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The following are summary minutes for the meeting of the **City of Las Cruces – Economic Development Policy Review Committee** on July 15, 2020. The meeting was held via Zoom.

- Council Members Present:**  
Yvonne Flores, City Council  
Kassandra Gandara, Mayor Pro-Tem  
Gil Sorg, Councilor

- Ex-Officio Members Present:**  
Debbi Moore  
Darleen Lopez  
Kathy Hansen  
Ana Berrun  
Davin Lopez  
Mary Ulrich

- Ex-Officio Members Absent:**  
Sandra Espiritu

- Staff Present:**  
David Maestas, Interim City Manager  
Griselda Martinez, Economic Development Director  
Francisco Pallares, Economic Development Deputy Director  
Mandy Guss, Business Development Administrator  
Andy Hume, Airport Administrator

- Others Present:**  
Kent Myers, Airplanners  
Bill Tomcich, Airplanners  
Guy Rouelle, DuBois & King  
David Becher, RRC Associates

- 1. Call to Order:** Councilor Flores called the meeting to order at approximately 10:04 am.
- 2. Conflict of Interest:** None.
- 3. Acceptance of the Agenda:** Councilor Sorg motioned to accept the agenda; seconded by Ana Berrun. Motion passed unanimously.
- 4. Minutes for Approval:**

- 1 a. **Economic Development PRC Meeting of June 17, 2020:** Councilor Sorg  
2 motioned to approve the minutes of June 17, 2020; seconded by Ana  
3 Berrun. Motion passed unanimously.  
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6 **5. Discussion:**

7 a. **Airport and West Mesa Industrial Park Updates:**

8 **1. Las Cruces International Airport:** Mr. Hume briefly went over the  
9 purpose of the program for the new members. The Space Needs  
10 assessment as well as the Facility assessment have been completed and  
11 the Passenger Air Service assessment is still ongoing. The goal of 20,000  
12 enplanements would be roughly 55 people flying out of the airport a day.  
13 Currently there are 12 businesses at the airport with more growth to be  
14 expected.  
15

16 Mr. Hume briefly discussed the ongoing construction projects to include  
17 the GA Terminal apron reconstruction, the runway/taxiway maintenance,  
18 the taxi lane/apron maintenance, the road rehab of Zia, Wingspan,  
19 Crawford, and Gasoline Alley, the perimeter fence replacement, and the  
20 security gates replacement and upgrades. Mr. Hume gave an overview of  
21 the investment breakdown for FY2019 to FY2020. He specified that the  
22 majority of funding was not from local funds. Over 80% of the funding  
23 money comes from outside the region, such as FAA. Mr. Hume went over  
24 the non-construction projects, to include the various plans being worked  
25 on as well as the new logo. Ms. Hansen asked what attracted the startups  
26 that have come to the airport. Mr. Hume responded that the two startups  
27 are both oriented to aviation and aerospace. Ms. Hansen also asked  
28 about the company from Boise that relocated. Mr. Hume said that it's a  
29 small helicopter manufacturing group.  
30

31 Mr. Rouelle discussed his charge of looking at the facilities of the airfield.  
32 They submitted a facilities assessment to Mr. Hume which included the  
33 airports runways, taxiways, and terminal facilities. The fuel farms can  
34 support up to three or four daily flights a day, there is a need to update the  
35 airport certification manual because of going from unscheduled to  
36 scheduled, and the FAA will request upgrades to go with the scheduled  
37 flights. A few years down the road, once the scheduled aircraft is greater  
38 than 90 feet and there are more than five daily departures, the firefighting  
39 equipment may or may not meet the standard. The primary concern was  
40 the terminal building; the size and capacity of the terminal building. The  
41 minimum standards to support up to five daily flights a day would require  
42 more space in the terminal. Recommendation would be to have additions  
43 to the current terminal rather than build a new one. The parking deficit  
44 roughly 60 parking spaces for the two flights per day.  
45

46 Councilor Gandara asked about updating the parking area to gain those  
47 other 60 spaces. Mr. Rouelle corrected himself that there are an additional  
48 67 parking that is needed. This is because the parking at the airport is being

1 used by other people who work around the airport. He mentioned that an  
2 updated forecast would help clarify what is needed. Mr. Myers said that the  
3 next step is the research in trying to understand how many people would  
4 potentially fly in and out of Las Cruces.  
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8 **2. Commercial Air Service:** Mr. Becher discussed the market feasibility  
9 of commercial flights to Las Cruces. The evaluation took into account how  
10 close the El Paso Airport is as well as various counties in the southwest  
11 portion of New Mexico; Doña Ana, Sierra, Grant, and Luna counties.  
12 Surveys were conducted of businesses and local residents, enplanement  
13 studies at the El Paso Airport, as well as an evaluation of air travel itineraries  
14 of regional residents. The studies were done during the COVID-19 which  
15 did impact the results but it is believed air travel will take time to come back.  
16 Surveys showed that the El Paso Airport is currently the main airport used  
17 although most businesses indicated that they would use a Las Cruces  
18 airport if it was available. The knowledge that the flights may be somewhat  
19 more expensive into Las Cruces does deter some people but others would  
20 be willing to pay more in order to have convenience. Majority of flights from  
21 El Paso were outbound; cell phone mobility data showed that 13.9% were  
22 residents of Doña Ana County with 35% from southwest New Mexico. The  
23 Dallas/Fort Worth airport seems to be the most popular destination from the  
24 surveys.  
25

26 Debbi Moore asked if they believe that Las Cruces would attract a more  
27 boutique airline as she believes that's the direction air travel is going to go  
28 after the COVID-19 epidemic. Mr. Tomcich responded that flights hit rock  
29 bottom in April; more than 96% down from a year ago. Things have been  
30 steadily bouncing back and there are signs that demand is coming back. El  
31 Paso's capacity was down 69% in June; currently it's down 61% from last  
32 year's levels in July but starting in August American and Southwest are  
33 adding capacity back into their schedules. August is scheduled to be down  
34 37% from last year's levels. Booking trends doesn't look like the demand is  
35 keeping up with the capacity increases but the trends are heading in the  
36 right direction. Mr. Tomcich stated that it will take time to get up to pre-  
37 COVID normal but this can be viewed as an opportunity. The challenge of  
38 finding available aircraft for new markets is no longer there; airlines are  
39 looking for more places to fly.  
40

41 Councilor Flores asked about Farmington's airport and how their new flights  
42 affect Las Cruces. Mr. Tomcich responded that Farmington announced  
43 recently their intention to start a United Express service with a 50 passenger  
44 regional jet contracted with Skywest Airlines to go from Farmington to  
45 Denver in October. They have been doing more service than Las Cruces  
46 and have done upgrades. Both Las Cruces and Farmington have an FAA  
47 certification Part 139. However, Farmington has a scheduled certificate  
48 while Las Cruces has unscheduled service. There is demand for intrastate

1 service within New Mexico. Options are available but it hasn't been looked  
2 into with detail as focus is more on larger commercial service. Mr. Myers  
3 stated he believes the goal of 20,000 enplanements for Las Cruces is  
4 achievable and they will be watching the Farmington flights closely as both  
5 areas are similar.  
6

7 **3. West Mesa Industrial Park:** Mr. Pallares explained how the West Mesa  
8 Industrial Park was acquired and the original intention. He commented that  
9 there has not been an update on the Masterplan since 1996. In 2018 there  
10 was an EDA grant acquired that covered the assessments for the airport.  
11 Mr. Pallares discussed the expected new businesses as well as two new  
12 businesses that are locating at the West Mesa Industrial Park. Ms. Guss  
13 continued the discussion of the companies; one to include X2 NSAT which  
14 the City approved an agreement with. She discussed additional work in  
15 putting more fiber optics in the area to support internet connectivity. Other  
16 changes that have happened were F&A Dairy was sold and Scale Ag  
17 Industries have come to the area which include other businesses  
18 underneath them.  
19

20 Ms. Guss stated they added a metric to track recruitment and new business  
21 interests coming in. There has been an increase over the past year in the  
22 land; the most common question being the utilities. There is currently talk  
23 with the State for a LEDA project related to the land. They're building a  
24 framework for a business retention and expansion program. Mr. Pallares  
25 went into the characteristics of the park and what is available; 1,820 acres  
26 with only 900 acres developed. With the grant that was received a  
27 consultant was hired and will be assisting in identifying key industries that  
28 would build on the current assets as well as provide potential for growth as  
29 well as provide clear implementation guidelines to grow the Industrial Park.  
30 The consultant held sessions with the community to find the strategic  
31 industries. One is aerospace/aviation/defense because of our economic  
32 activity, location, and incentives. Others are advanced manufacturing and  
33 value added agriculture.  
34

35 Mr. Pallares listed the top five implementation guidelines; hire an economic  
36 developer for park and airport, get flex space, eliminate administrative  
37 barriers, establish pilot business retention and expansion, and improve  
38 entrances and landscaping. Currently a consultant was hired for updating  
39 the West Mesa Industrial Park master plan. There is also work on a  
40 marketing plan for promoting the industrial park; possibly change the name  
41 to Las Cruces Industrial Park. The next steps would be to implement  
42 strategies and guidelines as well as pursue additional funding. Davin Lopez  
43 suggested a name change of Las Cruces Multimodal instead of Industrial  
44 Park. There are other names suggested and will be discussed before final  
45 decision. Councilor Sorg commented that the business that is doing the  
46 hemp industry out there was the property that Sapphire Energy was using  
47 for algae producing fuel.  
48

1 **6. Future Discussion/Task Listing:**

2 **a. Local Leaders Toolkit - Las Cruces Business Retention and**  
3 **Expansion/Economic:**

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5 **b. COVID-19 Impact Analysis on Local Economy**


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7 Councilor Flores commented that she may not be present at the next  
8 meeting.

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10 Ms. Martinez said that the future discussions will be confirmed through  
11 email. Ex-officio members can send recommendations for future items to  
12 Ms. Martinez and she will coordinate with Councilor Flores for future  
13 meetings.

14  
15 Councilor Sorg commented that there was a COVID Economic Recovery  
16 Committee that presented a three month timeline. He would like to get an  
17 explanation of the timeline; the actions and results.

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19 **7. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at approximately 11:40 a.m.**

20 Councilor Sorg moved and seconded

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26 Chairperson

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30 Approved: \_\_\_\_\_