

**MERCEDES CITY COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MAY 6, 2025 – 6:30 PM
MERCEDES CITY HALL – COMMISSION CHAMBERS
400 S. OHIO AVE., MERCEDES, TX 78570**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Oscar Montoya
Commissioner Joe Martinez
Commissioner Jacob Howell
Commissioner Armando Garcia
Mayor Pro-Tem Ruben Saldana

MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT: Alberto Perez, City Manager
Joselynn Castillo, City Secretary
Martie Garcia Vela, City Attorney
Patricio Rene Avila, Assistant City Manager
Meredith Hernandez, Interim Finance Director
Francisco Sanchez, Police Chief
Michael Rocha, I.T Director
Tom Villagomez, Public Works Director
Marisol Vidales, Library Director
Richard Morin, Recreation Director
Kristine Longoria, Human Resources
Denisse Hernandez, Interim Planning Director

OTHERS PRESENT: Juan Vasquez, Ruth Valdez, Eduardo Castellanos, Nellie Zamora, Jeniffer Diaz, Triana Guel

1. Call Meeting to Order

Mayor Montoya welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

2. Establish Quorum

All members of the Commission were present, which constitutes a full quorum.

3. Invocation by Mayor Montoya

4. Pledge of Allegiance by Mayor Pro-Tem Saldana

5. Open Forum

Mr. Alberto Cano addressed the Commission regarding the recent rain event. He expressed that the water receded much more quickly compared to previous years and commended the efforts of the Police Department and City Commission for working together effectively during the event. No action was taken, as the item was presented for public comment only.

6. Presentation

a. Financial Audit 2023-2024

Mr. Adrian Webb informed the commission about the audit for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2024. Mr. Webb stated their report concluded with an unmodified opinion with four findings. The findings included control over reporting of Financial Information, Improving Internal Controls over Financial Reporting, Capital Assets, and Expenditures over appropriations. He presented the financial highlights, which included the City's net position increased by \$2,705,869. The revenues for the City's business-type charges for services increased to \$7,194,478 from \$6,714,279 and expenses increased from \$6,487,686 to \$6,512,456. The general fund ended the year with a fund balance of \$12,000,175.00, a \$2,075,836.00, an increase from the prior year's balance of \$9,924,339.00. Revenues were \$2,223,513 more than the final budget, and expenditures were \$472,417 more than the final budget. This resulted in a total positive budget to an actual variance of \$1,751,096.00, not including other financing sources.

It was recommended to hire a company to review the city finance books quarterly. The City has also provided their corrective action plan to correct the material weaknesses. No further discussion.

7. Consent Agenda

a. Approval of Minutes for Meeting(s) held April 15, 2025

b. Approval of Second and Final Reading of Ordinance 2025-08 to rezone Hacienda Olivia Ph 4

c. Approval of Second and Final Reading of Ordinance 2025-09 to rezone Lot 15 Woodlawn Acres Subdivision

Commissioner Martinez made motion to approve items a,b, & c and discuss item d separately. Mayor Pro-Tem Saldana second motion. Upon a called vote, the motion passed unanimously.

d. Approval of surplus items for disposition to be placed at auction

At a question, Mr. Villagomez stated the compressor has been replaced with a new one and although both pictures of the compressor are included only the old one is being auctioned. Commissioner Martinez motioned to approve. Mayor Pro-Tem Saldana seconded the motion. Upon a called vote, the motion passed unanimously.

8. Management Items: Present, discuss, consider and possibly take action regarding:

a. Approval of appointment(s) to the Planning & Zoning Commission

Commissioner Martinez motioned to approve the reappointment of Mr. Leonard Garcia and Mr. Jonathan Munoz for a one-year term. Commissioner Garcia seconded. Upon a called vote, the motion passed unanimously.

b. Final Plat Approval for Camino de Verdad Ph 2

Commissioner Martinez motioned to approve the final plat for Camino de Verdad Phase 2. Commissioner Garcia seconded the motion.

Interim Planning Director Ms. Hernandez presented the item, mentioning that the

development covers approximately 22.76 acres and includes 76 four-complex lots. Commissioner Martinez raised a question regarding the roadway, which lies partially within both the City of Weslaco and the City of Mercedes. City Manager Alberto responded that discussions had taken place approximately a month and a half ago regarding the possibility of coordinating with Weslaco to connect the roadway or work collaboratively on the matter. Upon a called vote, the motion passed unanimously.

9. Ordinances/Resolutions

- a. Approval of First Reading of Ordinance 2025-10 to Abandoned Drainage Easement at Mercedes Light Industrial Park Subdivision

Commissioner Howell motioned to approve and forego the reading of Ordinance 2025-10. Commissioner Martinez seconded the motion. Upon a called vote, the motion passed unanimously. City Manager Alberto stated that the project is ready to begin. Mayor Montoya clarified that the ordinance pertains to an abandoned drainage easement.

- b. Approval of First Reading of Ordinance 2025-11 amending the Conditional Use Permit Ordinance

Mayor Pro-Tem Saldana motioned to approve and forego the reading of Ordinance 2025-11. Commissioner Martinez seconded the motion. Upon a called vote, the motion passed unanimously. The proposed amendment addresses Conditional Use Permits (CUPs). Mayor Pro-Tem Saldana inquired about the inclusion of convents, expressing the need to incorporate them into the CUP ordinance to better regulate similar uses—such as churches—under city discretion.

- c. Approval of First Reading of Ordinance 2025-12 amending the R-MH Zoning Ordinance

Commissioner Martinez motioned to approve and forego the reading of Ordinance 2025-12. Mayor Pro-Tem Saldana seconded the motion. Upon a called vote, the motion passed unanimously. During the discussion, Mayor Pro-Tem Saldana asked Interim Planning Director Ms. Hernandez if this ordinance was the same one originally signed by former City Manager Hinojosa years ago, and requested clarification on what had changed in the updated version. Denisse responded that the ordinance was rewritten to be more readable and that changes were made specifically to the business license procedures and associated pricing.

- d. Approval of Resolution No. 2025-13 suspending the date and rate increase by Texas Gas Service

Commissioner Martinez motioned to approve resolution 2025-13. Mayor Pro-Tem Saldana seconded. Upon a called vote, the motion passed unanimously.

10. Bids/Contracts

- a. Approval to renew the Interlocal Agreement between the City of Mercedes and the County of Hidalgo regarding On-Site Sewage Facility (OSSF)

Commissioner Martinez motioned to approve the Interlocal Agreement between the City of Mercedes and the County of Hidalgo regarding the OSSF. Mayor Pro-Tem Saldana seconded. Upon a called vote, the motion passed unanimously.

11. Monthly Departmental Reports

a. Planning Monthly Report

Interim Planning Director Denisse Hernandez presented the monthly report, noting that 10 new permits were issued for developments including Valley Ranch, Camino Real, and Stable Estates. She also mentioned a new subdivision coming soon on approximately 40 acres. Discussion followed regarding ongoing developments and property sales in the local market.

b. Library Monthly Report

Library Director Ms. Vidales presented the Library's monthly report, announcing that they received grants for projects including a display of photos and history in collaboration with Jacinto College Treviño. She highlighted the success of the March Sky Fest event, which attracted over 600 attendees throughout the day and was combined with an Easter celebration. Marisol also mentioned the writing challenge, which received over 40 entries, and upcoming plans for a creative writing workshop in July that will offer scholarships to children throughout the year. Mayor Pro-Tem Saldana noted that several projects were signed in March. Marisol confirmed that all projects were fully funded and, if approved, will continue until August. Mayor Oscar Montoya inquired about the usage of library machines. Marisol reported that there is ample room, the machines are efficient, and the library receives good attendance in the afternoons after school hours.

c. Finance Monthly Report

Meredith Hernandez presented the Finance Department's monthly report. She reported that sales tax revenue was slightly under 3% compared to the previous year but expressed optimism that sales would pick up during the summer months, especially at the outlet mall. Meredith also noted that expenditures are being limited to emergency needs only at this time.

d. Rec Center Monthly Report

Commissioner Martinez inquired about the status of the outdoor lights, emphasizing that many children use the facilities and suggested potentially involving the Foster Grandparents Program, which includes adults aged 55 and older, to help with arts and crafts, special activities, and kitchen programs for kids. Commissioner Martinez also suggested reaching out to local schools to connect with soon-to-retire staff members who might be interested in joining the program. Recreation Director Mr. Morin responded that the lights are currently on every day but acknowledged there are timing issues that need to be addressed. He also noted that the Pony League has been receiving many calls regarding the facilities.

e. City Secretary/HR Monthly Report

City Secretary Ms. Castillo and Human Resources Ms. Longoria presented the City Secretary and Human Resources monthly report. They provided updates on current hiring needs, noting that the city is actively hiring for the Police Department, Public Works, and Parks Works. She also informed the commission about the number of vacancies in each department. Commissioner Martinez asked about the hiring process. Ms. Longoria explained that Police and Fire positions are advertised year-round, including postings on

Indeed. The respective department heads review applications and conduct interviews to ensure candidates meet all certification requirements. Once a candidate is vetted, HR also participates in the interview process, and the final hiring approval is made by the City Manager. Commissioner Martinez emphasized the importance of department heads feeling comfortable with their hires, as those employees become their direct responsibility. Mayor Pro-Tem Saldana inquired about the availability of remote access to vital statistics, specifically for requesting birth and death certificates. Ms. Castillo responded that remote access is not currently available in the City of Mercedes, largely because most individuals request or require the long-form versions, which must be issued in person by the City in which they are born.

f. Fire Department Monthly Report

Fire Chief Javier Campos presented the Fire Department's monthly report. He announced that the department is expecting delivery of a new brush truck within the next two weeks. Current average response times were reported as 8 minutes for Fire Department calls and 3 minutes for EMS. Chief Campos noted the upcoming hurricane season and gave an update on flood-related damage. The city has submitted documentation totaling approximately \$1.5 million in damages. Rio Delta prepared a full damage assessment, which took four weeks to compile. All individual assistance documentation has been submitted, and public assistance is still under review. The Fire Department has continued to drive through the city to monitor flood-prone areas and evaluate potential improvements. He also noted that the media continues to post public information on how to seek damage assistance. The “5 Paws” animal program is still in progress. Mayor Montoya emphasized the importance of obtaining GIS data for drainage, water, and sewer systems, including details such as pipe sizes and flow capacity. The mayor also stated that a finance department staff representative needs to be available throughout any future storm events for coordination and support.

g. IT Monthly Report

IT Director Mr. Rocha reported that the department's major current project is the redevelopment of the city website. The new platform will include subscription options for alerts on city events and water service interruptions. He also noted progress in converting numerous documents—primarily PDFs—into accessible formats online. The digital application process has been performing well. An online feedback tool has been launched for residents to suggest improvements, though no feedback has been submitted thus far. Mayor Montoya praised the improved professionalism in the IT Department, stating that the public is finally receiving the services they’ve long requested. Mayor Pro-Tem Saldana requested that future reports include metrics on how many users are navigating the city’s website.

Additional Department Updates (Called by Mayor Montoya)

Public Works Department

Public Works Director Mr. Villagomez reported ongoing maintenance efforts, including purchasing new hoses and completing work on 11th Street by the end of the week. In

response to Mayor Montoya's question about alleyway repairs, Tomas stated that while work had been paused, it would resume soon. Work is also being conducted on Orange Street and pothole patching across the city. The Mayor complimented the improvement in street patching and encouraged the continued effort. Mayor Pro-Tem Saldana raised a concern about drainage on Mile 1 ½ East. Tomas responded that District 1 had done limited cleaning, but complete access requires fence removal—raising legal questions about jurisdiction. He also noted that over 42 tires had been collected from that ditch. Tomas announced the upcoming City-Wide Cleanup this weekend, noting most of the dumped tires were "market tires." Commissioner Martinez suggested improving lighting and installing cameras in commonly targeted dump areas. Mayor Montoya agreed and stated the city needs a formal protocol for tire shops and should cite businesses that do not cooperate with proper disposal.

Police Department

Police Chief Sanchez gave an update, noting the department has received grants used to support community events, such as a recent fishing tournament, which also encouraged safe driving practices. Commissioner Martinez proposed conducting community surveys to understand public perception and build trust. Chief Sanchez agreed, emphasizing that the department's goal is to build closer relationships with residents, so community members feel comfortable reporting issues and concerns directly to the Police Department.

- 12. Executive Session: Chapter 551, Texas Government Code, Section 551.071 (Consultation with Attorney), Section 551.072 (Deliberation regarding Real Property), Section 551.074 (Personnel Matters) and Section 551.087 (Economic Development)**
Commissioner/Mayor Pro-Tem Martinez motioned to go into executive session.
Commissioner/Mayor Pro-Tem Garcia seconded. Upon a called vote, the motion passed unanimously. The meeting went into executive session at 8:13 p.m.

- a. Discussion with City Manager regarding personnel matters - Section 551.074
- b. Consultation with Attorney regarding update on litigation - Section 551.071
- c. Consultation with Attorney regarding Project Updates - Section 551.087

13. Open Session

Mayor Montoya called the meeting back to order at 9:00 p.m.

- a. Possible Action pertaining to executive session item A
No action
- b. Possible Action pertaining to executive session item B
No action
- c. Possible Action pertaining to executive session item C
No action

14. Adjournment

Commissioner Martinez motioned to adjourn. Commissioner Garcia seconded. Upon a

called vote, the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:01 p.m.

[MIN_SIGNATURES]