual hike for mid-tier users was actually a substantial forty-six percent from the outset. What about high-use consumers or commercial accounts? Why was modeling not done to demonstrate how these changes would affect them? While they may reflect only a small percentage of users, they are significant economic generators for services and jobs within our community. My remaining concerns are two-fold. First, I understand that the budgeting and bonding requirements forced us to have a five-year plan regarding loan repayment. However, why must we accomplish this \$160,000,000 renovation within five years? Can it be budgeted out in seven or eight years? Could this be funded through revenues for other system purposes listed on the Govrates proposal that total \$50,200,000 over the next eight years? I know you are voting on a loan tonight to begin the work. Can we please look at income compared to the budgeted this spring before the July 25 increases occur? This would allow the Commission to see if it is possible to do less harm to our community financially, and still accomplish the needed goals of the reinvestment. Lastly, irrigation customers account for one-tenth of one percent of total water usage for the community. Can these customers, who are willing to invest in green spaces to beautify our community, just pay the same rate as everyone else? The current rate increase represents a two-hundred and seventy-five percent increase over previous costs.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Acting City Manager Hernandez made the following comments:

1. Different projects are going on within the next couple of weeks. We have the Monte Vista Cemetery Entry Renovation, which is funded by ICIP money, starting on January 6th. We have IT Infrastructure, which is funded through ARPA funds, going on at the Zoo. The Tenth Street Bridge project will be completed around April. The New York Street Maintenance Project, or SMP, will also be completed around April. The Great Blocks project will start digging on January 13th. The Hubbard Bridge replacement, which is both the bridge replacement and a water line, will happen on January 6th. The Oregon SMP, a water line replacement, will start on December 18th. The work on the water tank at Lower Heights, on Thunder Road, started today.
2. Tomorrow is the bid opening for the Golf Course.

REMARKS AND INQUIRIES BY THE CITY COMMISSION

Commissioner Rardin said piggybacking off what Mr. Ramsey under Public Comment mentioned, sometime in March of next year, could staff put together a presentation so we could have real numbers and data on the water rate increase? Like what money we are generating and what we need to service the debt. That would give the

Commission time to make a decision on whether the July increase next year needs to happen, or if it could be pushed off. Acting City Manager Hernandez said we are contracted with our consultant who did the original study. We were trying to get it sooner, but he wanted a full year of data. We will try to get something to see how much is being generated and if the projections are accurate and precise. We are getting that analysis in place to come before the Commission. Commissioner Rardin asked when that would be. She said around April. He said that would be pretty close. She said the consultant wanted a full year because it is higher in the summer, lower in the winter, and Spring is around average. He said so there would be eight or nine months of data by that time. She said yes sir.

Mayor Payne said we had the Christmas Parade, the Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony, and Christmas on Main Street. All the events were incredibly well-attended, and I will give a shout-out to everyone involved. There was also a play, A Christmas Carol, performed at the Flickinger.

Commissioner Paul said he wanted to thank each member of the Commission. This would be his last meeting as a City Commissioner, and it has been a pleasure working with them. There is a solid group of people on the Commission. I wish to especially thank Mayor Pro-Tem McDonald who made the initial nomination, three years ago, to be appointed to the seat I hold.

CONSENT AGENDA

4. Approve the minutes for the Regular Commission meeting on December 3, 2024. (Rachel Hughs, City Clerk)

5. Consider, and act upon, Resolution No. 2025-01 determining reasonable notice of meetings of the Alamogordo City Commission for the year 2025 (Open Meetings Act). (Rachel Hughs, City Clerk) (Roll Call Vote Required)

6. Consider, and act upon, the City Commission Regular Meeting Schedule of date, time, and place for the 2025 calendar year. (Rachel Hughs, City Clerk)

7. Consider, and act upon, Resolution 2024-72 relating to a rate increase of 2.47% effective January 1, 2025 for residential solid waste collection through Southwest Disposal. (Evelyn Huff, Finance Director) (Roll Call Vote Required)

8. Consider, and act upon, approval of Client Change Order 1, in the amount of \$349,629.76 plus NMGR to Yearout Energy Services Co, LLC for LED Light Standardization (Evelyn Huff, Finance Director)

Mayor Payne said we would pull Item 8 for questions.

Mayor Pro-Tem McDonald moved to approve the Agenda as amended.

Commissioner Robinson seconded the motion.

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

ITEMS REMOVED FROM CONSENT AGENDA

8. Consider, and act upon, approval of Client Change Order 1, in the amount of \$349,629.76 plus NMGR to Yearout Energy Services Co, LLC for LED Light Standardization (Evelyn Huff, Finance Director)

Mayor Payne asked why there was a change order. Finance Director Huff said this was for the YearOut Energy Services company, which is doing energy efficiency upgrades for us throughout the City. This change order came about in two ways. They are transitioning all the lights throughout all buildings in the City to LED. Some buildings already had rooms or areas that transitioned, and some buildings themselves were already LED. We realized we had a lot of different types of fixtures. The opportunity came to de-scope some work from the original scope's amount of \$363,551. The other is to standardize lighting throughout the City so we can have the same type of lighting fixtures and Facility Maintenance will not have to stock so many different varieties. This will also retrofit

some lights in the Library so they can now fit into the ceilings and provide an updated look. We also de-scoped some solar we were going to do because it would have been roof-mounted, but the roof was not capable of handling that. We are also de-scoping some heaters that were not going to be applicable for the Wi-Fi thermostats that we originally thought would be. We are adding back on the standardization of the fixtures at City Hall, the Civic Center, the Library, the Senior Center, the Senior Fitness Center, the Police Department Office, Fire Stations 1-5-6-7, and adding a five percent attic stock for all fixture types.

Commissioner Robinson asked how much this would save over the long run. Finance Director Huff said this change order specifically does not change much in our energy savings guarantee because most of what we were to change had already been changed to LED. It will save a little bit because we are upgrading old LEDs to new ones. The project overall does a huge amount of energy savings.

Commissioner Rardin asked where the money was being pulled from to pay for this. Finance Director Huff said Fund 49.

**Commissioner Robinson moved to approve.
Commissioner Burnett seconded the motion.
Motion Passed with a vote of 7 - 0 - 0.**

NEW BUSINESS

9. Consider, and act upon, Ordinance 1706 for final publication, approving a loan agreement in the amount of 32,500,00 with the New Mexico Finance Authority for repairing, replacing, extending, and upgrading water and sewer infrastructure. (Chris Muirhead, Modrall Sperling, and John Archuleta, Bosque Advisors) (Roll Call Vote Required)

Finance Director Huff said this ordinance first came to the Commission in August, which allowed us to apply with the New Mexico Finance Authority loan. This is the first of the long-term debt that was part of the water rate study, and it allows us to start making headway on our water and sewer infrastructure, along with the cash-funded projects we are doing. We continue to look for other funding sources.

Acting City Manager Hernandez said I emailed the Commission separately about this earlier today, but I want it on the record. I forgot to include what this was financing. The first round of financing will include the Highway 70 Grid Main Replacement - Pressure Zone Realignment, the Granada Hills Water Distribution System Replacement, the Law Luz Raw Water Reservoir 2 Intake Tower and Cover Replacement, the Callahan Ground Storage Tank Rehabilitation, the Lower Alamo Ground Storage Tank Rehabilitation, the Lower Ocotillo Ground Storage Tank Rehabilitation, the West Side Elevated Storage Tank Rehabilitation, and the Upper Heights 16" Transmission Replacement Zone 1 Realignment. There is also a sewer project for Indian Wells Road - 16th Street/White Sands - Florida Phasing.

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

10. Consider, and act upon, the Phase One design for the Fairgrounds Road extension to the railroad tracks, encompassing traffic study and signal upgrades, to facilitate traffic flow to the bypass. (Stephanie J. Hernandez, Acting City Manager and Justen Boyle, Project Manager).

Project Manager Boyle said due to possible future development in the area, he was requesting permission to proceed with necessary studies and design to facilitate the transition of the Fairgrounds Road intersection from a three-way to a four-way stop. Acting City Manager Hernandez said there has been plenty of discussions to extend Fairgrounds Road to the bypass. We are not at that point yet, but looking forward, we know the bypass is an area we want to develop. We want to start the first phase of this, which is upgrading that intersection. The intersection is around five years old and due for an upgrade. So if we have to do it anyway, we are seeing if we can do a four-way stop.

Mayor Payne asked if this was going out to the bypass. Acting City Manager Hernandez said no. Project Manager Boyle said right now it is a study for the lights. Mayor Payne said she was thinking about how long it took Union Pacific to play ball with the Scenic Extension.

Commissioner Rardin asked how much this would cost. Project Manager Boyle said this was just to get a proposal and see if it was worth pursuing. Once we get the proposal, I can start the traffic study, and can then update the Commission on the price of the study. Once we do the study, they will give me the EOPC, which is an estimated cost. That would let me know what the intersection would cost in terms of lighting. All we are focusing on is the traffic study for the lights, and replacing the lights to make it a four-way for future development.

Commissioner Tapley asked what the job scope of updating an intersection was. Project Manager Boyle asked if he was referring to the construction part or the study part. Commissioner Tapley said no, you said it was getting old and needed to be upgraded. Project Manager Boyle said right, you have to replace the entire arms on the lights. I would guess maybe \$200,000 to \$300,000 is the amount without the study. The study can be monthly, two months, or three months. They see how much traffic comes in from each direction. Once they do that, they go back and put it in again. That gives an idea of how many cars may come in or go to the west side. They incorporate that into the study and see if it is worth putting in lights or arrows or whatever they feel is best. They also give us our determination for how we are going to do things. Commissioner Tapley said it appears the arms are getting fatigued. Project Manager Boyle said they were put in back in 1988. Commissioner Tapley asked if the State had anything to do with this. Project Manager Boyle said they would have to get a permit from NMDOT because it is on the right of way. That wouldn't be an issue on the study part, which does not require a permit. We would have to get a permit for the construction part, for the replacement. I do not think that would be a big issue with NMDOT.

Commissioner Paul said if Fairgrounds Road at some point in the future ties into the bypass, then would the signal upgrades include whether it crossed the tracks? That way, we would not have to come back and spend additional money two or three years down the road to upgrade the signals again. Project Manager Boyle said once we are done with the traffic study, once we get closer to the construction part, I will be talking to the developer and ensuring elevation matches the right-of-way for the train and intersection on White Sands. Commissioner Rardin said Commissioner Paul was asking if the design of the light would be able to handle the volume of traffic in the event. Project Manager Boyle said that is the point of the study. If the study approves of that, whoever the developer is, I will incorporate whatever they are proposing on their road. I will basically make sure everyone is involved in communication. Acting City Manager Hernandez said when we go into this, that will be one of the things we will be presenting. We expect this to go into the bypass across the railroad tracks like the Scenic Extension. That is the intention of this. That is why we are looking into making a four-way. Commissioner Rardin asked how we would get a crossing there. Acting City Manager Hernandez said at this point, we do not know. This is step one.

Commissioner Rardin moved to approve.
Commissioner Tapley seconded the motion.
Motion Passed with a vote of 7 - 0 - 0.

ADJOURNMENT

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

ATTEST:


City Clerk Rachel Hughes


Mayor Susan Payne