



## City of Rio Communities Council Special Workshop

City Council Chambers - 360 Rio Communities Blvd

Rio Communities, NM 87002

Tuesday, July 12, 2022 10:00 AM

**Minutes**

*Please silence all electronic devices.*

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### Call to Order

- Mayor Joshua Ramsell called the City Council Special Workshop to order at 10:13 am.

### Attendees

- PRESENT: Mayor Joshua Ramsell, Mayor Pro-tem Margaret R. Gutjahr, Councilor Arthur Apodaca, Councilor Lawrence Gordon, Councilor Jimmie Winters.
  - Present: City Manager Dr. Martin Moore, Municipal Clerk Elizabeth Adair, Fire Chief/Code Enforcement Director Andrew Tabet.

### Law Enforcement

- Manager Dr. Moore began a discussion on the call outs in the community around 228 of the 233 calls where for Rio Communities as well as some for extra patrol just for one month, he showed a date range from LexisNexis community crime map and explained what icons can be shown and proceeds to explain the functions as well as explains why people have not been reporting incidents due to long wait times and officers not responding due to another incident.
- Councilor Gutjahr said for clarity this is the same thing that will happen if we have officers.
- Manager Dr. Moore continued with the crime map and showed how much different Belen and Rio Communities are on the crime map as well as showing council Valencia County and how much crime is around.
- Councilor Gutjahr said to remember that Belen has 25 officers, and we have 1 plus backup the citizens really wanted us to go for a police chief back in 2015. She continued by saying there was a different website back then and anyone had access to it, she categorized where the most crime was located and only had 3 locations where you had meaningful calls but, on this map, now she describes the pattern had changed but not so much, but this is the right way to go.
- Manager Dr. Moore continued with the discussion by stating on one side of town it appears to have more domestics than others as well as a part of town that has more deaths than others. He then said we can consider ourselves fortunate that our crime rate is where it is right now.
- Manager Dr. Moore said an issue in front of us is talking about law enforcement as our final year with the Sheriffs Department is here and with a possibility for an extension, we are pulling out of the community policing service, and continued with the discussion.
- Manager Dr. Moore said this is a hypothetical decision looking at a critical path for approximately 6 months to getting a police chief that's with remodeling as well as getting new police equipment/cars.
- Councilor Gordon asked what the scenario is for getting officers after the police chief.
- Manager Dr. Moore explained the scenario is within the first 6 months getting a chief and then by July of the following year you will be ready to hire several officers depending on revenue. He then said if the Sheriffs office gives us an addition 6 months

hopefully a year but if not then we will start the hiring process as soon, hopefully, as May if not July next fiscal year and then start having them do trainings as well as team up with the Sheriff's department so they can get insight on where to patrol the most in our community.

- Councilor Apodaca said last time we attended the VALEO meeting, The Mayor of Belen brought up to have a discussion having a County Law enforcement agency instead of having one of municipalities having their own. Then said looking into the future he's not sure if this would be a point of discussion but just wanted to bring this to attention. He continued stating that each city across the county have all been having problems with their own police departments, and this is why a county wide police force has been brought up.
- Manager Dr. Moore said in relationship to having a community of 7k people and a total department of 25 in Belen and continued with the discussion with if the city wants law enforcement and if they do then it will be a very critical 6-month path. He continued by saying this is a very aggressive agenda but a doable agenda.
- Councilor Gutjahr said what is suggesting is critical as well as keeping in mind about the comprehensive plan that meets through public safety but agrees that they need to keep mentioning it is a critical part of public safety. She continued by explaining without neighborhoods, lighting and as well as fire department and EMT and cleanup then the city would have to have way more officers than they do now.
- Manager Dr. Moore said there are certain communities that do not have these other areas in place and its not a complete reason but a factor as to why they are struggling and behind on effectiveness in law enforcement and continued with the discussion.
- Manager Dr. Moore said a community of our size and type, 3-5 officers is reasonable since we are not heavily retail as of yet and a critical component for us to attract new businesses is the amount of officers we are able to fund.
- Councilor Winters said we are fortunate we are a small city geographically as far as our residential and commercial wise being at the growing stage this is a great start for this process for the police department since we didn't have a choice initially till this point. He continued by saying having a county wide police force is appealing to him but would be a very long road especially with 6 different egos involved, not to mention if there is a county police force there would be a county wide tax.
- Councilor Gordon said in Camden NJ they have had they County police department and has been a model for states as well as counties and then proceeded to explain the process of what they did.
- Manager Dr. Moore said they have a joint aid as well as police chiefs, assistant chiefs, sheriffs, and undersheriffs who meet frequently as well frequent communication and proceeded to give an example of how the county wide would benefit Valencia County.
- Councilor Gordon asked if we have repeater system for radios and other equipment.
- Fire Chief Tabet said yes, we do currently have 4 different repeat system, and as of yesterday have gotten an updated system.
- Manager Dr. Moore said some areas have 5g technology and continued the discussion.
- Councilor Winters said it sounds like the mechanical issues make the process easier would just leave accounting left as well as manpower and allegations.
- Fire Chief Tabet said yes, and every agency in Valencia County is cross deputized with the police.

- Councilor Gutjahr said right before COVID she was sitting on the public safety board for NMML and that was a huge conversation about inability to be able to this. She continued by explaining there were only 3 elected officials out of 90 people the rest were EMS head or police chiefs. She finished by saying there were 2 big conversations, one was guns away from the mentally ill without breaking the first amendment and the second was cross deputization.
- Fire Chief Tabet said they constructed a unified command task when the blue hole fire had happened and continued with the discussion.
- Manager Dr. Moore continued with the presentation on revenue sources and explained the most steady revenue would be property taxes. He started by saying the current setup that municipalities are allowed to allocate is 2.75 and the counties allocation is at 2.6. He continued to say we have available 4.9 mills of the taxable assessed value of the home.
- Manager Dr. Moore said with talking with the Mayor, we would need an additional \$250,000 for a police chief and 2 officers and continued with the discussion.
- Manager Dr. Moore stated vehicles and equipment would be purchased with available cash, and said there is about \$300k, plus or minus, in capital investments. He continued to explain how switching the mill levy can benefit to the city for us to add a police chief and a few officers as well as having funds for additional trainings and such.
- Mayor Ramsell said we can try to apply for an MFA loan and stretch those funds as well as stretching vehicle purchases out for 5 to 7 years.
- Councilor Gordon said you shouldn't stretch the funds over 4 to 5 years, because the equipment needs replacements frequently.
- Fire Chief Tabet said with the vehicle purchases we can always get them off a state contract.
- Manager Dr. Moore started to explain the breakdown of the increase of mills by market value.
- Councilor Winter asked if he knew what the average would be.
- Manager Dr. Moore said he had the total assessed value for residential.
- Councilor Apodaca said if you divided it by month on a \$400k increase in property tax for a \$300k home it would only be \$33 a month, and he thinks residents would pay that for the law enforcement to be in the city and continued the discussion.
- Councilor Gutjahr said she thinks this is very sellable to residents.
- Manager Dr. Moore said this is the giving a range for the next presentation you are asking for.
- Mayor Ramsell said with talking to residents when your out and about, they say they are more than happy to pay more if we had additional homes, the tune of the city has changed, and people are willing to pay additional to help cover the cost. He continued by saying the idea is this is going towards public safety and as we move forward the dollar amount changes.
- Councilor Winters said there are so new residents within the last year or so and they seem to not have any problems paying higher taxes, and this continued the discussion.
- Mayor Ramsell said yes, they are coming from areas where their municipal rates where in the thousands and living here their rates are only say \$1,800 and then realize the reason they don't have what they were accustom to is because they are no paying for it here.

- Councilor Gutjahr said she thinks it is sometimes to go ahead and ask for the full amount now rather than monthly.
- Mayor Ramsell said that last time that the tax was increased was in 2015 and all council did was continue with the 2.75%. He then said what was also talked about if there was an increase then we would be able to get the police department and get what the fire department needs. He finished with people are more to support if its one lump instead of increasing every quarter and continued with the discussion.
- Manager Dr. Moore used an example if we were looking at the operating cost for 3 officers you are looking at \$500k due to capital costs but looking at operating costs without inflation you're looking at \$250k coming out from the city.
- Mayor Ramsell said the issues would be depleting the revenue cash.
- Manager Dr. Moore continued with the discussion on the possibly liability cost on police officers and making sure there is not excessive spending on left over budget.
- Councilor Gutjahr said we are going to have to look at the overall expenses not just what initially comes up.
- Manager Dr. Moore said yes but due to inflation they were built in.
- Councilor Winters asked where we would house this department.
- Manager Dr. Moore said looking at the building since we are still renovating, we may have enough room to house public works and the police department together in the meantime and began a discussion.
- Councilor Winters said does this give us more leverage to get more funding from the State and the federals since we are adding a department.
- Manager Dr. Moore said tremendously more.
- Mayor Ramsell said we can also apply for grants.
- Manager Dr. Moore said some other areas that is not included in this other revenue source is fines and forfeitures due to the State not allowing that as of right now.
- Manager Dr. Moore explained that the evaluations went down in 2020 but they went back up in 2021 about the same as 2019 levels and continued with the discussion.
- Councilor Gutjahr said so it may go back up from the revenues.
- Manager Dr. Moore said yes.
- Mayor Ramsell said if Council does put anything in place on July 31st of this year it would go into effect in January 2023, if after that it will not be in effect until 2024, and then asked if we could be a special workshop on Monday evening at 6:00 pm.

## **Adjourn**

- The City Council Special Workshop was adjourned at 11:53 am.

Respectfully submitted,

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Elizabeth F. Adair, Municipal Clerk  
(Transcribed by Cheyenne Sullivan, Assistant Clerk)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved:

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Joshua Ramsell,  
Mayor

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Margaret R. Gutjahr,  
Mayor Pro-tem/Councilor

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Arthur Apodaca,  
Councilor

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Lawrence R. Gordon,  
Councilor

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Jimmie Winters,  
Councilor