

**CITY OF ALAMOGORDO, NEW MEXICO  
CITY COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
7:00 P.M., DESERT LAKES GOLF COURSE  
@19<sup>TH</sup> HOLE RESTAURANT, 2351 HAMILTON RD.  
AUGUST 19, 2014**

**SUSIE GALEA, MAYOR  
JASON BALDWIN, COMMISSIONER  
NADIA SIKES, COMMISSIONER  
JENNY TURNBULL, COMMISSIONER  
AL HERNANDEZ, COMMISSIONER**

**ROBERT RENTSCHLER, MAYOR PRO-TEM  
DR. GEORGE STRAFACE, COMMISSIONER  
JIM STAHLER, CITY MANAGER  
STEPHEN THIES, CITY ATTORNEY  
RENEE CANTIN, CITY CLERK**

**CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL**

Mayor Galea called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Roll Call was taken by the City Clerk. Clerk Cantin announced there was a quorum present.

**1. Presentation of "Golly, I wish I hadn't said that!" (Ed Zendel, Risk Services Director of the New Mexico Municipal League)**

Mr. Ed Zendel said just about everyone in this room who is serving in a public capacity has had a moment where you wish you could have taken back the words that you said. His goal was to make everyone think about that a little bit more. The rest of his presentation is included in the agenda book.

City Manager Stahle commented he had experience with a commissioner 'Googling' for someone to fill a position, and how that kind of information can be incorrect. This can be costly and you need to be hyper-sensitive when on the Internet.

Mr. Zendel responded that you must always check accuracy, especially with information obtained from the Internet. He went on to say this community has a lot of potential and it is up to you all to come together and to help this community reach that potential.

**2. City Commission Team Building.**

Mayor Galea said we left off last time talking about the books of Covenants and Promises former school superintendent, Commissioner Straface explained to us. She asked if this is where everyone would like to start.

City Manager Stahle said it was up to her. They had left off talking about these instruments which Commissioner Straface had found useful in the school district. We are waiting for whatever direction you want to give.

Commissioner Baldwin read through it and there were a lot of things from the Covenants and Promises he really liked, and he thought it a good idea. He thought it would take longer than just tonight to do this.

City Manager Stahle said one suggestion might be to break it down into a Team and work with Staff.

Commissioner Straface said it was important for commissioners to understand the benefit of working together to further the interests of the City. We need to understand the need to forego our personal issues and focus on what's best for the City. If that is not in your attitude, it will get sidetracked. We have to come to agreement on our concept of values and then adhere to them. Tasks and problems will come and go, but relationships are what sustain us and allow us to build positive coalition. We have to come up with a philosophy of governance; how we choose to govern. Do we believe that we want to govern through policy or through micro-management? How do we come together as a unit to

further the interests of this city and to serve the community we represent?

He explained that the way they had done it was we had an all-day session and we had three goals: 1) Clarify our values, 2) Clarify the promises we would make to each other, and 3) Our processes for communication. How we did this was, for example values, we each had index cards and we wrote the values most important to each of us. Then we took a white sheet and went randomly around the room asking each their most important value and in the end we had a list of almost 20 values. Then we went around and said that in order to make sense of this, every one of us has to agree to that value; if one doesn't then it won't be on the list because we wanted 100% commitment to the values. Everyone voted on each and had three choices on these: 1) I can support it, 2) I can live with it, or 3) I can't live with it. That's also how we got our promises. Everyone listed what they expected of the others. At the end of each meeting, the board president/mayor would say 'Have we honored our covenants/Have we violated any, and sometimes we did. If we were told we had violated something, we corrected it. It was the same with communication covenants; no secrets and no surprises. The key to it was the honest participation of people who wanted to work together for the benefit of the school district/city. If one person didn't want to do that, it wouldn't work. The second key is you follow through, you police yourselves. We did this in one day of about six hours. This was an open meeting with the press and staff there. It became the foundation for our relationship over the next four years.

City Manager Stahle said you also reviewed it annually. Commissioner Straface said we had two planning sessions a year, and then when we had a replacement to the Board we reviewed it within ten days of them being sworn in. He said the key is your attitude, and work together to make this happen. A governing body doesn't accomplish anything unless they work as a team.

City Manager Stahle said it is important to meet informally in order to really talk, be willing and honest.

Commissioner Straface said once the board and he came to this agreement, he told them he would hold his Administrators to these promises. This was an administrative agreement so when I met with all the Administrators I told them they had to commit to these things as a condition of their employment. Our purpose was to build strong relationships. It won't work if all of us don't commit.

Commissioner Baldwin wants us to figure out what we want first and then how we go about getting it.

Mayor Pro-Tem Rentschler I'm the one you are going to direct, kicking and screaming. Touchy, feely crap is kind of the way I feel about this stuff, so it isn't that I'm not willing to consider it, but I've done this on every commission I've been on and for the most part this city operates in a professional way with professional people. As long as we hold ourselves to that professionalism it works well. When you start having these meetings, it's tough for me. There has to be some agreement and we have to be able to work together. The stuff I've seen come out of these meetings is never encouraging. He will go through it and listen to it and see if it makes a difference, but he wasn't optimistic about it.

Commissioner Sikes asked if this would include just the Commission or also include the Directors and Managers.

Commissioner Straface said not initially because the superintendent was their only employee, and the city manager is our only employee. We had to have that agreement; everybody else worked for me and they didn't really have a choice.

Commissioner Baldwin said we have a responsibility to those who come after us. The hope is when we leave our office and these things are put in place, and those that come behind us will function better than we did.

Mayor Galea thinks it would build more trust and there's more productivity with trust. Commissioner Straface said we have to define our roles and not operate outside of our roles, or we will destroy that trust.

Commissioner Sikes said one of the things she has been uncomfortable with is blaming the whole group through the behaviors of some. Mayor Pro-Tem Rentschler said he defines that as

unprofessional behavior.

Commissioner Straface said we already have that in place. Who is our spokes person, and Mayor Galea said the city manager. Who is the person who makes sure our ordinances are adhered to, and Mayor Galea said the city manager. So when you are asked a question we need to answer that you need to talk to the city manager. We hire a person to do it and that's who does it and that's who is accountable to us. It's not appropriate to call a staff member about something; it is our responsibility to call the city manager and let him talk to the staff because they work for him, not us.

City Manager Stahle had a couple of observations. One, the press likes to talk to the Chief Elected Official or other elected officials. Second is that one of the trickiest parts of the city manager/superintendent is I have seven bosses with the collective thinking of four of them that guides me. That's not always easy, so take that into consideration.

Commissioner Straface said his view is the city manager needs to communicate constantly with all of us.

Mayor Galea feels like for the same reason we should come up with a philosophy we all agree upon.

Mayor Pro-Tem Rentschler said we all have agendas and districts to represent. We all bring a history we have with Alamogordo to this table, but if we are looking at whether I'm going to be a state senator or US senator, what am I going to do with the rest of my life, then you are bringing stuff that doesn't need to come to this table. We are all equal here and we have to understand that. We have to bring our district/city concerns to the table without any other pretense.

Mayor Galea felt it was important as Mayor to represent the City at military functions and at all private sectors such as the Realtors Association and the Men's Golf Association.

Commissioner Hernandez said we all have ways of doing things and different ways of approaching items. He came tonight because he wants this thing to work, for everyone to participate.

Commissioner Straface said as a Commissioner we all need information so we need to visit with Staff sometimes to ask questions. The issue that comes is not providing direction to them; you are only gaining information. We need to let Jim know we had the conversation and the Staff needs to let Jim know we had the conversation so he isn't out of the loop.

Commissioner Hernandez said sometimes what happens is miscommunication; communication is one of the most important things we have here.

Commissioner Straface we need to ask for accurate information so we can work as a planning team to give him direction.

Commissioner Baldwin said if I get inaccurate information from staff then what can Jim do. I always go to Jim first.

Commissioner Straface said much of the time the CEO has the broad understanding but not the detailed understanding, because you hire people to do that specific work. It isn't his responsibility to deal with the details. It has helped me to understand the organization by talking to staff, but if I want something I'll go to Jim.

Commissioner Baldwin said our conversation with staff can influence their decisions and things they do.

Commissioner Straface explained he was in a bigger organization than the City. He had this expectation with his Board and with his Staff; any conversation you had about school district business, not personal, you had to inform me about that conversation within 24 hours. It's tough for a staff member to ignore a request from a mayor or commissioner. It puts them in a very political position

and what you don't know is what direction they got from the city manager. Once you start going directly to staff and asking for this and that, you are undermining the city manager.

City Manager Stahle said he doesn't have quite the same policy, but it's dangerously close. He doesn't expect the Commission to come to him, but he expects the Director's to get with him and let him know as soon as possible. His philosophy is simple, the easiest way to get your information the better. The challenge, and it is a big one, is the expectation being met by the staff of a commissioner who has asked for something or suggested. You have to be sensitive to how you come across to Staff, and what they will do to satisfy. The way you communicate will affect the recipient.

Mayor Galea said it's the people, the Commission, the City Manager and the staff that make this city work so that we have services.

City Manager Stahle said it's the Commission that directs the policies of the staff, and we try to abide by the established policies. Some we need to repair; some aren't going to fly in every circumstance. He asked if they wanted to pursue a session where they talk just about values; that's up to you. He thought conversations like this really do help.

Commissioner Baldwin asked to get back to the original question of do we want to do this, yes or no, and we'll hash it out at a later date. City Manager Stahle asked if they were willing to give up a Saturday to work on that.

Commissioner Hernandez said this is the sixth time we are here for basically the same thing. If we do a seventh time, we need to have something that holds everyone accountable; I'm saying something by ordinance that is binding, otherwise it is a waste of time.

Mayor Galea said we could address this at the end of every meeting and ask ourselves if we as a governing body stuck to things that are important and if we can do better the next time.

Mayor Pro-Tem Rentschler said we should do this at the beginning of the meeting. Commissioner Baldwin said the last place we are going to be able to make this work is in the public eye.

Commissioner Baldwin said we don't have to pick a Saturday right now. We can research some more and don't have to do this right away. Mayor Galea would hope the sooner the better before we get into budget season; before January would be her goal.

Commissioner Hernandez said everyone here has some form of digital communication, so we may start the process this way to see what everyone is thinking so that when we come to it we already have some things going and it doesn't take six hours to get everything on board. He would rather take those six hours to figure out how we will implement this and make it work. We have to be able to hold each other accountable.

Commissioner Straface said start with protocols and put them down on paper, and hold each other accountable.

Commissioner Hernandez said one of the things he appreciated that George said earlier and hasn't happened as a whole, is if something is decided then we own it, whether we agree or not with it. We need to support each other even when we all don't agree.

Commissioner Straface told how things were with the school board when he first came and he had to become very directive with staff. After a while, my effectiveness diminished because I could not change from directive to facilitative and that's what they needed after three or four years. He said he respected City Manager Stahle where he was and his perspective of this.

Commissioner Turnbull wants to set a date and get this done. Right now, there is so much infighting, some don't even hear a person talking; they simply shut down. We have to get past that; it doesn't

need to go on for six months and she would rather see it done sooner than latter.

City Manager Stahle said we will put something together on a Saturday at everyone's convenience within the next three months. He wanted to try and get it done before the holidays and asked everyone to look at their calendars.

### **3. Prioritization of City Manager Tasks.**

Mayor Galea said the Staff has presented us with a list of tasks and there are a number of them here. She thought the goal was to promote a more efficient public administration based on the city commissions understanding of what the local public values are. She continued with a statement of what needed to be done. We will be picking five of the 22 listed here.

Commissioner Hernandez said in looking at some of these we can have 5 priorities, but he wanted the city manager to look at them.

Mayor Galea said #11 and #12 are already done. She asked about #10, Road Repair Map, and Commissioner Hernandez said he had put that down because there are roads we've repaved two or three times. It would be to help us explain to the public the reasons for various road work. Mayor Galea suggested having public meetings addressing only roads.

Commissioner Straface is pretty confident that all of these are important and he thought of this as five general areas we would support. His listing of important things are 1) strategic plan, 2) budget for 2016 to align with that plan; 3) Communication; 4) HR Issues; 5) Public Works. Then we would come back with our plans under each of them.

Mayor Galea said #18 and #2 are very similar, and she addressed various issues within the public safety departments.

Mayor Pro-Tem Rentschler asked Police Chief Duncan if we forced any police officers to be firemen and the police chief responded we still require them to carry their bunker gear. They are not certified. City Manager Stahle said those who have the bunker gear have some minimal training although not trained to the level of a firefighter.

City Manager Stahle said the point is you all have a variety of things you would like to see accomplished in the City. He encouraged the idea that as a team you cluster around the general areas of interest. In our previous retreat at Fire Station 5, you narrowed your list of top priorities to two, Economic Development and Quality of Life. That's what I would encourage you to concern yourselves with instead of the details of planning.

Mayor Pro-Tem Rentschler said we have some very specific things here and they need to be more general. There was discussion on the goal of the fire department/police department split.

Mayor Galea said you mentioned the top of our list is Economic Development and she spoke on Item #20, and the challenge of working with the County.

Commissioner Baldwin said we have an idea to categorize these a little bit, correct? All agreed.

City Manager Stahle remarked he didn't begin evaluating as soon as he showed up. Now that he has been here over a year, it is time. I've asked you all for particular comments and am taking lots of things in account.

Commissioner Sikes said we can either be a policy commission or we can micro-manage. If we have a comprehensive plan in place with strong policies, a good foundation, then all of the specifics will be covered. She felt it important to do evaluations of all employees, but she didn't want to know about it. We hire good people and we don't need to breath down their necks about the individual things we would like to see done. We should be confident that our city manager and his staff can take care of things. Mayor Pro-Tem Rentschler agreed we have a professional staff and we ought to use them.

Commissioner Sikes said do you think over the last two years we have micromanaged and thus shackled? We have un-empowered them and they don't know what direction to go.

Commissioner Baldwin said he couldn't agree with it more. At the last meeting here, the comment was made we already have a strategic plan in place, and perhaps we need to get more specific.

Mayor Pro-Tem Rentschler said to tell us what you want out of this, Jim.

City Manager Stahle said it came out of your initial retreat that you categorized the two top ones. Then you directed we meet again to refine them and give me direction, so this is a result of that conversation. We could have a session to deal with the covenants and have all these things categorized with a list of specific tasks we need to work on.

Commissioner Straface would like to see Jim work with Staff and come to us with a plan that shows three to five major goals, and under each goal have three to five objectives, and under each objective have three to five action items, by October so we can look at it.

Mayor Galea felt there should be more direction for the city manager tonight.

Mayor Pro-Tem Rentschler expressed that some items on this list were not feasible until the next budget year. His concern on any project was to follow through.

Mayor Galea asked the city manager if he wanted to bring this back at an informal meeting like this or a formal commission meeting, and he said at an informal session. It would take longer than a month to get it ready.

Mayor Galea said we will work with the Staff to schedule another planning session.

City Manager Stahle said to send your goals and values to Commissioner Baldwin.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**The meeting was adjourned at 9:52 p.m.**

ATTEST:

  
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City Clerk Renee L. Cantin



  
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Mayor Susie Galea

*(Prepared by Nancy Jacobs, Deputy Clerk)  
Approved at the Regular Meeting held on September 9, 2014.*