

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
GATEWAY CITIES COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Gateway Cities Council of Governments
16401 Paramount Blvd.
Paramount, California
August 5, 2020**

Zoom Conference

GCCOG President Maria Davila called the meeting to order at 6:06 PM.

PRESENT: President Maria Davila, City of South Gate (E)
Immediate Past President Diane DuBois, City of Lakewood (E)
1st Vice President Cinde MacGugan Cassidy, City of Avalon (E)
2nd Vice President Ali Saleh, City of Bell
Member Raymond Dunton, City of Bellflower (E)
Member Pedro Aceituno, City of Bell Gardens
Member Naresh Solanki, City of Cerritos (E)
Member Oralia Rebollo, City of Commerce (E)
Member Alex Saab, City of Downey (E)
Member Jesse Alvarado, City of Hawaiian Gardens
Member Marilyn Sanabria, City of Huntington Park (E)
Member John Lewis, City of La Mirada (E)
Member Robert Garcia, City of Long Beach
Member Roberto Uranga, City of Long Beach
Member Marisela Santana, City of Lynwood
Member Heber Marquez, City of Maywood
Member David Torres, City of Montebello
Member Margarita Rios, City of Norwalk
Member Vilma Cuellar Stallings, City of Paramount
Member Brent Tercero, City of Pico Rivera
Member Joe Angel Zamora, City of Santa Fe Springs (E)
Member William Davis, City of Vernon
Member Fernando Dutra, City of Whittier (E)
Member Steven Neal, Port of Long Beach
Member Antonio Chapa, Office of Supervisor Hilda Solis
Member Martin Reyes, Office of Supervisor Hilda Solis
Member Herlinda Chico, Office of Supervisor Janice Hahn (E)

ABSENT:

Member Tony Lima, City of Artesia
Member Emma Sharif, City of Compton
Member Elizabeth Alcantar, City of Cudahy
Member Cory Moss, City of Industry
Member Rex Richardson, City of Long Beach
Member Edward H. J. Wilson, City of Signal Hill (E)
Member Kimberly Ortega, Office of Supervisor Hilda Solis
Member Lacey Johnson, Office of Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas

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(E) Executive Committee

ALSO PRESENT: Thaddeus McCormack, City Manager - City of Lakewood; Nina Turner, Local/Regional Liaison - Port of Long Beach; Norman Emerson – Emerson Associates; Nancy Pfeffer, Melani Smith, Gilbert Saldate, Karen Heit, Stephanie Cadena, Joel Arevalos, Genny Cisneros, Sandra Mora, Ivy Tsai - COG staff; Tyler Bonanno-Curley, Manager of Government Affairs – City of Long Beach; Sarah Patterson, Kome Ajise, Javiera Cartagena – SCAG; Karen Lee, Administrative Analyst – City of Artesia; Luke Klipp, Metro Board Deputy to Mayor Robert Garcia – City of Long Beach; Andres Molina – WSP; Gregory Farr – CalTrans; Mark Dierking – LA Metro; Dianne Guevara, Gladis Deras – City of South Gate; Danielle Soto – South Coast AQMD; Justin Ramirez – City of Long Beach; Rachel Roque, Jocelyn Rivera-Olivas – Office of Supervisor Janice Hahn; Marybeth Vergara – RMC; Kristine Guerrero – League of California Cities; Kim Tachiki-Chin; and Rosalba Gonzalez.

Roll call was taken by GCCOG Office Assistant Joel Arevalos.

President Davila thanked Immediate Past President Diane DuBois for her leadership in the past year and expressed it was a great honor to have had her service to the COG.

There was one amendment to the agenda. Executive Director Nancy Pfeffer pointed Board members to a draft census letter shared onscreen, and reported that staff is recommending this letter be added to the agenda as it relates to the early termination of the 2020 Census count. This matter came up after the finalization of the Board agenda and cannot wait until the next meeting. Staff recommends adding approval of this letter to the agenda, to express the COG's opposition to the early deadline of the 2020 Census.

President Davila asked if the letter was sent to Board members, to which Director Pfeffer confirmed it was sent via email to all members in the afternoon prior to the meeting.

Member Margarita Rios motioned to approve adding the item to the agenda, and it was seconded by Member William Davis. COG staff Arevalos performed a roll call and the item was approved unanimously.

Director Pfeffer said the letter was modified from one written by the SELA Collaborative, which has been encouraging Census participation and sharing Census resources and information that the COG has shared with all member cities. Pfeffer mentioned how much need there is in the region and how the Census has been threatened during this cycle. The letter asks to keep the original deadline of the Census, and encourages transparency in the process. The letter will go to all of our members of Congress and County Supervisors. President Davila further emphasized the importance of submitting this letter, given the impacts that COVID-19 has had on outreach efforts for completing the Census.

Member Herlinda Chico thanked the COG for its quick action in addressing this issue, and mentioned that the County Board of Supervisors recently approved a motion to send a letter requesting that the Census go back to the original deadline.

Member Marilyn Sanabria motioned to approve, and it was seconded by Member Rios. GCCOG staff Arevalos performed a roll call and the item was approved unanimously.

There were no public comments

Under Matters from Staff, Executive Director Pfeffer reported that the COG recently hired Melani Smith as the new Director of Regional Development. Smith thanked Pfeffer for the introduction and said she is pleased to join the COG staff and is looking forward to working with the COG region. Smith said she has been a practicing urban planner/designer for more than 20 years, has lived in Long Beach for 25 years, and served on the Long Beach Commission for 7 years. Most recently, she worked with

Metro on the West Santa Ana Branch (WSAB) Transit Oriented Development Strategic Implementation Plan (TODSIP) and has become familiar with several of our member cities.

Director Pfeffer announced that the homelessness count in SPA 7 is down overall from the previous year, and that COG staff Gilbert Saldade would be providing an update later in the agenda.

Director Pfeffer reported there are discussions with SCAG for additional funding under the Regional Early Action Planning (REAP) program by the state's Department of Housing and Community Development. The COG staff previously updated the Board on the Local Early Action Planning (LEAP) grants. REAP is a similar but different funding source coming from the State to SCAG, and SCAG is allocating funding to subregions. The COG is eligible for an allocation of up to \$1.3 million from SCAG for housing programs and activities that advance local Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) goals and help cities achieve Housing Element compliance.

Director Pfeffer reported that the COG would also be having two Civic Spark fellows this year. One is Mahogany Smith Christopher, who will work on the SoCalREN Regional Partnership Program and the California Resilience Challenge Urban Tree Canopy project. Mahogany is a graduate of UC Davis and a resident of Hawthorne. Pfeffer said the 2nd Fellow would be working with the COG's housing program, at HCD's expense. An offer has been made to a candidate and staff expects to receive confirmation soon.

Director Pfeffer also reported that the COG staff was supposed to clear out its storage unit by June 2020, but staff was not been able to complete this due to the pandemic. This is why payment for this item is on the warrant.

Director Pfeffer reported on the audit by the newly hired firm. She commended Administrative Director Genny Cisneros for her diligence in working with the auditors and said staff anticipates getting a report in the next few weeks. This concluded her report.

President Davila moved on to the Consent Calendar. First Vice President Cinde Cassidy made a motion to approve and it was seconded by Member Fernando Dutra. COG staff Arealos performed a roll call and the item was approved unanimously.

President Davila moved to Reports from Committees.

For the Report from the Gateway Cities COG Transportation Committee, Justin Ramirez introduced himself as the new Metro Board Deputy for Mayor Garcia. He said there was no Metro meeting this last month to report on for the Board.

Director Pfeffer said that there is one action item before the Board, approval of a COG comment letter on Metro's Recovery Task Force report, called "A PATH Forward." The

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Transportation Committee has approved this letter and recommends it to the Board for approval.

Member Alex Saab made a motion to approve and it was seconded by Member Dutra. GCCOG staff Arevalos performed a roll call and the item was approved.

President Davila moved on to Report B. Kome Ajise, Executive Director of the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) presented on the 2020/2045 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS). Ajise reported that the Plan was originally set for approval by April 2020, however due to COVID-19, that date was moved to May 7. While the plan was approved for federal conformity purposes only, staff was asked to take 120 days to address concerns with the plan. Ajise reported that staff has now completed updates to the plan, having taken time to check back with stakeholders and all cities for any updates, and hold virtual townhall listening sessions to get further input and hear impacts of COVID-19. Ajise said that staff would also like to be able to go back and make amendments to the plan before the next one is due in 2024, given that there will be significant changes due to COVID-19. Ajise said we've seen less commuting and higher speeds on local roads which conflict with the increased number of people that are riding bikes and walking, even though there is less traffic. Staff will also update the plan for how many people are taking transit, choosing to work from home, driving alone, learning alone, taking care of healthcare needs alone, and more.

SCAG staff will also be going to the Board in September with other topics, such as how the plan can be used for the recovery process, and identifying emerging issues and base elements for the 2024 plan. On the strength of outreach and collaborations, Ajise said the plan is ready for adoption. He feels that any delay could be a jeopardy to the region for any funding that we are eligible for, especially in regard to the SCS. Several funding sources are tied to having an approved SCS by CARB, as it would mean the SCAG region is meeting the state's greenhouse gas emission targets. He concluded his report.

Exec. Director Pfeffer asked if the City of Los Angeles' councilmembers' recent initiative related to infrastructure jobs could be used to think about a countywide or regional approach that would build on countywide tax measures. Ajise said that while SCAG is not an implementing agency, recovery will hinge on construction activities to lead us out of the pandemic. He hopes the plan will help the region get more transportation funding, but that means we will need to prioritize projects that are shovel ready and rapidly get them out to procurement. Ajise said that SCAG is working quickly to help increase housing programs, such as helping jurisdictions with tax increment financing, particularly through SCAG's Regional Early Action Planning funding. He acknowledged that it makes sense to expand on the initiative by the City of LA.

Immediate Past President DuBois motioned to receive and file report. Member Dutra seconded. COG Counsel Ivy Tsai clarified that no roll call is needed as the Item is for receive and file only.

President Davila moved on to Report C, the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC) Update on Grant Programs. Marybeth Vergara reported that the RMC will be coming out with a second call for projects for Prop 68 funding in the Fall. The minimum funding amount is \$200,000 with a max of \$2 million. Between Prop 1 and Prop 68, there is a total of \$68 million that the RMC has allocated towards grant funding. Vergara also said the RMC has

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approved a draft small grants program for smaller, quick-start projects starting at \$10,000, up to \$300,000. The RMC received input that small non-profits have a difficult time developing applications that are competitive, so this program is targeted to their efforts. Also included in this program is gap funding for emergency projects that need to be implemented quickly. The program information will be sent out for comment and the RMC hopes to approve the program at their next meeting on September 4th.

Member Roberto Uranga, member of the RMC Board, added that the RMC has been very receptive of submitted applications and does a very thorough review. He reported that the RMC has granted a lot of good projects, and encouraged cities to learn of the grant opportunities available.

Member Dutra asked if the information on the grants is available on the website, or if there is a presentation that members can look at. Vergara said the full grant guidelines for Prop 68 funding and the small grant programs can be found at rmc.ca.gov.

Member Ali Saleh, also a member of the RMC Board, said that they are hoping to approve the program in September. He thinks this is a great opportunity for a lot of cities, and asked Vergara to forward the grant information via email to COG staff to be distributed to all Board members.

President Davila skipped over Report D and moved on to Report E, Update on the COG's Homelessness Program. GCCOG staff Gilbert Saldate, Homelessness Program Manager reported that SPA 7 is the only SPA that had a reduction in homelessness. Saldate shared a list of cities onscreen by SPA, showing the 2019 and 2020 count, and the reduction in homeless individuals for SPA 7. There were about 15 cities that saw a reduction in homelessness, though some cities did have a significant increase. Saldate clarified that even though there is a small increase for some cities, it is important to note that across the County, there are approximately 150 individuals falling into homelessness each day, but there are also 133 individuals getting out of homelessness, whether through temporary or subsidized housing. Overall, the COG saw a 10% decrease in individuals and a 12% decrease in households experiencing homelessness.

Member Zamora asked if increases in the homeless count could be attributed to Project Roomkey. Saldate said that Project Roomkey will likely continue until February and that LAHSA is currently working to help individuals exit Project Roomkey into more permanent housing. He confirmed that homeless counts would be higher in cities that have Project Roomkey sites, particularly if cities have a new site that wasn't there last year. These cities would see an increase in the next homeless count.

Saldate also reported on a new initiative with the County for improved communication between regions for executive staff, city managers, and County Board of Supervisors homeless staff, to share issues, resources and improve engagement with cities for better, collaborative solutions. Saldate thanked City Manager Thaddeus McCormack and Executive Director Pfeffer for their leadership for the COG's Homeless initiatives.

Member Dutra commented that in Whittier, the City is participating in the Judge Carter case and subsequent to that, had approved building a 160-room homeless facility at their Salvation Army. The City is also providing a temporary facility at the community center that will provide 45 beds in the interim.

Member Raymond Dunton asked if with the temporary facility, cities are able to enforce anticamping laws. Member Dutra confirmed and said the city has had lots of discussions on how to implement this quicker. The City of Whittier had a good experience with the Carter case and they decided to do this temporarily, with the agreement that the City would be allowed to enforce their laws.

President Davila moved back to Report D, Approval of Documents for the COG's Health Care Program. Director Pfeffer walked through the elements of the Health Care Program documents and stated that the Gateway Cities are the only COG in the region that does not offer healthcare benefits for its employees. While specific arrangements were made for employees in the past, current staff do not receive benefits. As of July 1st, the COG is now budgeted to provide healthcare benefits to full-time employees. Director Pfeffer thanked COG Administrative Director Cisneros for her work in putting this program together. Staff recommends that the COG go into the CalPERS program, following the San Gabriel Valley COG as a model. Staff's research found that CalPERS is more affordable than other options, since it puts small number of employees in a large statewide pool and helps to lower overhead cost. The COG does not have to be a PERS agency to enroll, as we are a PARS agency. The COG is required to have a resolution to join, and that is included in the agenda for the Board to approve, along with a proposed health insurance policy.

Director Pfeffer clarified that only full-time employees would be eligible for the plan. Each year the COG Board would be asked to approve the recommended percentage of the premium to be covered. COG staff has budgeted for and is asking the Board to approve covering 50% of the health care premium for eligible employees. Director Pfeffer said this also creates a post-retirement benefit for eligible employees. The COG would have to contribute to health care for retirees if they are past 10-years of combined full and part time service to the COG. This contribution is required by CalPERS and the COG proposes to do an unequal method of contribution that would start with \$1 per month upon the employee's retirement. Acknowledging that this is a serious undertaking, staff did an actuarial study and based on the findings, staff believes we can accommodate this obligation within the COG budget over the years. The study is attached in the agenda for the Board's consideration to receive and file.

For participants, there are six full time employees that would be eligible for the program, of which four anticipate to enroll. For eligible employees that don't enroll, the COG proposes to include a benefit of \$200 a month in lieu. In their research, staff found that public agencies often include this kind of contribution, and many give more than what staff proposes. Staff also found that this is a common benefit in both public and private sectors. Currently there is \$30,000 in the budget that has been approved and includes employee premiums and retirement contribution. Director Pfeffer also noted that we would need to modify our PARS plan to allow for this contribution. COG staff will bring the modified plan for the program to the Board for approval at the next meeting.

Director Pfeffer emphasized that it is up to the COG to decide how much of the premium cost to cover. The COG Board is also able to discontinue the plan if it turns out that we cannot sustain the financial obligations. Each year, as we do our budgeting, staff will be able to make a recommendation on continuing the program. If the Board did vote to leave CalPERS, the COG could not return for 5 years.

Director Pfeffer recapped that the current year's coverage amount is budgeted to be 50% of premiums. Employees would be notified of this via an annual memo, which is attached to the Board agenda. An in-lieu benefit will be provided to non-participants. The COG staff has developed a Health Insurance Policy, which is attached for the Board's approval. Entering this plan requires approval of a resolution by the Board and also requires the COG to provide a post-retirement benefit for employees who retire with at least 10 years of service. Based on an actuarial study, staff believes the COG budget can accommodate this obligation. Entering into this plan requires the COG to make a contribution to participating employees' retirement (PARS) accounts. This amount is included in the approved COG budget. The PARS plan will be amended to allow for employer contributions and will be brought to the Board next month. Each year the Board would have the ability to withdraw the COG from the CalPERS program if costs become unsustainable. Director Pfeffer said there are three documents recommended for the Board's approval tonight, the COG's Health Insurance Policy, CalPERS resolution, and the annual memorandum to full-time employees indicating that the contribution would be 50% this year. Staff also recommends that the Board approve the actuarial study.

Member Dunton asked COG Counsel Tsai if this item should be a closed session item. Tsai responded that as it is not a personnel matter, but adoption of a health care plan, it would not qualify for closed session. Member Dunton expressed that he has issues with the item as it relates to employees and does not feel comfortable addressing this in a public forum.

Member Dunton made a substitute motion to take vote on this matter in closed session. Member Naresh Solanki seconded the motion. Member Solanki commented that a similar matter happened in City of Cerritos in closed session. Member Oralía Rebollo asked Tsai why this matter would not qualify for closed session.

Tsai said the Board would be establishing a new plan and it does not affect any existing memorandums of understanding or employment matters already in place.

Member Dunton asked for a vote on the substitute motion.

Member Rios asked for clarification if the recommendation is to receive and file or to take action. President Davila said the recommendation is to approve the health care plan. Director Pfeffer added that there are three documents to approve and one to receive and file.

Member Rios asked what the employees were entitled to in terms of benefits, if any. Director Pfeffer said there's never been a program through the COG. Member Rios asked if the funding for this would come from the COG. Pfeffer responded that the funding would come from COG member dues, which would not be raised for this program. Member Rios asked how many employees would be eligible for this benefit, to which Pfeffer responded that there are six eligible, and four that would like to participate.

Member Dunton commented that the item should not be discussed further until Board members took action on how the item should be addressed, as employees are being discussed.

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Tsai advised the Board as there is no existing coverage and staff is asking to establish a program for coverage, this item would not be appropriate for closed session.

Member Dunton changed his motion to table this matter until the matter is researched further.

Member Rios commented that, based on COG Counsel Tsai's advice, it's not necessary to go into closed session and therefore would like to move forward with her questions. She asked for clarification if she should refrain from posing further questions until the motions by Member Dunton are addressed.

President Davila said she would like to follow through with the substitute motion. Tsai confirmed that Member Dunton's motion was to table the matter. Member Solanki seconded the motion. President Davila asked for roll call vote. Member Saleh said the matter can still be discussed while there is a motion on the floor. President Davila asked for discussion.

Member Rios asked that since this does have a big impact on cities fiscal budget and the dues come from the cities, it requires further conversation that members can engage in during this meeting or have postponed to another meeting. She expressed concerns on approving such a program with potential for impact to cities' finances in the future, especially considering the current pandemic and the need for cities to take care of their employees. She commented that the City of Norwalk is being conservative with financial responsibilities and decisions, as they don't know what the future holds.

First Vice President Cassidy stated that for benefit of new members of the COG Board, this is an item that has had ongoing discussion by the Board for over 6 months, with the Executive Board in agreement that some kind of benefit to full time staff members should be provided. She acknowledged that Administrative Director Cisneros has been with the COG since inception without benefits. First Vice President Cassidy stated if it's the will of the Board to hold on the decision until other questions can be asked, it would be okay to do that, but she would ultimately like to move forward with a program.

Member Zamora agreed with 1st Vice President Cassidy that this has been an ongoing topic of discussion for some time now and is something the Board would like to move forward with for staff.

Immediate Past President DuBois commented that the Board previously thought they could move forward on the program without negatively impacting cities, but since things have changed due to the pandemic, members are getting nervous about approving such a plan. She expressed discomfort with going back to cities for dues for the program.

Member Dutra agreed that the Board has been discussing the item for a long time and the COG has been moving in a new direction, and providing much more value to communities. He noted that Director Pfeffer can outline a couple of examples of the significant things that have taken place in the last 2 years, which is a result of the value of the people that are hired. He said that in order to retain the best, you have to be able to provide services and packages to your employees, and as business owners, you don't want surprises. He emphasized that if the COG is going to maintain the same level of value that we have come to expect, then we need to provide the services. Member Dutra expressed respect

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for concerns of members, and noted that two Executive Boards have been working to move this forward, and the work product that's been presented this evening is meeting the expectations of the past two Executive Boards.

Member Heber Marquez added that they recently did the same thing for the employees at their city and it was not conducted in closed session.

Member John Lewis expressed that as it sounds like not everyone is 100% comfortable moving forward on this item, it wouldn't hurt to push the item another month and help Members better understand what it will look like for cities, for example any dues increases especially given the lack of sales tax.

Administrative Director Cisneros commented that the Board and staff has been talking about this item for over a year. COG Officers said they did not want to raise membership dues, therefore staff managed to reduce costs in some areas to provide this service for employees. She suggested the Board could delay the start of the program to later months until we know what the membership dues are like this year.

Director Pfeffer responded to a chat question about the cost for the program. Member Zamora asked via the chat on the cost for the program, to which Pfeffer responded that the cost is \$30,000 and has been budgeted already.

Member Dunton said he thinks the matter needs to be looked at more closely. He reminded Members that two years ago the COG was almost bankrupt had to make an assessment on cities. He advised that Members be careful with the program decision.

Member Dutra asked Board members to send any questions on the program via email to Director Pfeffer and to be specific about concerns so that they can be addressed within the next 30 days.

President Davila confirmed the motion by Member Dunton is to table to item to next month, and it was seconded by Member Naresh Solanki. COG staff Arevalos performed a roll call. The motion passed, there were four nays.

There were no Matters from the Board of Directors.

Under Matters from the President, President Davila appointed Bellflower Councilmember Sonny Santa Ines to the SCAG Community, Economic, and Human Development Committee (CEHD). President Davila adjourned the meeting in memory of Member Rios' sister-in-law and Mayor Robert Garcia's mother. Member Rios thanked President Davila and wished everyone to stay safe, use sanitation and wear masks.

Adjournment: President Davila adjourned the meeting at 7:53 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Pfeffer, Executive Director