



# City of San Marcos

## Work Session Meeting Minutes City Council

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Tuesday, April 20, 2021

3:00 PM

Virtual

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**This meeting was held using conferencing software due to COVID-19 rules.**

### I. Call To Order

**With a quorum present, the work session of the San Marcos City Council was called to order by Mayor Hughson at 3:00 p.m. Tuesday, April 20, 2021. The meeting was held online.**

### II. Roll Call

**Mayor Pro Tem Derrick arrived after roll call at 3:30 p.m.**

**Present:** 7 - Mayor Pro Tem Melissa Derrick, Mayor Jane Hughson, Council Member Maxfield Baker, Council Member Saul Gonzales, Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Shane Scott, Council Member Alyssa Garza and Council Member Mark Gleason

### PRESENTATIONS

1. Receive a Staff presentation and hold discussion on the Resource Recovery Request for Proposal - 3 month update, and provide direction to the City Manager.

**Bert Lumbreras, City Manager, provided an update regarding the 3-month update on the Garbage Request For Proposal (RFP). In January, Council asked Staff to review alternative programs and services to include in the prospective RFP. Mr. Lumbreras introduced Amy Thomaides, Community Enhancement Initiatives Manager, to provide the presentation.**

**Mrs. Thomaides stated the purpose and outlined the progress since January 2021. She stated the survey evaluation was completed which included random sampling from each service area with the survey conducted in both English and Spanish. The RFP process has begun and the basic services have been updated from the 2003 RFP. Mrs. Thomaides noted that staff is gathering information regarding sustainable practices by looking at Solid Waste Environmental Excellence Performance standards.**

**Chase Stapp, Director of Public Safety, stated that a different Council started this process last year and he wants to confirm this Council still wants to move**

forward with the RFP process.

Staff is seeking direction from Council on whether the City should go out for bid or honor the 5-year extension.

Council Member Scott noted he likes competition, but this is not a good time to change contracts. We are under a contract and we have so much to do to help our community get back on its feet and should stick with the contract we are in and definitely do the RFP in 2024. This will work best for the community.

Council Member Gleason also supports competition he noted we have an existing contract with them. He is concerned about the appearance of breaking a contract. He wants to do the RFP in 2024.

Council Member Baker noted the request for an RFP was to ensure we have the best deal. He prefers to do an RFP at this time.

Mayor Hughson stated we should stay with the five-year contract we are in.

Council Member Gonzales prefers to do an RFP now.

Council Member Garza stated that staying with the current contract is best for our residents at this time due to the pandemic.

Council Member Derrick was absent for this discussion.

The consensus was to move forward with honoring the 5-year contract but agree with the staff recommendation to require an RFP in May 2024.

2. Receive status reports and updates on the 2021 Winter Storm; and provide direction to the City Manager.

Mr. Lumbreras provided an update related to the after-action report on Winter Storm Uri. He stated Staff worked around the clock through some very challenging weather in order to restore power and water to residents, deliver meals and water, secure shelter, monitor and update social media, take calls, and conduct utility welfare checks. Mr. Lumbreras stated there were lessons learned and staff is preparing for when a disaster happens again.

Kelly Kistner, Fire Marshal/Interim Emergency Management Coordinator, noted the impact of the required power outages by ERCOT and the associated water issues including damaged pipes. He stated the purpose of this report is to

review actions, analyze results, identify strengths to be maintained, identify potential areas for further improvement, and support development of corrective actions.

On February 13, 2021, Mayor Hughson issued an emergency declaration for Winter Storm Uri, also known as the President's Day Weekend Winter Storm. Mr. Kistner stated this was a real world incident that tested Infrastructure Systems, Logistics and Supply Chain Management, Situational Assessment, Operational Coordination, Operational Communication, Public Information and Warning which were all tested during this event. Mr. Kistner provided the strengths, improvements and recommendations for each of these areas.

He provided statistics related to the volume of calls received and responded to by our Fire, Police, and Electric Department. The city responded to 20,000 calls for service. Police and fire combined responded to over 7,000 of those calls. The rest were utility related. The City provided Hays County with assistance in opening warming centers and arranged for three school district buses daily in strategic locations within the City to be utilized for the same purpose. The City also distributed approximately 36,000 bottles (1,125 cases) of water and 1,500 meals & food bags to San Marcos residents in need. The City assisted various organizations to ensure people had shelter in this storm, mainly through hotels.

Mr. Kistner provided the strengths and areas of improvements within each of these areas.

In the Infrastructure area, our strengths were responses by the Electric Utility and the Water department to restore power and water to residents often before many of the surrounding areas. Both the Police Department and the Fire Department assisted in delivering meals as well as bottled water to City residents. Recommendations include an Outage tracking system, Redundant Internet Service Provider, Redundant A/C for servers, Generator maintenance and fuel source, and Winterize City Facilities to a lower temperature that previously determined.

In the area of Logistics and Supply Chain Management our Strengths were the assistance by Non-governmental Organizations (NGO's), Faith Based Groups & Community Volunteerism, Warming Stations, and Care of City Personnel, many of whom had to stay in San Marcos for the duration of the storm which including room and board for several days. Improvements we will pursue include dedicated Emergency Fuel sources including Purchasing and Transport

for city mission-critical vehicles. We also have a need to transport large amounts of fuel for generators, etc. and bulk storage of fuel. Regarding Mass Care Services, we did well with Identification of local vendors to provide food and water, hotel services for employees, Warming Centers, and Water distribution.

Mr. Kistner noted the Recommendations of Training Sessions on City's Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) for this level of a winter storm, Review task assignments, Develop Standard Operating Procedures for warming centers, Regarding Operational Coordination, we did a very good job because we had good working relationships between City Departments and community-based organizations. This is the first time we have used a short-term natural disaster Virtual Emergency Operation Center. Microsoft Teams software was used for communications and we will refine that process. A re-write of the City's Emergency Operations Plan was just completed prior to the storm and provided a good guidebook. Improvements have been made since the event to include what we learned.

Mr. Kistner continued that our Public Information & Warning was very good. It included detailed plans for activation and managing public information and warning activities; Highly trained and experienced Communications staff; Multiple information dissemination platforms; and Successful social media and use of the Warn Central Texas system. We will continue to build a partnership with Hays County and develop a plan for a Joint Information Center (JIC).

He noted all of the work done prior to the storm including pre-treatment of streets and information warnings about the potential impact of the storm.

He noted that we opened an inbound call center within 12 hours of the start of the event to assist the 9-1-1 dispatch center with call volume. Staff volunteered to call 30,000 residences.

Improvements will be made through more training.

Kristy Stark, Director of Communications and Intergovernmental Relations, provided information related to the communications team and the work that was completed during this event. Mrs. Stark stated Social Media Communication, website, press releases and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) were utilized in an effort to reach citizens. Mrs. Stark provided first responder calls, incident responses and police and fire personnel, Street safety, critical needs, and water/utility statistics.

**Tyler Hjorth, Assistant Director of Public Services, provided information related to the San Marcos Electric Utility and their role during the winter storm which include identifying the sources and locations of issues. Mr. Hjorth provided the timeline and number of customers that had power outages. Mr. Hjorth provided the hours worked by the San Marcos Electric Utility employees during this time and the amount of equipment and supplies needed. He noted that there were NO vehicle accidents or injuries and there will be no adverse financial impact to our customers. There will not be a utility rate increase, nor pass through energy costs.**

**Tom Taggart, Director of Public Services, provided information related to the Transportation Department. To prepare for this event, 24-hour operations include sanding streets and snow removal was implemented, real-time traffic monitoring system and camera feeds with Fire, Police, and EOC to manage and communicate roadway issues was utilized, multiple traffic signals were repaired due to power outages, vehicles were provided with fuel tanks to aid in fueling backup generators, and message boards were installed on I-35 warning of icy conditions.**

**Mr. Taggart provided information on Water/Wastewater Operations. The challenges included:**

- High Water Demand - Frozen pipe breaks and running faucets caused 14 million gallon a day usage, usually 7 million a day during this season.**
- Reduced Pressure in System - Caused by water supply reduction due to power outages and heavy demand**
- Citywide Boil Water Notice Required- Lasted for 4 days (2/17 to 2/21)**
- Water Service Loss to Some Areas - Customers at highest elevations & farthest from plant had low or no pressure**
- Wastewater Release Adjacent to River - 1 million gallons released due to power loss & generator failure**
- Extended fuel use by all generators - 5000 gallons of fuel transported by staff in 100-200 gallon tanks**

**The successes included:**

- Maintained water production throughout event (reduced volumes)**
- Communications Dept. pre-communicated winter freeze precautions**
- Everbridge precautionary boil notice to all customers**
- Performed all turn off requests same day received**
- Resolved site problems as quickly as conditions allowed**
- Strong teamwork with whole organization and GBRA/Jacobs staff**

- **Great staff dedication under tough conditions**

**Recommended improvements:**

**Weatherization (insulation, heat tracing) of tank valves, piping and instrument supply lines**

- **Back up power supply on modems and communications equipment**
- **Fuel tankage, transport tanker trucks and direct supply contracts**
- **Enhanced generator equipment testing**
- **Enhanced traction for vehicles (chains, winter tires., 4X4s)**

**Mr. Taggart noted all others who assisted with supplies and services.**

**Mayor Hughson expressed her sincere appreciation to the employees, citizens and everyone that helped with this event.**

**Council Member Gleason expressed his appreciation to the staff. He was impressed with how the community came together.**

**Council Member Garza expressed her appreciation to staff. She stated that she worked with some outside agencies and some leaders of these organizations expressed frustration with working with the City so she would like to ensure we work with them in the future. She would like to know what we can do to bridge the disconnect. Mr. Stapp stated they have not received feedback from everyone, however one need that came out of this, is the need to form a Community Organization Active in Disasters (COAD) group. As part of this process, the City will solicit feedback. Council Member Garza wants to ensure we work on getting the word out to everyone to inform them of the services that were available during this time.**

**Mayor Hughson stated Staff was able to pivot and accommodate when needs arose from the Community. The assistance from the community was needed to identify the locations where people needed help. Staff was able to procure items, on short notice, to get necessary supplies to the community.**

**Council Member Baker asked if there is a preliminary price tag for some of the recommendations mentioned in the presentation. He inquired about the need for a more permanent emergency shelter for these types of emergencies. Mr. Stapp stated there is not a cost tally at this point, but staff is working on this and possible funding. In terms of shelter there are plans for an Emergency Shelter but the lack of electricity caused a challenge and these shelters may provide no more warmth than a person's home. Staff is looking at additional**

generators.

Council Member Baker inquired about underground utilities and if this would have been beneficial in this event. Mr. Hjorth stated he would advocate for underground utilities in most cases. It would have cut down on some of the impact, but that alone would not solve the problem. Much of the problem was due to electrical appliances, etc. that were plugged in and when the power was restored, there was too much to address.

Mr. Taggart stated the situation at the main lift station is that they had a belt and suspender type approach and the cycling on and off is what damaged the system.

Council Member Baker inquired about the effluent that was released into the river. He asked if there are plans to capture this or is there another fail proof plan in place. Mr. Taggart addressed this and stated this and given the quantity of the overflow, in this case the length of the event and nature of the outages is what caused this to fail. Mr. Taggart stated there is not a lot that can be done to contain such a large amount of flow, but he did state this did not include a lot of sewage. The flow was mostly fresh water due to running faucets. The City has not received any reports of any environmental effects to the river. Staff will look at back up power supplies as well.

Council Member Gonzales expressed his gratitude to all staff. He inquired about the Emergency Operation Center (EOC) and if Council Members are included in those conversations in the EOC. Mr. Stapp stated it is not typical to have Council Members in the EOC. He noted that he sent status updates daily to the Council.

Council Member Gonzales inquired about water pressure (PSI) and what would happen if a fire broke out. Mr. Stapp stated there are fire trucks that have water that can be hauled and do not require pumping so a hydrant is not necessary at all times. Mr. Taggart said they were pressurized in many areas so these trucks could be filled quickly if needed. Les Stephens, Fire Chief, stated they do have contingencies in place and can utilize other entities through mutual aid agreements. They typically have about 2000 gallons on hand at any given time. We also have mutual aid agreements with fire departments in the surrounding area who can help provide water.

Mayor Pro Tem Derrick thanked staff. She said there were a lot of needs after this event related to burst pipes which led to health concerns. She spoke of the

work by Splash Coworking and their work with faith based organizations in our community. She spoke on process they created at Cuauhtemoc Hall as they were handing out food, water, and providing diapers, formula, and hygiene products. She would suggest the City to lead this charge in future events.

Council Member Gleason asked if the City identified the neighborhoods that had most of the issues during the surges. Mr. Hjorth stated these areas have been identified and Staff is working to ensure the transformers and fuses are the correct sizes. When transformers were replaced, Staff has actually increased these sizes. Council Member Gleason inquired about emergency notification phone calls coming through as Spam.

Council Member Baker asked what we are doing to assist those that may still have outstanding concerns. He also inquired about funds in our home rehabilitation program that could be utilized. Mr. Stapp stated staff is looking at partnering with some organizations to assist with identification of the need and how to address these concerns.

Council Member Baker asked if there is discussion about the need for a Resolution to our congressional leaders regarding the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT). Mr. Hjorth stated there is a lot of legislation about hardening the system but Staff has met with the lobbyist to explain what they saw locally and the impact to our citizens. Mrs. Stark stated the issue of ERCOT is front and center but Staff can look at placing a Resolution forward. Staff will continue to testify and look at any specific legislation related to this.

Council asked Staff to identify a way to encourage our legislature to take some type of action on this.

Council Member Garza wants to ensure we work on the education piece and find ways to share information even in a non-traditional way.

Mr. Lumbreras thanked Staff and City Council and additional follow up will be provided in the future.

### III. Adjournment.

A motion was made by Council Member Gleason, seconded by Council Member Baker, to adjourn the work session of the City Council at 4:51p.m. The motion carried by the following vote:



**For:** 7 - Mayor Pro Tem Derrick, Mayor Hughson, Council Member Baker, Council Member Gonzales, Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Scott, Council Member Garza and Council Member Gleason

**Against:** 0

**Tammy K. Cook, Interim City Clerk**

**Jane Hughson, Mayor**