

**Minutes of Proceedings  
Regular Board Meeting  
La Feria Utilities Board  
Tuesday, June 14, 2016**

Be it known that the Board of Directors of the City of La Feria Utilities Board met in regular session on **Tuesday, June 14, 2016, at 5:15 P.M.** in the City Commission Meeting Room, 115 East Commercial Avenue, La Feria, Texas 78559. The purpose of said meeting was to consider and take action on those items of Utilities Board business as was duly posted by agenda in accordance with the State Open Meetings Law.

The following Board Members were present at said meeting:

Mr. Adolfo Lopez	Chairman
Ms. Betty Jo Dunlap	Vice Chairman
Mr. Ovidio Saldivar	Board Member
Mr. Ralph Muse	Board Member
Mr. Olga H. Maldonado.	Mayor/Ex-Officio Member

The following staff members were present at said meeting:

Mr. Sunny K. Philip	City Manager
Ms. Kin Mendoza	Finance Director
Ms. Esmeralda Sanchez	City Secretary

Other individual present at the meeting was Mrs. Helen Muse.

Board Chairman Adolfo Lopez asked all present to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America. He then declared that a quorum was present and called the meeting to order at 5:16 PM

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Board Chairman Adolfo Lopez declared the public comment session open. No one signed up to speak before the board; therefore, Mr. Lopez declared the public comment session closed.

**REVIEW AND TAKE ACTION TO APPROVE MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE LA FERIA UTILITIES BOARD HELD ON TUESDAY MAY 10, 2016.**

A copy of the minutes was provided for review. The minutes will be amended to include a statement indicating the individuals that made and seconded a motion to accept the Annual Financial and Independent Auditor's Report for the City of La Feria Waterworks and Sewer System for Fiscal Year ending September 30, 2016 as noted by the Ms. Dunlap. Following discussion, Mr. Muse made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. The motion was seconded by Mr. Saldivar and passed by unanimous vote of the Board Members present.

## FINANCIAL REPORTS FOR THE MONTH OF MAY 2016.

Finance Director Kin Mendoza presented the reports for May 2016. A copy of the report was distributed to the Board. Ms. Mendoza reviewed the total revenues and expenditures for the month of May, year to date figures, capital outlay funds, and water and sewer system performance indicators. Discussion with the Board included the monthly cost of utilities, cost savings from the solar panels, and the cost of repairs for the month of May. Additional information on the solar panels will be provided at a later date following clarification from the service provider. The cost of repairs was higher in May due to recent motor and pipe repairs throughout the system. Following discussion, Mr. Lopez announced the reports to be filed for audit.

### REPORTS BY STAFF

- WATER AND WASTE WATER IMPROVEMENTS

Mr. Philip reported the following:

The Waterworks System (System) has been actively working on improvements funded in part by Texas Water Development Board for several years. In the late 80's the system's assets totaled approximately \$3.5 Million. Currently the System writes off over \$1 Million in depreciation per year and has an asset value of about \$35 Million, almost ten times more than in the late 80's. Compared to the City of Brownsville, the La Feria Waterworks System is making significant improvements. Considering a population of 7,000 in La Feria to 150,000 in Brownsville, improvements to the each water/wastewater system total approximately \$15 Million and \$40 Million, respectively.

Cornett Construction has installed water lines on the west side of town, hook-ups are pending approval from TWDB. Since there are not too many people currently using the water, it remains in the lines and needs to be flushed out. The improvements made to date are enough to accommodate an influx of 20,000 people moving into La Feria over the next year. The goal is to take residents off the septic system by providing access to City water and sewer while also increasing property values. At this time the System is at a loss until we can complete the remaining hook-ups to water and sewer, which will increase revenue. The hook-ups in the approved project areas will be provided free of charge pending TWDB approval. Hook-ups are part of the application so we will need to follow up on the status of the change order for Cornett Construction to complete the hook-ups to the water lines on the west side. The lines with low water usage need to be flushed regularly to keep the water from going bad. Overall the improvements have accomplished the majority of looping needed across the System, Automatic flushing devices with timers have been installed at key locations to keep water moving through these lines. The other contractors continue working on the sanitary sewer projects and the office at the Water Treatment Plant.

Saenz Brothers are mostly working on the east side of town near the Sam Houston School. They are pending completion of the new lift station to service the area. Typically a lift station starts 20' deep and the lines are extended at a close until they are about 3' deep. This project is almost done with line installation. Sewer lines are installed 14'-16' deep, water lines are installed about 4' deep, so sewer line installation typically takes longer than water line installation. When building a lift station it is possible to use a pre-cast fiberglass wetwell instead of pouring concrete in place, methods which allow water infiltration. We now use monolithic manholes set on a concrete foundation as a precaution against infiltration. The process requires pouring concrete columns to hold the weight so the fiberglass manhole does not bear the weight. TWDB has visited the site of

the lift station Saenz Brothers is building and seems pleased with the work. Saenz Brothers Construction is also working on Main Street, Arroyo Heights area, including bringing sewer to the dome and technology and success center sites. In developing the greater plan, TWDB funding to install sewer services was key to the location of the domes and technology and success center. It takes a great effort to manage sewer system improvements timely with other projects in the City. At this time the Main Street dome and the technology and success center are connected to City sewer service.

JM construction has mobilized but is experiencing delays due to the rain. As part of the \$15 Million water/wastewater improvements the City had to increase the CCN through a purchase from North Alamo Water Supply Corporation and the purchase of 120-150 different easements needed for installation of new water lines. Additionally there were dilapidated buildings along the area where new lines were being installed posing an additional challenge to the City in securing approval from owners to demolish such buildings. The work to date is significant, but there is still more work to be done. Work was planned cautiously to ensure there was enough funding for hook-ups in the new service areas.

Cornett Construction is responsible for Phase II of the sewer system improvements on the west side. They will be building a lift station on Kubiski and installing additional sewer lines. The project will take approximately 250-300 days to complete, upon approval from TWDB.

Mr. Lopez commented that there appeared to be more people interested in working on construction projects in La Feria based on the number of bids that have been coming in. Mr. Philip shared that Saenz Brothers and Cornett are glad to be working in La Feria and appreciate the clean design where they don't have to second guess the plans. All contractors are satisfied and are courteous to the residents. One example of the contractors working well with the City is JM's willingness to reduce their contract by \$46,000 without fussing because the changes were better for the system. That's the type of respect they have working with the City knowing that proposed changes are only what is allowed by State procurement policy. La Feria continues to maintain a good relations with contractors. The initial budget proposed to TWDB was \$25 Million, but most of that associated work is being accomplished for \$15 Million. Rather than award one big project, the work was divided into several projects to allow smaller local contractors to bid. SWG Engineering has been on top of the various projects; never has there been so much participation from an engineering firm to assure the work is progressing appropriately. La Feria works to ensure there is a real architect or real engineer with experience working on our projects, rather than having work assigned to an architect or engineer in training without the necessary experience.

JCON is working on the new office at the water treatment plant, we are pending release of the bid for the Motor Control Center.

Previous discussions with the Board include SCADA improvements at three locations with tablets provided to key personnel to be able to control access remotely or to have remote monitoring capability. A team of electrical engineers and electricians have reviewed the plans and we are going to change to an Allen-Bradley open system rather than continue with the current obsolete SCADA system. Training will be provided to personnel for operation and maintenance, but with the open system there is also the option to contract a service provider.

Another wish list of projects has been submitted to TWDB. Availability of funds and ranking of projects will be available in July.

Also of note is that in case of drought, we have submitted 2-3 items for consideration in the Texas Water Plan as part of Region M. The City submitted strategies for water conservation efforts at a proposed cost of \$53 Million worth of improvements including putting the canals in the City underground in pipes. The groundwork has been laid in case of a drought to take water from the river as far north as Santa Rosa via 60"-70" pipe. Currently there is an earthen canal which narrows at the expressway.

The Board inquired about the status of drainage projects. Mr. Philip informed the Board that the drainage projects are almost completed. The City, not the County has taken the lead in drainage improvements on a regional level surrounding La Feria. The southern outlet has been improved at the private crossing, pending installation of the endcaps and with the pumps and generator installed at the levee, stormwater can move out to the south faster. With all of these improvements, we hope the Irrigation District will take responsibility to clean the ditches. The crossings have also been opened up enough so that even if tires or corn husks are in the ditches they will be able to flow through the crossings. The City was lucky to get the funding to accomplish all of this work, but it has been a tough five years working through all of the projects.

There being no further discussion, Mr. Lopez declared that no official action was required as a result of these reports.

#### **ACTION FOR ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to conduct, Mr. Muse made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Dunlap seconded the motion, and the motion carried by unanimous vote of the Board Members present.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Chairman Adolfo Lopez adjourned the meeting at 6:05 P.M.

**APPROVED:**

  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Adolfo Lopez, Board Chairman

**ATTEST:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Esmeralda R. Sánchez, City Secretary**

These minutes were prepared and filed with the City of La Feria as official record of the Utilities Board at 3:00 PM on July10, 2016.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Esmeralda R. Sánchez, City Secretary**