

**MINUTES OF THE CITY OF LAS VEGAS SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2025 AT 5:00 P.M. IN THE CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS.**

**MAYOR:** David Romero

**COUNCILORS:** Marvin Martinez  
Barbara Casey  
Michael L. Montoya  
David Ulibarri

**ALSO PRESENT:** Tim Montgomery, City Manager  
Casandra Fresquez, City Clerk  
Caleb Marquez, Sergeant at Arms

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Romero called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.

**ROLL CALL**

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**MOMENT OF SILENCE**

Councilor Ulibarri thanked everyone for attending the meeting and advised that it's been a frustrating couple of weeks but they're working together to solve the problems.

Mayor Romero apologized for the water situation and advised that the Governing Body was just as frustrated and they also have many questions. Mayor Romero explained why a meeting wasn't called sooner and advised that they did not want

to take away staff from the emergency situation. Mayor Romero advised that they need to be careful not to point fingers. Mayor Romero advised that the Governing Body was determined to find out what exactly happened and the importance of the after action investigation review being completed.

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Councilor Casey made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Councilor Montoya seconded the motion. Mayor Romero asked if all were in favor. All were in favor.

City Clerk Fresquez advised the motion carried.

### **PUBLIC INPUT**

Tony Draper spoke about the City of Las Vegas receiving \$2.6 million in February 2023 for engineering reports and \$98 million in August 2024 to repair or replace the water system. Mr. Draper stated why that much money was needed for reports, where are the reports and what engineering firm received that money.

Lillian Lester spoke about whether or not the Water Treatment Plant was evaluated after the fire, if so where was the evaluation document and what part of the plant needed to be repaired or replaced.

Gloria Medina spoke about why all the water tanks emptied so quickly and were they being monitored. Ms. Medina asked if there was an updated fixed assets report and aging plan. Ms. Medina asked if there was a plan for the new Water Treatment Plant, is there enough funding for one and who would run the plant.

Dinah Maynes thanked Mayor and Council for everything they've done so far. Ms. Maines spoke about the need for a new Water Treatment Plant.

Agustin M. spoke on transparency regarding the after action report, and suggested mandating all future project goals, fundings, progress and timelines both actual and projected be made public and easily accessible via PSAs and government websites. Agustin thanked Mayor and Council, the Emergency Response Team and City employees who made sure everyone had water immediately.

Andrea Love thanked Mayor and Council for their correspondence and asked that correspondence be posted on City government websites. Ms. Love spoke on businesses helping the community during situations to help deliver or distribute water to the community.

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### 1. Update regarding water emergency:

#### a. Report from City Manager

City Manager Tim Montgomery discussed the following; what an After Action Review and Report was and when one is performed. City Manager Montgomery advised that they established a Unified Incident Command which consisted of various City employees.

Water Distribution Manager Travis Hern discussed the following tank names/locations; Cabin Site tank - located above the Water Treatment Plant, which feeds zone 1 and also feeds the Camp Luna tank through a transmission line, Camp Luna tank then feeds zone 2 and also feeds the Valencia tank through a transmission line which provides water to zone 3 and the Taylor Wells has a direct transmission line to the Valencia tank which would only provide pressure and water to zone 3.

Councilor Montoya asked Mr. Hern to discuss how much water was lost during water line breaks.

Mr. Hern advised that the current water line breaks had been minimal with about a couple hundred gallons and a couple thousand gallons of water lost.

Mayor Romero asked Mr. Hern to explain the process to prevent major water line breaks from occurring when introducing water back into the lines.

Mr. Hern advised when air gets into a pipeline and fills with water it's called a water hammer which could cause significant damage to the pipeline and service lines. Mr. Hern advised that they need to fill lines slowly to prevent any damage, which is why fire hydrants need to be opened to bleed any air out which is part of flushing and maintaining the system to prevent catastrophic failure.

Mayor Romero advised that there were many compounding issues that led to the water situation.

Councilor Martinez asked Mr. Hern to explain how much water is in the infrastructure that feeds the community.

Mr. Hern advised that there are 126 miles of water line ranging from 2 - 18 inches. Mr. Hern explained that the water works off of a hydraulic grade line so the water only flows downhill.

b. Report from Incident Command Members

Police Chief Caleb Marquez advised that the incident was very unstable and thanked everyone for their support, especially employees who put in 5,900 hours.

Fire Chief Steve Spann discussed the conditions of low water pressure, low water production and low water volume. Fire Chief Spann advised that City staff jumped into action by reaching out to get bulk water distributions. Fire Chief Spann advised that they also reached out to Fire Suppression partners in Santa Fe and San Miguel County for fire tender support and structural engines in case of fires.

Police Chief Marquez advised that they didn't have days to plan only hours. Police Chief Marquez advised one big effort was distributing water to critical care sites, critical areas in town that had been without water for days and to the elderly.

Fire Chief Spann advised that City employees distributed 9,310 cases of boxed water and 3,834 cases of bottled water to citizens.

Police Chief Marquez discussed the 24 hour call center with real time monitoring to help with mapping out where they were losing water or where there was low pressure.

Fire Chief Spann advised that the dedicated City cellphone received 1,200 calls and 700 calls were received at City Hall for a total of 1,900 calls processed.

Police Chief Marquez advised that water hauling also took place, with 55 trucks hauling water 24 hours a day to help support the water system.

Fire Chief Spann advised that each truck carries 6,000 gallons of water.

City Manager Montgomery advised that it took 3 hours to have 55 trucks come in and during that time they received State approval to have the water inserted into the water system. City Manager Montgomery advised that all the trucks were certified as only being used for certified water. City Manager Montgomery advised that they were being proactive with having a precautionary boil advisory due to water pressure going down, which could impact sediment flowing through the pipes.

Councilor Ulibarri asked City Manager Montgomery to provide an update regarding the water once a month.

Fire Chief Spann advised that they are trying to maintain the water coming in and they are making sure this does not happen again.

City Manager Montgomery advised that the investigation needs to take place so they could produce a true, honest and open After Action Review.

Mayor Romero asked Jake Jimenez with Magnum to discuss the work he did regarding the leak at the Water Treatment Plant.

Councilor Casey asked that the questions be answered from those who spoke during public input.

Jake Jimenez with Magnum Welding & Construction advised that they were dispatched on Saturday and were on site within an hour. Mr. Jimenez advised that they excavated and were able to expose an 18 inch CCP water line and found the leak. Mr. Jimenez advised that they performed quite a bit of rock excavation to expose the line and identified the exact cause. Mr. Jimenez advised that they performed a temporary patch and the line was back in service. Mr. Jimenez advised that they had all the necessary parts and would begin construction on a permanent fix.

City Manager Montgomery reiterated the question asked about where the money and reports from February 2023 and October 2024 were. City Manager Montgomery advised that the February 2023 money was from the debris removal, the gabion clean up and the reports were prior to his time as City Manager. City Manager Montgomery advised that a request for proposal would be posted for the Debris Removal from the upper side of Gallinas near the gabions. City Manager Montgomery advised there was an RFP published inappropriately that did not follow City guidelines. City Manager Montgomery advised that the October 2024 money in the amount of \$98 million has earned interest and has been maintained.

City Manager Montgomery advised that the monies are for a comprehensive water system and not just a water treatment plant. City Manager Montgomery advised that they have started assessing the amount of storage tanks they want to bring into the City and have taken inventory of the current distribution lines and what improvements are needed. City Manager Montgomery advised that they are looking at different ways of utilizing the money for the Water Treatment Plant by looking at what the water resource will be in the future such as well water or just surface water inclusion. City Manager Montgomery advised they could then design what type of plant is needed and to what capacity with the guidance from consultants.

Mayor Romero advised in the previous design there were two pretreatment plans, one at Storrie Lake and the other in the upper Gallinas River. Mayor Romero advised based on that design they would be prefiltering water that would have high turbidity rates and then into the reservoirs. Mayor Romero advised after the flood event in June the reservoirs were compromised, so had they followed through with that design the reservoirs would have been compromised.

City Manager Montgomery reiterated the question asked if the Water Treatment Plant was evaluated after the fire and what part required repairs. City Manager Montgomery advised that the plant is old, the filtration beds are about 37-38 years old. City Manager Montgomery advised they are looking at that as part of the investigation due to a maintenance schedule being in place and if they adhered to that maintenance schedule. City Manager Montgomery advised after the fire their focus was on the turbidity levels, how much could be used from Peterson, Bradner and Storrie Lake. City Manager Montgomery advised after determining the turbidity levels and the impacts it had on the plant, they brought in an active flow system from the Veolia Company to pretreat the water and into the plant.

City Manager Montgomery advised after the fire there were chemical related impacts, the need to clean the clarifying beds more frequently, maintenance schedules needing to be changed to adjust to the water, electrical panels breaking, pumps breaking and inefficiencies with getting chemicals up to the clarifying beds during extreme cold weather.

City Manager Montgomery advised that leaks were not the primary cause but they did have an impact and there were several things taking place prior to the event which included regular maintenance and improvements that shut down the plant for backwashes. City Manager Montgomery advised that there were changes in water reserves over the last couple of weeks and they would be looking into that to get to the bottom of what happened to that water.

City Manager Montgomery reiterated the question asked if there were plans for a new plant. City Manager Montgomery advised that they were narrowing down what they felt was necessary for the plant but had not selected or communicated with any specific vendor. City Manager Montgomery advised that they are looking at water capabilities of different types of plants.

Mayor Romero advised that the quality of raw water drastically changed since the fire, with an impact to the Wastewater Treatment Plant because of that.

City Manager Montgomery advised that the Wastewater Treatment Plant was also a component of the Water Treatment system. City Manager Montgomery advised that the \$98 million could not be used for anything other than the water treatment system and was highly regulated Federal money. City Manager Montgomery advised that they want to be as transparent as possible, with the Public Information Officer putting out 38-39 public service announcements since it began. City Manager Montgomery advised that they try to be as open as they possibly can at that moment but there are frequent changes.

A member of the audience asked about the current quality of water.

City Manager Montgomery advised that the City was currently under a State boil water mandate due to a period of time when the turbidity level in the water filtration beds spiked. City Manager Montgomery advised that there's criteria that need to be met to be released from the State mandate such as the plant being in full operation, the tanks being at capacity and the turbidity levels need to be stable and not fluctuate.

Mayor Romero advised that the State mandate was also due to the pipes going dry and there being sediment buildup.

A member of the audience voiced her opinion regarding not pointing fingers at people and it sounding more like maintenance issues over several years.



Councilor Montoya thanked his colleagues for supporting him with calling the special meeting. Councilor Montoya advised that he felt it was important for the community to know what's going on. Councilor Montoya advised that the Cabin Site tank holds 5 million gallons, the Camp Luna tank holds 2.5 million gallons and the Valencia tank holds 600,000 gallons for a total of 8.1 million gallons of water storage for the water system. Councilor Montoya advised that the City uses 1.3 million gallons of water on a regular basis. Councilor Montoya advised that the water levels at the Camp Luna tank should have been at an alarming low level. Councilor Montoya voiced his concerns regarding 8 million gallons of water being emptied overnight. Councilor Montoya advised that the water situation put them in a bad spot. Councilor Montoya advised that \$4 million was used towards the water system. Councilor Montoya asked for a weekly report regarding the water storage and suggested having short term goals.

Mayor Romero advised that they would be open and transparent with the investigation and they are committed to accountability. Mayor Romero advised that there were many compounding issues. Mayor Romero advised that they'll wait for the investigation to be completed and not point fingers.

Dianne Moore voiced her concerns regarding feeling disappointed with the report and advised that they weren't there to see who did it or who's pointing fingers. Ms. Moore advised as a community they care about what the plan is going to be and what will be done.

Mayor Romero advised that the meeting was to discuss what happened, what they're doing and to address the emergency situation as requested.

Councilor Montoya advised that he wasn't pointing fingers but the City pays millions of dollars to different companies to run the water plant and everyone needs to be accountable.

Councilor Martinez advised that he understood what the community was going through and appreciated their support and patience.

Councilor Casey advised sometimes you have to hit rock bottom and build back up. Councilor Casey advised that they are doing their best to make sure that the monies that were already spent are being spent for the benefit of the community. Councilor Casey advised that the money is not going into anyone's pockets. Councilor Casey advised that the FEMA money has been there for awhile but a water treatment plant can't be built that fast especially when there are specific needs for the water due to no longer having a watershed. Councilor Casey advised that they need to have faith in the work that City employees do, who work harder than anyone else. Councilor Casey advised that they have excellent and loyal employees. Councilor Casey advised that they need to focus in a positive manner.

Mayor Romero advised that there were many individuals that have sat on the Governing Body that had opportunities to fix certain things. Mayor Romero advised that they are trying to do the best they can to fix the system. Mayor Romero advised that they got to this situation because people were afraid to make decisions from many years ago.

Discussion took place regarding the Peterson Dam Reconstruction plans being 75% complete and the production of water currently taking place.

## 2. Next Special Meeting Scheduling

Councilor Casey suggested until things are resolved, instead of having reports from the different departments, instead have those turned in prior to the meetings so Mayor and Council could review them such as the Police and Fire department, along with a monthly status report of the water and what the plan is moving forward. Councilor Casey advised that they could still get their usual reports from the Police Chief and all the others.

Mayor Romero advised they could place an agenda item on the agenda regarding an update on the water crisis.

Councilor Montoya advised that he would also like a weekly report on the water storage given to council and placed on every agenda as a report from the City Manager.

Councilor Casey thanked those who were present during the meeting.

**ADJOURN**

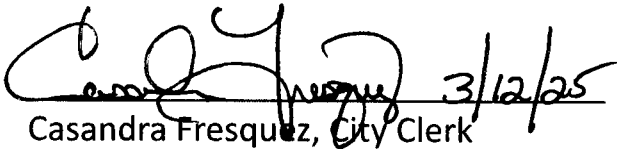
Councilor Casey made a motion to adjourn. Councilor Martinez seconded the motion.

Meeting adjourned at 6:57 PM.



Mayor David Romero

ATTEST:



Casandra Fresquez, City Clerk