



**City of Rio Communities Council Regular Business Meeting**  
**City Council Chambers - 360 Rio Communities Blvd**  
**Rio Communities, NM 87002**  
**Monday, August 26, 2024 6:00 PM**

**Minutes**

*Please silence all electronic devices.*

**Mayor - Joshua Ramsell**

**Mayor Pro Tem - Lawrence R. Gordon**

**Council - Arthur Apodaca, Thomas Nelson, Matthew Marquez**

**Call to Order**

Mayor Ramsell called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

Councilor Nelson led the Pledge of Allegiance

**Roll Call**

**Governing Body**

Mayor Joshua Ramsell

Councilor Lawrence Gordon

Councilor Thomas Nelson

Councilor Art Apodaca

Councilor Matthew Marquez

**Staff**

Manager Dr. Martin Moore

Deputy Clerk Lalena Aragon

Police Chief Felix Nunez

City Attorney Randy Van Vleck

**Approval of Agenda**

Motion made by Councilor Nelson to approve the agenda as presented. Seconded by Councilor Apodaca.

**Voting Yea:**

Councilor Gordon

Councilor Nelson

Councilor Marquez

Councilor Apodaca

Motion passed with a 4-0 vote

**Public Comment:**

Dick Irvin talked about his time in the service and the taps song played when a soldier has fallen. He read his version of taps. This was regarding the 13 service members killed in the Kabul attack.

**Presentation by HDR Engineering—Review of City Stormwater Plan**

Mr. Fifle from HDR gave a presentation on Storm water drainage he explained this includes incised channels, unstable ditches, and prevalent erosion. Mr. Fifle went through a Power Point looking at the different areas of the City where the runoff from storm water impacts the community most. He explained that Highway 47 is the outfall that everything leads to and stated that it is a DOT channel. He gave suggestions throughout the presentation of what the City could do to reduce the storm water

damage. The drainage master plan illustrates the improvements that will stabilize the outfalls, build the infrastructure and the discharge that needs to be handled. The city needs to be proactive instead of doing reactive repairs. HDR collected LIDAR, which is the latest technology in getting topographic information. The PP illustrates a 2D model of what is coming down the streets in the community which helps monitor what is happening. The proactive approach is to deal with the runoff but not impact the downstream conditions. The LIDAR also looks at the velocity of the water drainage.

City Manager Dr. Moore asked whether the water was coming from platted channels that aren't working.

Mr. Fifle explained water is coming offsite into the area as well as from areas within the community that are failing. The water comes down through the street channels.

Councilor Nelson asked how many years was the rain event model based off.

Mr. Fifle stated it is off 25 years.

Councilor Marquez asked about the Highway 47 drainage channel and how the City can partner with DOT to begin the work on this.

Mr. Fifle explained that he can reach out to DOT and ask if they would partner with them.

Councilor Marquez asked if the Manzano Express way belonged to the city or to DOT.

Mr. Fifle stated he believed it was the City.

Dr. Moore stated the city has a 200-foot right-of-way there.

Councilor Marquez asked if the retention pond was city owned

Mr. Fifle stated they are privately owned.

Mayor Ramsell stated that they have shared this with DOT in the past.

**Discussion, Consideration, and Decision – Approval of Grant Agreement from Department of Finance and Administration for Firefighter and Emergency Medical Technician Recruitment.**

Dr. Moore explained the Fire Chief and his colleagues from around the state, the Municipal League and other parties came together to get more due to the increasing numbers of medical calls. They also recognized the medical side of the issue and built it into the bill. Dr. Moore explained that it's a step-down type of grant similar to a federal grant with fewer step downs. It's approximately, plus or minus, \$350,000 dollars the first year. From there, it steps down by half the second year, then half again the third year, and by the fourth year it disappears. For communities that have revenue planning: it provides an opportunity for them to front load people on the ground to help alleviate the immediate pressure. A good example is the continued rising number and severity of emergency medical calls.

Fire Chief Tabet stated that the grant is a step-down grant, and they were awarded \$650,250 to be used. This will allow the fire department to hire 5 to 6 full-time personnel. This increase in personnel will allow them 48-hour shifts with 96 hours off to give seven days a week coverage. The increase in calls, transport and lack of AMR units will help justify the grant. The number of calls within the city itself has increased. It used to be that the district calls outweighed the city calls. Now it's flipflopped. For this to work, it would be split into three shifts. The Deputy Chief and Fire Chief would remain at 40 hours and the captain on down would have A, B, and C shifts. There would be three paid personnel per shift augmented by volunteers. They would be able to cover seven days a week that way with built in overtime as most 48-hour shifts do. It would be planned and planned accordingly. For this to go through would be a historical for the fire department. It will also help with emergencies.

Police Chief Nunez stated he had the opportunity to review the grant with Fire Chief Tabet and speak to the testimony of the increase in call volume of calls going up. He stated the police calls last month went up. Last month the department received 337 calls, and they expect to exceed that this month. Having the EMS available is most important. Police Chief stated there is an issue with the local ambulance contract. We need capable individuals available for emergencies. This will help the police and fire.

Mayor Ramsell asked Fire Chief Tabet if this will maintain his request to have 4 people per call.

Fire Chief Tabet stated per standards any career staff, once they transition the station over to seven days a week will count as three volunteers on the ISO side of it. So, the station will more than meet their minimum required staff. They also have a good number of augmented volunteers. This will afford the opportunity for the volunteers to get certified and to continue to better the station.

Councilor Nelson stated he is all for the grant, but does the City have future planning for funding as the grant trickles off.

Chief Tabet stated that he will continue to work to get more funding.

Dr. Moore explained that there is a budget plan in place that the City will have to work on and have a plan brought in front of Council in October.

Councilor Gordon stated he doesn't want to hire and not be able to keep them.

Chief Tabet explained that the problem the Fire Department is dealing with right now is a lack of firefighters. That's why they're wanting this grant. It's a statewide and countrywide issue. People just aren't becoming firefighters like they used to. But the fact of the matter is, that for the Fire Department to obtain larger grants, obtain better ISO ratings and better coverage for the City and residents this is the way they are going to have to go.

Councilor Marquez asked if the city would receive any additional funds for the EMT calls.

Chief Tabet stated that they will be able to bill for transport.

Councilor Apodaca thanked Chief Tabet for the valuable information. He proceeded to speak on the fact that the City is well known as a City with many needs and no income. And that the two most important departments within a city are Fire and Law Enforcement. He stated the council is trying to do everything they can to support the two in all of their needs. He acknowledged the fact that as their calls continue to

increase. The Council must do everything, they can to support them and work on the Councils' part to plan for the future. The council can't stop the forward progress and must continue to support them with their needs, and the needs are great.

Councilor Marquez asked since we don't have a budget revenue plan, we should table this until we have one.

Fire Chief Tabet explained if we table it, we will lose the grant.

Councilor Marquez stated his issue is that if the City agrees to the \$375,000, next year the City is responsible for 50% of that which is \$187,000. He stated that is a lot of money for the city to push and put in.

Mayor Ramsell confirmed that this money is 100% first year, second year is 50%, third year is 25% and by year four is 0%. From there the city has to fund it 100% on their own.

Councilor Marquez asked if we don't have the money will we cut those positions from the EMTS or from the City. The City is already short-staffed, and there has to be staff to run the City.

Fire Chief Andrew agreed with Councilor Marquez's statement and stated that the City also needs to be able to answer 911 calls. Right now, they are answering calls they don't have the manpower to answer. Getting this grant will serve a dual function and right now the Council and Fire Department need to get "boots on the ground."

Police Chief Nunez stated that he ran into the same problem when they were trying to get started. The concerns are not falling on deaf ears with the City's finances, but the city has made a commitment that they want police and fire. This is something that they are going to have to look at. He let them know when they interviewed him that First Responders are the City's most expensive agencies. The two departments try their hardest to seek revenue and not hurt the City. Right now, probably 80% of their funding for equipment is coming from different sources and the City is paying salaries. It's ensuring the community feels safe. We must start forecasting because we are here to stay. The Council needs to start looking at taxes to make these services available.

Councilor Marquez stated he feels it is important for them, the City Manager, and the Council, to get together and look at what they will be able to afford and forecast for the future.

Councilor Nelson suggested they need to start having workshops so they can start working on this to ensure the City is at a point where it can be on the ballot next year.

Mayor Ramsell requested that Dr. Moore get some dates together for a workshop on revenue planning. Dr. Moore asked the Council to please let him know the dates they would like to come together to discuss the revenue planning.

Councilor Gordon asked if the City would receive the revenue for transport and would the Fire Department charge the same rates as AMR.

Fire Chief Tabet explained that the rates would be dictated by the Public Regulatory Commission as to what they can and cannot charge.

Councilor Apodaca made a motion to approve the grant agreement from the Department of Finance and Administration for Firefighter and Emergency Medical Technician Recruitment. Seconded by Councilor Gordon.

Voting Yea:

Councilor Gordon  
Councilor Nelson  
Councilor Marquez  
Councilor Apodaca

Motion passed with a 4-0 vote

**Discussion, Consideration, and Decision – Approval to Remove Former Employees and Former Elected Officials from the City of Rio Communities Checking Account**

Councilor Marquez asked who the current ones are on the checking account.

City Manager Dr. Moore explained this was a housekeeping matter. The way the protocols have been set up by the Council is there are two people on the administrative side and two people on the elected side. Whenever checks are signed there is someone from each side to try and avoid the appearance of collusion. This is a request of the bank that the City specifically declare names. Currently Dr. Moore is the solo on the administrative side and the mayor is the one on the elected side.

Motion made by Councilor Nelson to remove former employees and former Elected Officials from the City of Rio Communities checking account. Seconded by Councilor Gordon.

Voting Yea:

Councilor Gordon  
Councilor Nelson  
Councilor Marquez  
Councilor Apodaca

Motion passed with a 4-0 vote

**Discussion, Consideration, and Decision – To add Signature Authority to City Manager Martin Moore, Beasley, Mitchell & CO (CPA) Angelica Pacheco and Mayor Pro Tem Lawrance Gordon to the City of Rio Communities Checking Account**

Motion made by Councilor Apodaca to add To add Signature Authority to City Manager Martin Moore, Beasley, Mitchell & CO (CPA) Angelica Pacheco and Mayor Pro Tem Lawrance Gordon to the City of Rio Communities Checking Account. Seconded by Councilor Marquez.

Voting Yea:

Councilor Gordon  
Councilor Nelson  
Councilor Marquez  
Councilor Apodaca

Motion passed with a 4-0 vote

## **Council Discussion**

Council Marquez asked where the Minutes and Accounts Payable are and why they aren't on the agenda. The last minutes for approval were for May 30<sup>th</sup>.

City Manager Dr. Moore explained we can provide them for you at the next meeting.

Council Marquez asked if the Rio Communities signs be replaced on the brick structure by Nancy Lopez. He then asked about the new hires and asked if the Council could meet them.

City Manager Dr. Moore replied that yes, the signs will be replaced. They asked that brackets be placed so the signs can be rehung.

Councilor Marquez reviewed how many new hires the city has made and if there are going to be more.

City Manager Dr. Moore confirmed there is a new temporary person in finance, the City has Rachael Howe, and Police Chief Nunez also has a new employee, and we have one more coming in.

Councilor Marquez requested the number of applicants that have applied for Municipal Clerk.

Dr. Moore affirmed that he would get that for him.

Councilor Marquez also inquired about the municipal recruiting firm. When did we submit, and what did we hear back from them.

City Manager Dr. Moore explained we don't have a contract with one specific firm, but the company that was most responsive was called the SGR Group. The company does not just have a flat fee. They have an a la carte type setup where the customer can pick and choose what works best for their needs.

Councilor Marquez asked about the progress on Don Diego.

City Manager Dr. Moore stated that the city put in a 4.3 million dollar grant for that road which is still in review. No awardees have been announced yet. DOT said that the City should know possibly sometime in September.

Councilor Marquez asked for an update on the property he has discussed. There has been some construction going on. Could the City ask the property owner to water it down to keep the dust down.

City Manager Dr. Moore replied that the City had not heard back from them on whether they watered it down only that they did want to be good neighbors.

Councilor Marquez asked about the dumping area and if there were plans to move it.

City Manager Dr. Moore responded that they are dealing with three different things. The City has green waste, that he personally is hopeful that Universal Waste can help with by adding some things that they can do. But really, it's a situation of getting a removal schedule and price to get that stuff out of there

Councilor Marquez asked about the veteran's memorial park and requested some special workshops

Councilor Nelson said that he was in Phoenix over the weekend, and he had the opportunity to speak with Maverik and they said they might be willing to make a memorial in the corner of the property.

Councilor Apodaca stated that he could give them an update on the property where they originally talked about putting the memorial that already has a flagpole on it. It is private property. The property needs some maintenance, cleanup, and repair. There is also electrical running up into the half wall because it used to light up the flag. That would need to be addressed. Maybe use a solar light to light up the flag to eliminate the cost of an electric bill. The site itself needs some landscaping and cleanup. The landowner asked that he put a proposal together, which he did and presented to the Council at one of the previous meetings illustrating what it would look like with the flag, half wall, and sign. The City could ask the property owner to donate the area to the city or maybe a lease agreement like a dollar a year. That would allow the City to bring it up to speed. Councilor Apodaca is with Councilor Nelson in that looking for another property would be a more permanent place. Maybe people could park and walk up to it. If the city were to use the private property it would only allow for the memorial to be a visual site as people couldn't park and walk up to it.

Councilor Nelson asked Police Chief Nunez how the process of hiring a new officer was going.

Police Chief Nunez stated that it was successful and that they have offered the officer the position. Hopefully by the next Council Meeting they will have her ready to be sworn in.

Councilor Nelson stated that was really all he had and thanked Police Chief Nunez and his team for helping with the National Night Out.

Councilor Apodaca asked about an update on the City zip code.

City Manager Dr. Moore stated everyone keeps passing the buck at the congressional level.

Councilor Apodaca asked about a pictorial history they had talked about for the City. He believes it's important for the City to have one. Since Rio Communities is a young City, they need to start now.

Councilor Marquez requested the City to start advertising for Planning and Zoning commissioner applications.

Councilor Nelson had a question on the Keep America Beautiful grant. Have they told the City the amount they were awarded.

City Manager Dr. Moore replied that he had not heard yet, but he would follow up to see if he could find out.

Mayor Ramsell stated the postal service was readjusting their routes including rural routes, so people may see new carries. They are reducing the number of carries due to them continuing to reduce expenses as an organization overall.

**Adjourn**

Motion made by Councilor Marquez to adjourn. Motion carried at 7:27pm.

Respectfully submitted,



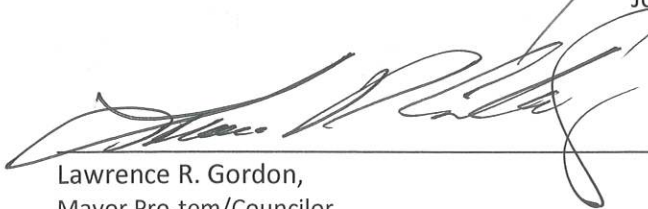
Dr. Martin Moore, (Acting) Municipal Clerk  
(Taken and Transcribed by Lalena Aragon, Deputy Clerk)

Date: 9/9/24

Approved:



Joshua Ramsell,  
Mayor



Lawrence R. Gordon,  
Mayor Pro-tem/Councilor

Arthur Apodaca,  
Councilor

Thm 9-9-24  
Thomas Nelson,  
Councilor

Matthew Marquez 9/9/2024  
Matthew Marquez,  
Councilor