



PENSION ADMINISTRATION

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KARINA CHAVEZ
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Welcome, and thank you for attending the groundbreaking ceremony for the future home of the El Paso City Employees' Pension Fund administrative offices and board room. The path that has brought us here today began over five years ago, beginning with the 2012 Quality of Life Bond Election and the decision by City Council to demolish the existing City Hall (where the Fund had its offices on the 5th floor) to make way for a ballpark.

With the demolition planned for April 14, 2103, the Fund was advised by the City Manager in March of that year that it would have to find an office location due to there not being enough room to accommodate Pension staff in the new City Hall at 300 N. Campbell. While the City did eventually provide the Fund a leased location for its offices in the Union Plaza Transit Terminal, the Board of Trustees decided that the time was right for the Pension Fund, which was established in 1944, to finally have its own permanent, dedicated facility for staff offices and public meetings.

As Chair of the Ad Hoc Facilities Committee, which was formed by the Board in April 2013 for the purpose of managing the process for selecting the location for the new building, I have experienced the gamut of emotions over the course of the past four-and-a-half years: frustration, patience, gratitude, impatience, excitement and accomplishment. I spent almost two years with the Committee, our Broker, and the Board attempting to locate an existing building that met the variety of requirements needed for our functions: City-center location, a single-story building, accommodations for a board room, plenty of parking, ADA accessibility, and more that I am sure I cannot remember at the moment. All in vain. So, after this exhaustive search process, the Board tasked the Committee with locating vacant property where a new building could be built. After several months of exploring options, one day I decided to stop for lunch at Luby's across the street. As I was parking, almost by accident, I noticed a large "FOR SALE" sign, all the while remembering the past controversies surrounding its proposed use as the site for a WalMart store. The location was perfect, no demolition was required, the zoning allowed for our intended use, and an opportunity to provide infill with a professional building was icing on the cake. The Board was definitely interested in securing ownership of the property and directed the Committee to work with our broker and real estate attorney to proceed with an offer.

After several more months of deliberation by the Board and negotiations between buyer and seller, a contract for sale was finally signed by both parties and approved by the Board in June 2015. The property was ours! And then things began to get interesting...While the zoning allowed for our intended use of the property, **400 W. San Antonio Suite B • El Paso, Texas 79901 • (915) 212-0112 • Fax (915) 212-0113 • WWW.EPPENSION.ORG**



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several zoning conditions had been imposed by ordinance during the “WalMart” period, and it was necessary for the Pension Fund to remove some and modify other of these conditions. After meeting with surrounding residents, participating an in-depth application process, and meeting with City staff, the revised conditions were approved by the City Planning Commission, much to the Board’s satisfaction, in August 2016.

The way was now paved to hire a firm to design and build a facility that would not only meet the functional needs of the Pension Fund and its visitors, but also present the professional appearance of a financial institution to the surrounding community—all at a good value. The past year spent hiring our construction consultant Stephan Schmitz, our builder FT James Construction, and working with Steve Franco of Carl Daniels Architects designing the building, has been a whirlwind of activity by myself, the Committee, and our Administrator, Robert Ash.

Which brings us to where we are today. My vision for this new facility is that it serves its administrative functions for the Pension Fund and its staff, adds value as a good neighbor to this community and District 2, and provides for the opportunity to host events for our retirees to honor their service and provide valuable health and financial advising.

In closing, I would like to thank the past and present members of the Board of Trustees who played a role in this process, the members of the Ad Hoc Facilities Committee, our broker, David Etzold, our real estate attorney, Bob Warach, our Administrator, Robert Ash, our construction consultant, Stephan Schmitz, and the members of the Pension Staff in helping us accomplish this major milestone in the life of the Fund. We look forward to continuing to work with FT James and Steve Franco to complete this project by next Spring, and hope to see you all again at our grand opening!

Groundbreaking Remarks

Karl Rimkus, Chairman, Board of Trustees

August 31, 2017

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