The following are minutes for the meeting of the City of Las Cruces Quality of Life Policy Review Committee held at 3:00 p.m. February 23, 2022, in City Hall, Conference Room 2007A.

MEMBERS PRESENT:
Councilor Tessa Abeyta – District 2 – Chair
Councilor Becki Graham – District 3 - Vice-Chair
Councilor Becky Corran – District 5
Diego Medina, Ex-Officio Member

MEMBERS ABSENT:
Dr. Marlena Fraune, Ex-Officio Member

OTHERS PRESENT:
Ikani Taumoepeau, Assistant City Manager
Rebecca Slaughter, Quality of Life Deputy Director and PRC Staff Coordinator
Christine Rivera, City Clerk
Sergio Ruiz, Administration Policy Analyst
David Weir, Community Development
Ginger Barela, Quality of Life Sr. Office Manager and PRC Recording Secretary
Gregory Shervanick, Member of the Public

I. CALL TO ORDER - Chairwoman Abeyta called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. Roll was called, and a quorum was established with Chairwoman Abeyta, Councilor Graham, and Councilor Corran present.

II. CONFLICT OF INTEREST – Chairwoman Abeyta read the conflict of interest statement. “Does any member of the City Council or any member of City staff have any known conflict of interest with any item on the agenda?” All members present indicated there were none.

III. ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA - Chairwoman Abeyta requested a motion for acceptance of the agenda. A motion was made by Councilor Graham and seconded by Councilor Corran to approve the agenda. Role was called and the agenda was accepted by the committee members present.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - Chairwoman Abeyta requested a motion for approval of the meeting minutes from the January 26, 2022, meeting. A motion was made by Councilor Corran and seconded by Councilor Graham to approve the minutes. Roll was called and minutes were approved by the committee members present.
V. ACTION ITEMS: None

VI. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. GO Bond – Upcoming Initiative and Process – Presented by Mr. David Weir, Deputy Director Community Planning: Mr. Weir presented to the committee detailing the 2022 General Obligation Bond Program. Mr. Weir began his presentation by defining a GO Bond as a financial mechanism which allows cities to fund large projects that will benefit the entire community. The 2022 GO Bond Program will not increase property taxes. In 2018, a tax increase occurred with the passage of the 2018 GO Bond program. The City is proposing to cycle the bonds that were approved in 2018. This will allow the City to move forward with appropriate projects that will support the community without increasing the rates of property taxes. Mr. Weir further detailed that GO Bonds will have to be approved by the community. Approval of bond projects will be recommended by the City, submitted to Council for approval, and will then be placed on the general election ballot for vote.

Councilor Graham inquired if the funds can be used for a purpose other than what was approved by voters. Mr. Weir confirmed that the funds are very targeted and cannot be used for other purposes. Councilor Graham further inquired if a bond project were approved and was unable to be implemented, due to unforeseen circumstances (e.g. COVID), what happens? Mr. Weir responded that there would most likely be processes in place to extend or rescind a project. Councilor Corran further inquired what would happen if the cost of the project is greater than what was approved for the bond. Mr. Weir responded that the City would be able to look at other funds and grants to cover any shortfalls or additional expenses. Chairwoman Abeyta added that the City may want to consider looking at the percentage the contingency percentage for projects. Mr. Weir also stated that another approach would be to phase a project to help better plan for costs. Ms. Rebecca Slaughter added that when identifying projects for approval, succinct completable projects were chosen that can show that the program is successful. This would help for future projects that are submitted for voter approval in upcoming years. When utilizing phased projects, the public perception can be that the City is not completing projects. Mr. Weir agreed that the challenge for the City is to show that the organization follows through with the projects to gain the confidence of voters.

Mr. Weir listed and provided a brief status of projects that were approved through the 2018 GO Bond. Ms. Slaughter added that the Public Art ordinance was approved by Council. Moving forward, it will be part of the GO Bond questioning to have Public Art added to projects. Although this Ordinance was not approved prior to GO Bond 2018, it has been approved to have pieces of Public Art installed at both Fire Station 3 and the Animal Service Center.

Mr. Weir concluded his presentation by detailing the importance of the GO Bond Program, the need to establish public engagement, and encourage members of the public to register to vote. Chairwoman Abeyta inquired the City would be able to have individuals available at public engagement meetings to
register attendees to vote. Councilor Corran added that the League of Women Voters might be able to assist. Ms. Christine Rivera stated that she did not believe that there would be an issue with this. She further stated that City Manager approval would need to be requested to allow this within City buildings. Mr. Weir stated that the City is currently in the process of scheduling the public awareness meetings and identifying potential projects. In May and July staff will present to Council more specific projects and potential language to place on the ballot. If approved these will be given to the County Clerk to place on the General Election ballot for November.

Councilor Corran inquired if projects that are recommended for GO Bonds are typically presented for the entirety of a project, or by project phase. Such as this will cover the architecture phase of a facility and then the construction phase, or will they be presented as a complete project that encompasses everything. Mr. Weir replied that they try to approach with phased requests. This help make the success of a project more presentable. Your taxes went towards completing this part of the project. Chairwoman Abeyta added that these discussions will take into consideration input from the public gathered during the public awareness meetings. It is advantageous to strategize the pairing of projects to encourage acceptance and support from voters. Ms. Slaughter agreed that you want to show how the proposed projects serve the entire community. Pairing projects helps gain support. Mr. Weir also added that the grouping of projects does form coalitions of community groups that compliment each other and serve a wider purpose for the community. Chairwoman Abeyta inquired of the limitations that staff can do regarding advocacy. Mr. Weir responded that additional research has been conducted to show that staff can advocate for projects to show the benefit to the community, as long as there is transparency. A resolution will be drafted to set the parameters for Council approval that will allow staff to take a more active role in advocacy. Mr. Ikani Taumoepeau confirmed Mr. Weir’s statement. In previous GO Bonds, the City created a steering committee as a non-attached organization. After Legal Department review, it was determined that the City can explicitly announce their support for projects that have been approved through Council. Councilors will be able to hold meetings in their districts to advocate for approved projects and foster engagement in the community. Councilor Corran inquired if these meetings could also be held remotely for community members that did not have the capability to attend in person. Mr. Weir responded that he believed we would be able to have the meetings in person and remotely. Chairwoman Abeyta stated that she felt it would be advantageous to reach out to community groups such as Greater Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce and the Home Builders Association to disseminate information. Mr. Greg Shervanick inquired of Mr. Weir what additional financial impact will the GO Bonds have on property owners. Mr. Weir displayed a graphic showing, and provided explanation on, how property taxes are distributed.
VII. FUTURE DISCUSSION ITEMS AND TASK LISTING: Chairwoman Abeyta noted to the committee that the UTV Ordinance and Noise Ordinance will be on schedule for March. It was suggested that the March meeting be extended to 5 pm and that a larger conference room is secured to accommodate a potential increase in public participation. Chairwoman Abeyta additionally stated that she requested that the previous ordinance and background information be provided to the committee.

Recruitment of Quality of Life PRC Members

Master Calendar for City Led Children/Teen Programs

Utility Structure/Public Art Assets List by District


IX. ADJOURNMENT - Chairwoman Abeyta requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion to adjourn was made by Councilor Corran and seconded by Councilor Graham. Roll was called and all members present approved. Meeting adjourned at 3:44 p.m.

Chairperson

Approved