



City of San Marcos

630 East Hopkins
San Marcos, TX 78666

Workshop Minutes City Council

Tuesday, January 6, 2026

5:30 PM

City Council Chambers

630 E. Hopkins St. - Workshop

I. Call To Order

With a quorum present, the workshop meeting of the City Council was called to order by Mayor Hughson on Tuesday, January 6, 2026 at 5:30 p.m. This meeting was held both in person and online.

II. Roll Call

Present: 7 - Mayor Pro Tem Shane Scott, Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Alyssa Garza, Council Member Amanda Rodriguez, Mayor Jane Hughson, Council Member Lorenzo Gonzalez, Council Member Matthew Mendoza and Council Member Josh Paselk

III Citizen Comment Period

Mr. Polanco expressed concerns regarding recent international events, U.S. government actions and discussed various perspectives on international relations, specifically mentioning historical examples of U.S. foreign policy decisions and questioning the legal basis for certain actions.

PRESENTATIONS

1. Receive a staff presentation and hold a discussion regarding the Paid Parking Pilot Program in the City Park parking lot, and provide direction to the City Manager.

Jamie Lee Case, Director of Parks and Recreation, presented an update on the paid parking pilot program at the City Park parking lot, implemented on July 1, 2025. She reviewed the program's background, noting that it originated from the 2019 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan, which called for evaluating riverfront parking fees.

Director Case explained that parking is enforced from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m., with the first 30 minutes free. Residents with approved permits park at no cost, and Pauline Espinosa Community Hall renters receive validation codes for their guests. Rates are \$5 for up to 1 hour, \$10 for up to 2 hours, and \$15 for all day. Special event rates—typically for holidays or Texas State events—are \$25 for all day.

Charles Campbell, Multimodal Parking Initiatives Manager, and Jessica Ramos, Assistant Director of Parks and Recreation, provided additional technical details. They noted that the system uses a closed-loop license plate reader (LPR) to track entry and exit and offers multiple payment options, including kiosks and a pay-by-phone app.

Council members raised concerns about situations where visitors might need to extend their time after their prepaid session has expired. Mr. Campbell explained that the system can send alerts when time is running low if using the app, but acknowledged limitations if someone is unable to respond to those alerts. Staff outlined the adjudication process for contesting citations, which must be done within 17 days.

As of December 23, 2025, the program had 3,637 active resident parking permits and had generated \$171,764.95 in net revenue. Assistant Director Ramos noted that roughly 32% of the 1,502 citations issued since October 9, 2025, had been paid.

Council discussed potential barriers to obtaining permits. Council Member Garza expressed frustration that no qualitative data had been collected to understand why some residents did not complete the permit application process, noting that approximately 345 applications had been rejected for various reasons.

The Council then considered expanding permit eligibility beyond city limits. Director Case presented demographic data showing that adding the 78666 zip code would include an estimated 33,836 households, expanding to the full San Marcos Consolidated Independent School District (SMCISD) boundary would add about 20,591 households, and including Martindale (78655) would add roughly 1,464 households.

After extensive discussion, the Council provided direction to:

- **Expand permit eligibility to include residents within the 78666 zip code;**
- **Further expand eligibility to all residents within the SMCISD boundary;**
- **Consult with Council before exploring any privatization of the program**

Council Member Rodriguez raised concerns about potential future privatization of the system and requested that any consideration of privatization come to Council first. City Attorney Sam Aguirre noted that the current ordinance would need to be changed for privatization to occur.

Staff agreed to return to Council with any recommendations or considerations regarding potential privatization.

- 2. Receive a staff presentation and hold a discussion regarding Managed Access in Rio Vista Park, including but not limited to fencing options, layout and potential fees, and provide direction to the City Manager.**

Director Jamie Lee Case presented an update on managed public access at Rio Vista Park. She reviewed the community survey results, which showed that the natural environment (74%) and parks and recreation (71%) ranked highly among citizens' priorities.

Director Case then provided background on the managed access initiative, noting that in 2019 the Parks and Recreation Board adopted recommendations to implement paid parking within the Riverfront Park System to help recover operational and maintenance costs.

In May 2025, Council authorized a managed access test plan on weekends and holidays from Memorial Day through Labor Day, operating for a total of 50 days during the summer season.

End-of-summer feedback indicated a noticeable reduction in litter and improved compliance with park rules. In October 2025, Council reached consensus to continue managed access at Rio Vista Park using aesthetically pleasing temporary fencing.

Director Case then presented the costs associated with operating Rio Vista Park during peak season, including:

- Park ambassador personnel: \$36,303**
- Park ambassador uniforms and supplies: \$10,333.83**
- Park maintenance holiday weekend crews: \$21,960.59**
- Public works holiday street closures (overtime): \$38,728.80**
- Contract deputy marshals: \$81,454.40**
- Police officers and fire marshals overtime: \$37,557.04**
- Signage (one-time cost): \$3,493.33**
- In-stream litter remover contractor: \$19,800**
- ESPI (formerly Easter Seals) weekend and holiday litter removal: \$117,736.96**
- Portable toilet rental: \$30,018**
- Fencing rental: \$11,179.77**

The total cost was \$508,568.72, representing approximately 18% of the overall parks maintenance budget.

Chief City Marshal Tiffany Williams and Assistant City Manager Rodney Gonzales reported that managed access improved park behavior and reduced the need for security compared to 2024, though 2025 weather also affected attendance.

Director Case shared that New Braunfels charges a \$2 non-resident river management fee, generating \$509,934 in 2023 and \$438,348 in 2024. She proposed a fee of \$25 per group of up to 10 people, or \$5 per individual age 6 or older, applied only on weekends and holiday periods (36 days in 2026). She noted that implementing the fee would require a ticketing system costing about \$30,000 annually.

Council Member Rodriguez raised concerns about monetizing public space and suggested delaying implementation for a year to gather more data. Council Member Garza expressed similar concerns about public perception and communication.

Council consensus was to:

- **Approve the fencing layout as proposed by staff**
- **Implement a fee for out-of-town visitors**
- **Exempt residents within the San Marcos Consolidated Independent School District boundary from the fee**
- **Direct staff to develop specific fee proposals to be brought back to Council in an ordinance**

Council also requested that staff consider rate consistency with other park facilities and ensure the system remains accessible to all users, including those who may not have access to cashless payment options.

IV. Question and Answer Session with Press and Public.

There were no questions from the press or public.

V. Adjournment.

Mayor Hughson adjourned the workshop of the City Council on Tuesday, January 6, 2026 at 9:11 p.m.

Elizabeth Trevino, City Clerk

Jane Hughson, Mayor

