

**SPECIAL MEETING
of the
CITY OF RIALTO
CITY COUNCIL
WORKSHOP**

**MINUTES
October 7, 2021**

A special meeting of the City Council of the City of Rialto was held in the City Council Chambers located at 150 South Palm Avenue, Rialto, California 92376, on Thursday, October 7, 2021.

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This meeting was called by the presiding officer of the Rialto City Council in accordance with the provisions of **Government Code §54956** of the State of California.

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CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Deborah Robertson called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m.

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Pledge of Allegiance

City Manager Marcus Fuller led the Pledge of Allegiance.

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The roll was called, and the following were present: Mayor Deborah Robertson, Mayor Pro Tem Ed Scott, Council Member Rafael Trujillo, Council Member Andy Carrizales and Council Member Karla Perez. Also present were City Manager Marcus Fuller, City Attorney Eric Vail, and City Clerk Barbara McGee.

City Treasurer Edward Carrillo was absent.

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Marcus Fuller, City Manager, and Lissette Montoya with Avant-Garde presented staff report to Request City Council to Provide Direction to Staff on the Use and Allocation of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funding.

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City Treasurer Edward Carrillo arrived at 5:47 p.m.

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Mayor Pro Tem Scott believed the storefront business assistance program is not very effective. He suggested a program that incentivizes employees to return to work by offering money to businesses to pay bonuses to get people to return to work. That would be money better spent to get people off of unemployment. He believes more funds need to be increased for SWAG and homelessness. Police Chief Kling has some ideas on how to improve the program. The rental/mortgage assistance does not seem to be very effective. We should encourage people to use the State's rental/mortgage assistance program.

As I go into the capital projects, I see the police station as being too big a dent for this money; and I think there's other ways we can pay for a police station. I totally support a new station.

The Items listed on Attachment A are great items. I would support all of them. Obviously, we couldn't put \$30 million into streets. I do believe the most important priority for our residents is our streets, and a large portion should be allocated into streets. Ten million dollars would be appropriate.

He inquired on the \$5 million dollars for AMI (Advanced Meter Infrastructure) on Attachment B related to the water budget.

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Tom Crowley, Utilities Manager stated there is \$5 million available in the facility improvement.

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Mayor Pro Tem Scott asked why is \$7.5 being proposed.

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Mr. Crowley stated it was one that was identified. We can allocate those funds, if it pleases the City Council.

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Mayor Pro Tem Scott stated that is what those AMI funds are for and should be used for. I don't anticipate raising water rates any time soon or we actually may have to raise water rates but I know wastewater is pretty flush. My understanding is that wastewater is paying for itself. So why would we want to take \$5 million out of this to put in wastewater?

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Mr. Crowley stated we are trying to pursue grant funding for AMI (Advanced Meter Infrastructure) through the Bureau of Reclamation a maximum of \$2 million with the combined \$5 million of the FIP (Facility Improvement Plan).

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Mayor Pro Tem Scott believed there's other grants to spend on water and not have to raise rates. He opposed both those items.

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Council Member Trujillo asked about the possibility of childcare within the small business program. What would it look like to provide childcare for business employees as a hiring incentive?

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Ms. Montoya stated if the funding is going to be provided specifically to the business, then she recommends having a “not-to-exceed” amount provided to each business that employees can receive directly from their employer for childcare assistance. Another alternative method would be if the City is already providing City programs that provide after-school recreation or morning programs would be eligible programs that could be used as expanded programs to hire more City staff or additional hours. So it could be a direct benefit to the City in providing the service or providing a program to the business where they would offer that incentive to their employees.

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Council Member Trujillo asked if paving a road or sidewalks outside the CDBG area would be permissible.

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Ms. Montoya stated yes. Once the area is identified where the project is to occur, then a determination of how that population in that area was impacted by COVID-19.

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Council Member Trujillo asked what it would mean to kickstart the Police Department project.

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City Manager Fuller stated there are different ways. Perhaps a design-build approach with a long-term lease with the builder of the building. That would leverage more funds long term. We need to explore that and start a process. Typically, it's 10 percent of the cost upfront to engage with an architect and all the consultants. Possibly half a million dollars total approximately to start working with a team to put together a solicitation for a design-build approach.

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Council Member Carrizales agreed with Mayor Pro Tem Scott and Council Member Trujillo. He, too, would also like to see start up funds be allocated to the police station.

He inquired about Lake Rialto.

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City Manager Fuller stated grant funding is being pursued for Lake Rialto. All the grant funding has not been obtained for that project. The allowed uses related to water and wastewater are listed under the ARPA funds. It was listed for that reason under the guidelines.

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Mayor Robertson stated she provided City Manager Fuller a list of grants the City should be exploring.

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Council Member Trujillo asked about the Information Technology updates. Is it similar to the City of Riverside's Wi-Fi friendly city? What kind of technologies are involved?

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City Manager Fuller stated it is developing a more robust and better technology platform which then leads to the ability to have better Wi-Fi for us and for the public.

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Arron Brown, Deputy City Manager, stated it is a strategic way to deploy technology. We've responded to the individual needs instead of thinking future-proof.

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Council Member Carrizales stated he would like to see a heavier number on this and implement something similar to what Riverside did strategically in different areas, City Hall, big shopping centers, parks or heavily traffic areas.

He asked about the City-wide security camera system and how much \$3 million dollars can provide. The number seems low.

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City Manager Fuller stated that system is currently being developed. We think the funds are sufficient.

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Deputy City Manager Brown stated it would be based on how robust it grows. But this is a limited scope including some intersections, and parks.

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Mayor Pro Tem Scott asked if this is mostly City facilities.

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Deputy City Manager Brown stated correct.

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Council Member Carrizales stated he would like to see this technology used in brand new and existing parks to possibly upgrade some of the other equipment to match the newer parks.

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Council Member Perez agrees with incentives for small bonuses for employees returning to work. She'd also like to kickstart the police station project as well. The technology upgrades and the citywide camera system would be very beneficial.

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Mayor Robertson thanked Ms. Montoya for the presentation. Mayor Robertson recommended allocating 10 percent of the total funds for social programs such as small business, childcare, and worker incentives.

We need to move something. We need to see progress. I would like to see us focus on whatever we can do to deal with design build for the police station. We need to start that conversation. Ideally, I'd like to see us breaking ground on something by next spring 2022.

Many people were misinformed or not informed. They thought the application periods for getting access to the State and County resources had ended, and it has not. We have to do a better job of getting the message out. More funds need to be allocated towards workforce in helping people get jobs.

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Mayor Pro Tem Scott stated he agrees with the 10 percent recommendation as well.

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Council Member Carrizales recommended having a bilingual outreach and be informed that these programs and funds are available to them.

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Mayor Robertson believed they do a fairly good job but can definitely do more. The message from the Relief Housing Program clearly say these resources are available to people and are not asking questions about citizenship status. I don't know what more we can all do to convince people when they're concerned about coming forward seeking services if they're still not comfortable and trusting.

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Mayor Pro Tem Scott asked if the income levels were the same as the CDBG.

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Ms. Montoya stated that as it relates to rental/mortgage assistance, as long as they are living in the eligible Census tract they're qualified. If they're outside of that qualified Census tract, then they need to establish how the population in that area was affected by COVID-19. There is no strict regulation that has been issued within the guidance that states that we have to stay within the 80 percent income requirement. However, a lot of cities are staying within the parameters.

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Mayor Pro Tem Scott asked if a family of two is \$48,000.

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Mayor Robertson stated she saw a family of three at \$19,000. How can anyone operate on that?

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Ms. Montoya stated she has an updated income limits.

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Mayor Pro Tem Scott asked what is the income level for a family of two under CDBG.

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Ms. Montoya stated it is \$50,600.

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Mayor Pro Tem Scott stated this is the problem with this whole program. You can have a family of two with a \$70,000 income. They've been impacted just as much by COVID-19. They're still buying masks and sanitizers. They're still struggling, and we're not helping them.

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Ms. Montoya stated if there is a family of two that's earning \$70,000 and they live within the Census tract area that has been identified, they will be eligible to receive assistance.

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Mayor Robertson asked without no income restriction?

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Ms. Montoya stated there is no income restriction on the ARPA funds as identified in the interim final rule.

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City Manager Fuller stated that it did not sound from the City Council that there was a desire to expand rental/mortgage assistance so that's where the income limits come into play.

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Mayor Pro Tem Scott stated but it did under utilities and everything else.

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Mayor Robertson stated we're looking at CDBG guidelines, eligible block groups but from my understanding, the ARRA (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) money under the U.S. Department of Treasury doesn't have the same income restriction at 50 or 80 percent. It's about the impact.

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Mayor Pro Tem Scott asked how do you quantify that impact.

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Ms. Montoya stated the CDBG outline was used to establish allocation as well as identifying disproportionately impacted communities. So if you live within that Census tract, you're automatically eligible to receive assistance for any program the City establishes.

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Ms. Montoya stated that if you live outside of the Census tract area, as long as we're able to identify how they've been impacted by COVID-19, then they would be an eligible recipient.

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Council Member Carrizales referenced the map and asked if someone living in the yellow zone, doesn't have to show they've been impacted. If you live outside the yellow areas, you have to show a loss or hardship?

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Ms. Montoya stated you would have to demonstrate how you have been impacted by COVID-19, such as a job loss.

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Mayor Pro Tem Scott stated he has a hard time understanding why these yellow zones exist.

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Council Member Carrizales asked if these yellow zones were created by the City.

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City Manager Fuller stated that's from the Federal government.

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Mayor Pro Tem Scott stated that's from CDBG. So is that based from average income in that area?

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City Manager Fuller stated it's based on Census information, correct.

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Ms. Montoya stated it is based on Census information published by HUD, and that's how the map gets derived.

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City Manager Fuller stated the only reason we had that there was the extent the City Council desired to expand or add more money towards mortgage/rental and utility assistance. Those programs would now be available to those that exceeded the income-levels based on the ARPA guidelines. You live in a yellow area, you are eligible, regardless of income.

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Council Member Carrizales clarified that only the areas identified are the ones that would qualify.

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City Manager Fuller stated correct. The ARPA guidelines are trying to expand to a greater number of people who we can help so people even living outside of those qualified Census tract areas are eligible it's just a matter of demonstrating their impact.

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Mayor Pro Tem Scott asked how are you going to communicate that to people and help them accomplish that. The information is not user-friendly.

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City Manager Fuller stated it is not. The direction I'm hearing today is to provide business assistance to incentivize recruitment of employees, childcare assistance, increased funding for SWAG and homelessness. All those programs don't have ties to the Census tract and income levels.

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Mayor Robertson stated we need to see where we can refer them to those other areas.

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Mayor Pro Tem Scott stated utilities is a big deal for people. Ambulance fees were charged to people with COVID-19. They were charged large amounts of money, which is approximately \$1,500. We didn't include reimbursements for that, and no one covered that bill.

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Council Member Trujillo stated we asked staff about COVID-19 medical expenses, and it never came up.

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Mayor Pro Tem Scott stated we never thought about it until a City Commissioner brought it up, because she had an issue.

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Council Member Carrizales suggested allocating funds for ambulance reimbursement.

Mayor Pro Tem Scott agreed with Council Member Carrizales.

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Mayor Robertson stated those suggestions need to be noted and have them to go back and come back to us with those very points. A lot of people don't know that they could also be helped with emergency assistance for burials. How do we go about not only doing something but getting the information out through our community services and our consultants.

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City Manager Fuller clarified part of your direction is setting aside some funding for continued mortgage/rental and utility assistance.

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Mayor Robertson stated I think we need to look at the ones we've already provided assistance and decide what's the status.

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Mayor Pro Tem Scott stated we need to look at the State program and the City program. I personally think there's enough funds in the State program, but we need to assist people to access it.

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Mayor Robertson suggested case management. Start with the people that have already been helped and determine if there's others in the community that need help. We did a review under a different set of criteria. The process wasn't as simple as we seem to think it was.

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Council Member Trujillo asked about the street improvements as it relates to infrastructure.

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City Manager Fuller stated he doesn't believe there has ever been funds allocated to curbs and gutters or sidewalks. That's a big ticket item. We have a lot of older streets in this neighborhood not just the pavement but other parts of the infrastructure.

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Council Member Trujillo recommended start exploring what needs to be revitalized. These neighborhoods look dated.

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Council Member Carrizales stated we need \$300 million.

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Mayor Robertson stated some improvements were made with Safe Routes to School grants. We were able to fix curbs and sidewalks if it was a pathway to a school.

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Mayor Pro Tem Scott stated there are a lot of streets with no streetlights.

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Mayor Robertson stated we have limited money, but we have an endless list of things to do.

Do you need anything further?

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City Manager Fuller stated this has been helpful. I hope my staff has been taking notes. It sounds like streets are a priority. Starting on the police station is a priority. I appreciate your comments on IT side because we see that as a priority to get us into the 21st Century which will be a platform at being better at everything we do. I have Mayor Robertson's notes on the social service side.

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Mayor Roberson stated it is larger than expected. It is not going to end in a month or two. It is going to carry over into the new year.

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City Manager Fuller stated we will regroup. Part of what will show in the spending plan will be administrative costs whether it's Avant-Garde or some other case manager, but we need the administrative support to implement and monitor these programs to make certain they are being delivered effectively.

I appreciate your time tonight. This has been good direction.

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Mayor Robertson requested information on how many people have requested applications, how many were served and how many were denied. And if they were denied because they did not fit the then CDBG criteria, they still have a need.

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City Manager Fuller stated that's an easy way to expand and provide that assistance to those underserved residents.

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Mayor Pro Tem Scott asked if there are companies that administer this work.

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City Manager Fuller stated I am sure there is.

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WORKSHOP

Mayor Pro Tem Scott stated we really need to look into that. Our employees have enough to do.

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City Manager Fuller stated this will definitely require the support of an outside consultant.

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ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Council Member Trujillo second by Mayor Robertson and carried by a 5-0 vote, to adjourn the City Council Meeting at 6:44 p.m.

The City Council adjourned in memory of:

Victoria E. Baca
Mayor Pro Tem, City of Moreno Valley

MAYOR DEBORAH ROBERTSON

ATTEST:

CITY CLERK BARBARA A. McGEE