



City of Commerce

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, September 26, 2023 - 5:00 PM

**CONCURRENT JOINT MEETINGS OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF
COMMERCE, JOINT POWERS FINANCING AUTHORITY AND THE GOVERNING BODY
OF THE SUCCESSOR AGENCY TO THE COMMERCE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION**

5:00 P.M. CLOSED SESSION

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Argumedo called meeting to order at 5:03 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: 5 - Mayor Argumedo
Mayor Pro Tem Altamirano
Councilmember Garcia
Councilmember Lainez
Councilmember Rebollo

PUBLIC COMMENT ON CLOSED SESSION ITEMS

There were no individuals wishing to address the City Council on any items on the Closed Session agenda.

RECESS TO CLOSED SESSION

The City Council/Successor Agency recessed to Closed Session at 5:05 p.m.

1. Conference with Legal Counsel Pursuant to Government Code Sections 54956.9(d)(2) & (e)(2) - Regarding Anticipated/Potential Litigation - Two (2) Matters.
2. Pursuant to Government Code §54956.8, the City Council will confer with its real property negotiator, Edgar Cisneros, with respect to real estate negotiations regarding:
 - A. Mitsubishi property concerning proposed price and other terms relating thereto, comprised of 5440 Telegraph Road, Commerce, California (APN: 6336-023-920)
 - B. 5550 Harbor St., Commerce CA 90040 (APN: 6335-025-903)
 - C. 2143 S. Atlantic St., Commerce, CA 90040 (APN: 5244-014-904)
 - D. Craig Realty Corporation concerning proposed price and other terms relating thereto, comprised of the former Commerce Community Development Commission-owned real property located along the Telegraph Road Corridor, south

of Gaspar Avenue and north of the Commerce Casino [Tubeway Avenue], formerly known as 5809, 5819, 5823, 2901/2903, 5933, 5901, 5959, 6000, 6003 and 6233 Telegraph Road and 2240 Gaspar Avenue; 2311, 2322 and 2366 Travers Avenue, Commerce, California.

3. CITY COUNCIL CONFERENCE REGARDING PUBLIC EMPLOYEE RECRUITMENT/EMPLOYMENT/APPOINTMENT pursuant to Government Code 54957 (b) (1)

Employee Title: Public Works Director

RECONVENE TO OPEN SESSION

The City Council/Successor Agency reconvened to Open Session at 6:13 p.m.

ORAL CLOSED SESSION ANNOUNCEMENT

City Attorney Tapia provided a report on Closed Session items:

Item #1 – staff made a presentation on two potential litigation matters, City Council provided direction and no reportable action was taken on this item.

Item # 2A - Vice Mayor was not present during the discussion of this item.

Item # 2.A, #2.B and #2.C and item #3- staff provided a presentation, direction was provided and no reportable action was taken on these items.

6:00 P.M. - CITY COUNCIL MEETING

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Argumedo called regular City Council meeting to order at 6:16 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: 5 - Mayor Argumedo
Mayor Pro Tem Altamirano
Councilmember Garcia
Councilmember Lainez
Councilmember Rebollo

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Acting Public Works Director Nila led the Pledge of Allegiance.

INVOCATION

Vice Mayor Altamirano offered the invocation.

APPEARANCES AND PRESENTATIONS

1. Commendation Honoring Cindy Montañez for Her Leadership as the CEO of TreePeople USA and Contributions to the City of Commerce, County of Los Angeles, and State of California

Councilmember Lainez took a moment to recognize and commend Cindy Montanez for her exceptional contributions to the City, County of Los Angeles, and the State of California and read the proclamation. Her dedicated efforts in the realms of environmental justice and leadership have left an indelible mark on the region and the community.

Joined by the Mayor, Councilmember Lainez extended heartfelt gratitude to Cindy for her tireless commitment to making our environment more just and equitable through her outstanding work.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no individuals wishing to address the City Council on any items within their jurisdiction.

CONSENT CALENDAR

Councilmember Lainez moved, seconded by Vice Mayor Altamirano, to approve the Consent Calendar. The motion carried by the following vote:

Ayes: 5 - Mayor Argumedo, Mayor Pro Tem Altamirano, Councilmember Garcia, Councilmember Lainez, and Councilmember Rebollo

2. Approval of Warrant Register Nos. 25A, 25B, 4A and 4B
3. Approval of Minutes
4. Award of Construction Contract to Elecnor Belco Electric, Inc. for the Various Signalized Intersections Improvement Project

SCHEDULED MATTERS

5. Presentation/Update from the Sheriff's Department Regarding Public Safety in the City of Commerce

Sergeant Duarte delivered a comprehensive update for the past two weeks. In this timeframe, several events were attended, including National Sliding Day and the Smart and Final Rally, aimed at safeguarding American workers' rights.

A discussion revolved around a recent burglary incident where the perpetrator was

found selling stolen items on OfferUp. It was observed that no formal police report had been filed, hindering the potential prosecution of the case. Sergeant Duarte emphasized that vehicle burglary is indeed considered a felony, underlining the importance of reporting such incidents to facilitate appropriate legal action.

6. Authorize a Vehicle Leasing and Replacement Program with Enterprise Fleet Management, Inc.

Transportation Manager Greg Guzman presented an overview of the staff report.

In response to Councilmember Garcia's inquiry about comparisons and the selection of Tesla as the chosen model, Guzman explained that the City secures more favorable pricing through Enterprise compared to individual purchases or leases. He clarified that the Code Enforcement Division would receive one Tesla, and Transportation Department would retain one vehicle, and others would be utilized for pool vehicles. Transportation Manager Guzman emphasized that the upfront purchase of Ford Fusions, without leasing, results in increased costs when factoring in maintenance and fuel expenses. In reply to Councilmember Garcia's question about whether leasing is more cost-effective than ownership, Guzman affirmed that leasing is more efficient for the City, as they retain vehicles for extended periods, and their value depreciates significantly.

Councilmember Rebollo asked whether other vehicle options could be electric or hybrid, to which Guzman responded that vans are not electric, and Expeditions do not offer a full hybrid or electric alternative.

In response to Councilmember Lainez's question about whether the City is adding more vehicles, Guzman clarified that the City is actually reducing the number of vehicles. He further explained that staff would be handling maintenance in-house, as the lease does not cover maintenance costs.

Councilmmeber Rebollo moved, seconded by Councilmember Lainez, to adopt a Resolution authorizing a vehicle leasing and replacement program with Enterprise Fleet Management, Inc. The motion carried by the following vote:

Ayes: 4 - Mayor Argumedo, Mayor Pro Tem Altamirano, Councilmember Lainez, and Councilmember Rebollo

Nayes: 1 - Councilmember Garcia

7. Award of Agreement for Tree Maintenance Services

Jose Martinez, President of Northstar Landcare, appealed to the City Council for

their consideration in choosing Northstar Landcare as the locally situated, Latino-owned company, which also happens to be the lowest union bidder. Regarding the forest study, he expressed the company's willingness to negotiate terms.

Acting Public Works Director Nila provided an overview of the staff report. In response to Councilmember Rebollo's query about how services are evaluated, Director Nila explained that they assess factors such as experience, customer service, responsiveness, and the length of contract terms with other jurisdictions.

Councilmember Rebollo commended any company willing to invest in union work, highlighting the significance of this commitment. She recommended selecting Northstar Landcare.

Councilmember Lainez, having conducted research, acknowledged that Great Scott may have high ratings but mentioned that they are located in Orange County and are not a union-based company. He agreed with Councilmember Rebollo's support for union-based companies and pointed out that Northstar Landcare, being Latino-owned and local while servicing neighboring communities, aligns with these values.

Councilmember Rebollo moved, seconded by Vice Mayor Altamirano, to adopt a Resolution approving an Agreement with Northstar LandCare for tree maintenance services for 3 years effective October 2, 2023 with an option to extend the term of service by two additional years. The motion was carried by the following vote:

Ayes: 5 - Mayor Argumedo, Mayor Pro Tem Altamirano, Councilmember Garcia, Councilmember Lainez, and Councilmember Rebollo

8. South Eastern Avenue at Southbound I-5 Freeway Raised Island Beautification Project Concept Plan Approval

Chuck Foley offered an overview of the concept plan for the Eastern Avenue location adjacent to the Southbound I-5 freeway.

Councilmember Lainez inquired about measures to prevent graffiti and vandalism on the sign and what actions could be taken. Mr. Foley explained that they could employ materials resistant to such damage and consider the installation of lighting or mounted lighting.

In response to Councilmember Lainez's question regarding maintenance of the

island or monument and the City's role in fixing it, City Manager Cisneros clarified that if approved by the Council, the City would be responsible for maintaining the monument.

Councilmember Garcia sought details about the materials used for the sign. Mr. Foley noted that it would be constructed with poured concrete on the hillside, while the freeway-facing message would feature an aluminum frame with sheeting, surpassing typical Caltrans sign standards. Councilmember Garcia also inquired about the color scheme chosen for the sign, to which Mr. Foley responded that the specific color scheme had not been determined yet but would be vibrant enough to draw attention.

A discussion regarding concept approval ensued, with Director Nila explaining that some concepts presented to Caltrans had not been accepted. Once Caltrans approval is secured, Mr. Foley would proceed with the design, bringing it to the City Council for final approval. Vice Mayor Altamirano suggested presenting it to the Beautification Committee first.

Mayor Argumedo asked if the inclusion of lighting for the trees and sign was definite or optional. Mr. Foley clarified that Caltrans had accepted the inclusion of lighting for the monument. Regarding the timeframe, Mr. Foley estimated it would take about six months to complete the project.

Vice Mayor Altamirano moved, seconded by Councilmember Garcia to receive and file a presentation by Hirsch & Associates, Inc., for the South Eastern Avenue at Southbound I-5 Freeway Raised Island Beautification Project, and adopt a Resolution approving the proposed Concept Plan tentatively approved by Caltrans, and authorize staff to proceed with the project design phase and Maintenance Agreement with Caltrans. The motion was carried by the following vote:

Ayes: 5 - Mayor Argumedo, Mayor Pro Tem Altamirano, Councilmember Garcia, Councilmember Lainez, and Councilmember Rebollo

9. Appeal of Traffic Commission Denial of Disabled Blue Curb Parking Request at 7158 Watcher Street

Acting Public Works Director Nila provided an overview of the staff report.

A discussion ensued regarding the allocation of the driveway and garage at the back of the property, specifically whether they are fully dedicated to the back unit, and the possibility of verifying this information with the owner of the two units. It

was suggested that cars be parked in the garage area, as there are two available spaces, and the potential extension of parking space to the left in front of the unit should be considered.

Concerns were raised about the significant number of cars parked on the street, which has been reducing available resident parking. Some individuals were noted to be working on cars and using all available street parking.

It was recommended to obtain an update from code enforcement on the parking situation and explore potential solutions to make street parking available. Staff was directed to verify the parking details within the two units with the owner and return to the City Council with an updated report on the matter.

Mayor Argumedo moved, seconded by Councilmember Rebollo, to direct staff to see if these issues regarding parking could be mitigated, and bring back to the City Council this item at a later date. The motion was carried by the following vote:

Ayes: 5 - Mayor Argumedo, Mayor Pro Tem Altamirano, Councilmember Garcia, Councilmember Lainez, and Councilmember Rebollo

10. Slauson Corridor Improvements from I-5 to I-710 Project Concept Plan

Acting Public Works Director Nila provided a brief overview, followed by a PowerPoint presentation by Min Zhou and Greg Garces from Koa Corporation, outlining the proposed improvements.

Councilmember Rebollo recommended the installation of rolled/median curbs for the safety of bicyclists.

Councilmember Garcia inquired about bike lanes, and Ms. Zhou explained that between I-710 and Malt Avenue, there are currently three lanes in each direction, and one lane would be converted into a bike lane. Mayor Argumedo expressed reservations about reducing traffic lanes in favor of bike lanes, given the increasing development and the potential for traffic congestion. There was a discussion about whether the pedestrian lane could be a shared lane with bicyclists. However, Ms. Zhou noted challenges such as utility poles and fire hydrants that would need to be relocated. She also explained that based on drainage, hydraulics, and design, on-street parking would need to be removed if a shared lane option were chosen.

Acting Public Works Director Nila clarified that one section currently has three

lanes of traffic, while another section currently has one lane dedicated to parking, which would be converted into a bike lane. In addition, Director Nila mentioned that the City received two million dollars for this project, and not selecting bike lanes might jeopardize the grant. Ms. Zhou emphasized the importance of maintaining the grant by adhering to the bike master plan's complete street concept.

Councilmember Rebollo inquired about the possibility of applying for another grant if this one were lost, to which Ms. Zhou explained that most transportation grants require complete streets with bike lanes.

Further discussion centered on reducing traffic lanes, with the Mayor and Councilmembers agreeing to visit the area to better understand the proposed changes. Mayor Argumedo stated that they would drive with staff to gain a clearer picture of the proposed plan.

Mayor Argumedo called a five minute recess at 8:42. Returned at 8:59pm.

Mayor Argumedo moved, seconded by Vice Mayor Altamirano, to receive and file a presentation and to look for other solution without sacrificing the traffic lanes and address issues as discussed. The motion was carried by the following vote:

Ayes: 4 - Mayor Argumedo, Mayor Pro Tem Altamirano, Councilmember Lainez, and Councilmember Rebollo

Absent: 1 - Councilmember Garcia

11. A Resolution Amending the Annual Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2023-2024

City Manager Cisneros provided an overview of the staff report.

Vice Mayor Altamirano recommended increasing the camera rebates from \$500 to \$1,000 per household, and City Manager Cisneros suggested doubling the existing budget. Mayor Argumedo recommended community outreach for the increased amount and allocating funds based on different areas of the city. This motion was carried unanimously.

Councilmember Lainez moved, seconded by Councilmember Rebollo, to approve various public information-related items, including adding a Media Specialist position, transitioning to a monthly Commerce Connect , establishing a City Mobile application, and setting up a 311 Phone Info line. This motion was carried

unanimously.

There was a discussion about two requested positions in the Human Resources Department, which were deemed necessary if the YES program was approved. Councilmember Rebollo moved, seconded by Councilmember Lainez, to approve the requests submitted by the Human Resources Department, and this motion was carried unanimously.

Councilmember Rebollo moved, seconded by Councilmember Lainez, to approve the allocation for the YES program, and this motion was carried unanimously.

Vice Mayor Altamirano moved, seconded by Councilmember Lainez, to approve the allocation for the City Planner position, and this motion was carried unanimously.

Councilmember Rebollo moved, seconded by Councilmember Garcia, to approve Public Works budget requests, and this motion was carried unanimously.

There was a request to open other library branches, and Library Director Bautista mentioned that a full-time librarian position was needed for this. Councilmember Lainez moved, seconded by Councilmember Garcia, to approve the library's requested budget allocation, and this motion was carried unanimously.

Councilmember Rebollo recommended bringing another Park Supervisor position for Council consideration, as there were two parks without a supervisor. It was agreed to discuss this position during the mid-year budget. Councilmember Garcia moved, seconded by Councilmember Rebollo, to approve Parks and Recreation budget requests, and this motion was carried unanimously.

Councilmember Lainez moved, seconded by Councilmember Rebollo, to approve Parks and Recreation Council requests for adult excursions and family excursions, and this motion was carried unanimously.

Councilmember Rebollo moved, seconded by Vice Mayor Altamirano, to approve Finance Department requests, and this motion was carried unanimously.

Vice Mayor Altamirano moved, seconded by Councilmember Garcia, to double the camera rebate program allocation, as the rebate amount was increased to \$1,000. This motion was carried unanimously.

12. Resolution Designating an Arts District in the City of Commerce

City Manager Cisneros provided an overview of the staff report during the meeting.

Councilmember Garcia stated that the development of an arts district has been a vision of the Vice Mayor Altamirano. Vice Mayor Altamirano expressed that he has observed arts districts in cities like Miami and others. The vision is to introduce more art, potentially including three-dimensional art. The idea is to narrate the story of the City of Commerce through art and further enhance the city through artistic endeavors. Additionally, Councilmember Garcia mentioned that efforts are being made to engage with artists within the city to gather their ideas and input.

Councilmember Rebollo moved, seconded by Mayor Argumedo, to adopt a Resolution designating an Arts District in the City of Commerce per the Art in Public Places Committee's recommendation. The motion was carried by the following vote:

Ayes: 5 - Mayor Argumedo, Mayor Pro Tem Altamirano, Councilmember Garcia, Councilmember Lainez, and Councilmember Rebollo

13. Revisions to the Personnel Classification and Compensation Plan by Amending the Code Enforcement Officer II, Travel Coach and Public Safety Manager Classifications

City Manager Cisneros provided an overview of the staff report.

Councilmember Garcia inquired about the Code Enforcement Officer II position. Cisneros confirmed that the Code Enforcement position was approved as Code Enforcement I, and there are available funds for Code Enforcement II, and therefore, staff is requesting modifications. In response to Councilmember Garcia's questions regarding education requirement for Travel Coach, City Manager Cisneros explained that the position was not originally meant to have that requirement, and this modification was made to clarify that a bachelor's degree is not necessary for this role. Regarding the Public Safety Manager position, Garcia asked if Code Enforcement would report to the Public Safety Manager. City Manager Cisneros clarified that Code Enforcement falls under the Planning division.

Councilmember Garcia inquired about the background check process and how it differs from the Sheriff's department. City Manager Cisneros explained that for this position, a higher level of background check is necessary due to access to certain law enforcement systems that regular employees would not have.

Councilmember Rebollo questioned why the requirement of "in lieu of a degree, 10 years of law enforcement experience" was added. She noted that the position had already been recruited, and an offer had been made to a candidate. City Manager Cisneros responded that this modification provides flexibility for future recruitment. Councilmember Rebollo emphasized that any managerial position should require a degree.

Vice Mayor Altamirano motioned, seconded by Councilmember Garcia, to approve the modifications to the Code Enforcement II position. The motion was carried unanimously.

Councilmember Rebollo motioned, seconded by Councilmember Lainez, to approve the modifications to the Travel Coach specifications. The motion was carried unanimously.

Vice Mayor Altamirano motioned, seconded by Mayor Argumedo, to approve the modifications to the Public Safety position.

Councilmember Garcia made a counter-motion, seconded by Councilmember Rebollo, to approve the requested modifications to the Public Safety position but retain the education requirements as previously approved, requiring a bachelor's degree. The motion was carried unanimously.

In response to Councilmember Lainez, City Manager Cisneros clarified that these modifications do not change the current recruitment process but rather clarify the duties of the positions.

PUBLIC HEARING

14. Rejection of Commercial Cannabis Permit Applicant Nos. 18-053 and 18-010

Senior Management Analyst Delgado provided an overview of the staff report. City Manager Cisneros stepped out of the Council Chambers and did not participate on this item.

Councilmember Rebollo moved, seconded by Councilmember Lainez, to formally reject applications No.18-053 and No.18-010 based on failure to move forward and diligently process their respective development agreement applications. The motion was carried by the following vote:

Ayes: 5 - Mayor Argumedo, Mayor Pro Tem Altamirano, Councilmember Garcia, Councilmember Lainez, and Councilmember Rebollo

CITY COUNCIL/SUCCESSOR AGENCY REPORTS

Councilmember Rebollo extended good luck wishes to the participants of the flag football season. Additionally, Councilmember Rebollo reported that she attended Camp Commerce and the Women's Getaway Weekend.

Councilmember Lainez mentioned that he also visited Camp Commerce.

Mayor Argumedo reported that he attended the grand opening of CCM Market on September 15th and described it as a fabulous event. He also attended the Family of Health Centers Gala, 20th Roaring event. Furthermore, he participated in a JPIA Board meeting on gaming-related matters. Lastly, he wished his son Joshua a happy birthday on October 1st.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 10:48 p.m.