

**GROUND RULES GOVERNING FOR
COLLECTIVE BARGAINING SESSIONS & NEGOTIATIONS
Between The
CITY OF LAREDO, TEXAS
And The
LAREDO FIRE FIGHTERS ASSOCIATION, LOCAL 872
("LFFA, LOCAL 872")**

The following Ground Rules shall apply to the collective bargaining negotiations undertaken pursuant to Chapter 174, Texas Local Gov't Code between the CITY OF LAREDO, TEXAS (hereafter "the CITY") and the LAREDO FIRE FIGHTERS ASSOCIATION, (hereafter "LFFA" or "ASSOCIATION"), collectively referred to as the "PARTIES".

I. PURPOSE

- A. The purpose of these ground rules is to establish guidelines for the negotiations of a successor Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Association and the City.

The Association and the City recognize their long term, interdependent relationship. The Parties acknowledge a mutual interest in working together to resolve their differences in a manner that is fiscally responsible and provides a desirable work environment for employees and high quality, uninterrupted service to the citizens of this City.

The Parties have agreed to pursue, to the extent practicable, a joint problem solving approach to labor negotiations in an effort to establish a working relationship based on trust and cooperation, rather than confrontation. To this end, the parties commit to open and honest communication and a sincere effort to understand each other's point of view about issues which must be resolved. The Parties will strive to achieve creative, sustainable and fiscally responsible solutions to issues that are mutually satisfactory to both of their interests.

The ground rules may be modified in writing by mutual agreement of the Parties.

II. BARGAINING TEAMS

- A. Each respective bargaining team, shall consist of no more than six (6) members (not counting the Chief Negotiator) seated at the table.
- B. The Parties understand and agree that the Chief Negotiators for the ASSOCIATION shall be CARLOS LOZANO and/or OSCAR DELGADO, and that the Chief Negotiators for the CITY shall be ROXANA I. PEREZ STEVENS and/or REBECCA S. HAYWARD. The designation of the Chief Negotiators may be replaced only by the directive of their respective clients, the CITY OF LAREDO and the ASSOCIATION.
- C. The initial members of the Bargaining Team for the CITY shall be LEAD NEGOTIATORS, ROSARIO CABELLO, JUAN CABALLERO, LINDA TENIENTE, JESUS ESPARZA, HOMERO VASQUEZ. Alternate Members may be members from the HEALTH AND BENEFITS DIVISION and FINANCE DEPARTMENT.
- D. The Fire Chief shall not be a member of the bargaining team or an alternate, but the Fire

Chief, or a management level representative from the Fire Department, may be available to the CITY bargaining team for consultation purposes with respect to any provisions affecting the operations of the Department.

- E. The initial members of the Bargaining Team for the ASSOCIATION shall be 1) RAFAEL TORRES; 2) GABRIEL CAMPOS; 3) JOSE ANTONIO ALANIZ; 4) LEO MENDOZA; 5) VICTOR TORRES; and 6) AIDAN ALVARADO. Alternate member(s) may be any current or past members of the association.
- F. Only the duly designated bargaining team members authorized to sit at the table shall be allowed to participate in the negotiations, except as otherwise agreed by the Chief Negotiators. Further, the negotiations shall be conducted primarily through the Chief Negotiators or a designee.
- G. The Chief Negotiator of either Team may designate an alternate Chief Negotiator for any given session, by providing no less than 24 hours notice of an alternate designation to the Chief Negotiator for the opposing Negotiation Team.
- H. Either PARTY may designate alternates to substitute for any member of its respective team, except the Chief Negotiator, but notice of any such substitution must be made to the opposing Chief Negotiator at least 24 hours in advance of any scheduled session.
- I. The PARTIES recognize, stipulate, and agree that the collective bargaining process is being conducted primarily through meetings of the respective bargaining teams. A quorum must be established by both bargaining teams in order to commence a bargaining session. A quorum for the ASSOCIATION shall consist of the Chief Negotiator and no less than two members. A quorum for the CITY shall consist of the Chief Negotiator and one member. The party with the quorum may, at its discretion, waive the quorum requirement of the other party for discussion purposes, but no TA's shall be signed under these circumstances.
- J. Nothing in these Ground Rules shall prevent or preclude each bargaining team from having members present for purposes of consultation and confirmation of facts, figures, processes, and procedures. Each bargaining team may freely consult and seek advice from respective personnel who may sit behind the team and be available for consultation.

III. AUTHORITY OF CHIEF NEGOTIATORS

- A. The Chief Negotiator for each party shall have the authority to lead the negotiations, and shall be responsible for maintaining order with respect to his/her respective bargaining team.
- B. Only the Chief Negotiator of each PARTY may authorize and allow members of the bargaining team to address a point or make a presentation.
- C. The Chief Negotiator for each party, with the consent of the Bargaining Team, may make tentative agreements (TAs) or commitments regarding specific terms and conditions raised in the contract negotiations. Tentative agreements that are in writing and initialed by the Chief Negotiators shall be treated as concluded and off the table thereby allowing the PARTIES to proceed to other issues. However, a tentative agreement could be revisited upon agreement of both lead negotiators in the event that a (TA) article conflicts with another subsequent proposed article. A timestamped copy of tentative agreement will be provided to both parties.

- D. The PARTIES understand and agree that tentative agreements shall not be implemented during the bargaining process. All tentative agreements remain subject to final formal approval of the contract document by the CITY OF LAREDO CITY COUNCIL, under a duly posted and action item posted in compliance with the Texas Open Meetings Act, and approval by the majority vote of the ASSOCIATION AND ITS MEMBERS, consistent with their internal processes, procedures, and bylaws, and in accordance with the requirements of Section 174.152, TLGC.

IV. NEGOTIATION SESSIONS

- A. The PARTIES shall meet and agree upon a negotiation schedule. The Chief Negotiators may, by mutual agreement, postpone or reschedule a meeting.
- B. Negotiation sessions shall be scheduled to allow for up to eight hours of negotiations and caucus time, and will not last more than eight hours unless circumstances dictate otherwise as determined by the respective bargaining teams.
- C. The frequency, the time, and the number of meetings shall be scheduled with due regard for the impasse deadlines imposed under §174.152, TLGC, or as otherwise extended by written agreement.
- D. During the negotiation sessions, either party may request a break or caucus during the negotiation sessions.
- E. Upon the agreement of both chief negotiators, a subcommittee may be formed to gather information on a specific article to maintain efficiency of negotiations.

V. SCHEDULE OF PRESENTATION FOR PROPOSALS

- A. The initial meetings shall be for the following purposes:
 - 1. to set the initial identity of each bargaining team;
 - 2. discussion and adoption of Ground Rules; and,
 - 3. general discussion of the schedule, format, structure, and content of the negotiations.
- B. The collective bargaining process, for purposes of impasse deadlines under Chapter 174, TLGC, shall not commence until the first scheduled bargaining meeting at which a substantive proposal is tendered by one of the PARTIES. This shall be denominated as the “first bargaining meeting” for purposes of Chapter 174, TLGC.
- C. The parties’ goal is that the fourth bargaining meeting, beginning from the “first bargaining meeting”, shall be the last meeting any new initial proposals may be submitted in writing and presented by either negotiation team, subject to any mutually agreed modification of this schedule.

VI. NEWS RELEASES/PRINTED MATTER

- A. During the negotiations, neither party shall unilaterally issue news releases, or hold any press conferences, in any form, or issue any other printed material, regarding the events during negotiations or the status of the negotiations.

- B. Requests for comment or information by any representatives of the media shall be referred to the Chief Negotiator for each PARTY, each of whom is authorized to handle the inquiry at hand in their own discretion consistent with the spirit of these Ground Rules.
- C. When the parties agree that a news release is desirable, such release shall be jointly prepared and released by the parties. A short statement of a non-specific nature may be issued by either Chief Negotiator, upon the request of the media, and such statement shall not be considered as a violation of this section.
- D. In the event impasse as defined by Chapter 174, TLGC, is reached, the PARTIES may at that time unilaterally communicate with the press or the public.

VII. CONTACTS DURING NEGOTIATIONS

- A. The parties agree that all negotiations shall be conducted exclusively between the designated bargaining teams at the bargaining table under a public meeting. Neither party shall make any effort to bypass such designated bargaining teams during any stage of the negotiations which have begun on May 20, 2022.
- B. This section is effective beginning May 20, 2022 and up to when an Impasse has been reached as defined by §174.152 of the TLGC.
- C. Upon the agreement of both chief negotiators, the parties may address concerns, issues, and/or questions brought up/raised by elected city officials and/or association members in a subcommittee prior to/after scheduled negotiation meetings. The subcommittee in this section will include one lead negotiator from each party or their designee.

VIII. CONTRACT DOCUMENT

- A. The contract document shall be created and maintained in an MS Word format. During the negotiations, a draft of the document shall be maintained by the CITY's Chief Negotiator.
- B. An adequate number of copies of all proposals and/or counter-proposals shall be provided to the members of the respective opposite bargaining team for use at the negotiations sessions.
- C. Copies of the draft documents shall be made available to the ASSOCIATION's Chief Negotiator and/or the ASSOCIATION President upon request and within a reasonable time for use at the negotiation session.
- D. The final version of the negotiated contract shall be maintained by the ASSOCIATION's Secretary, as well as by the City Secretary on behalf of the CITY OF LAREDO.
- E. The parties agree that it shall not be necessary to record the negotiation sessions. However, either party may utilize note takers during the meetings. The Parties agree that there shall not be any surreptitious recording of the negotiation sessions.

IX. OPEN MEETINGS

- A. The parties agree that negotiation sessions, except for team caucuses and any mediated sessions, are open to the public to the fullest extent provided for by Chapter 174, TLGC.
- B. The negotiation sessions will be publicly noticed and will be live streamed and recorded by the City as public meetings under Chapter 174 and the Texas Open Meetings Act. The

recordings of the negotiation sessions will be publicly available and shall serve as the minutes of the meeting.

X. BARGAINING PROCESS DEADLINES

- A. The PARTIES intend to conclude the bargaining process within the impasse deadlines contemplated by §174.153, TLGC, subject to duly executed extensions in writing, as authorized by law.
- B. Each PARTY reserves their statutory and other legal rights with respect to the bargaining process, unless modifications are agreed to in writing.

XI. NEGOTIATING TIME FOR BARGAINING UNIT MEMBERS

- A. The duly designated members of the ASSOCIATION's bargaining team shall be allowed to attend bargaining sessions while on duty subject to the discretion of the Fire Chief due to staffing needs of the Department as determined by the Fire Chief.
- B. Members of the bargaining unit who are not named members of the bargaining team and who wish to attend a bargaining session as spectators may do so only on their own time. No special prerogative or privilege shall be exercised to accommodate leave requests for personnel who are not named members of the bargaining team.


XII. MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

- A. These Ground Rules, being the subject of mutual agreement between the PARTIES, may be modified by agreement at any time to serve the interests of the bargaining process; provided, however, that any modifications to these Ground Rules must be in writing and signed by each Chief Negotiator.
- B. These Ground Rules are to be self-enforced as procedural rules for the orderly conduct of business. The parties do not intend that these Rules are binding as contractual provisions.

SIGNED on the 10th day of JUNE, 2022.

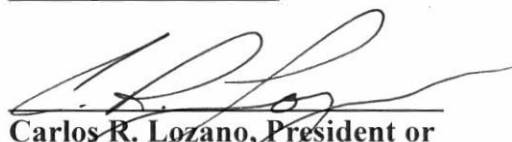
CHIEF NEGOTIATORS

CITY OF LAREDO, TEXAS



Roxana I. Perez Stevens or
Rebecca Hayward

LFFA, LOCAL 872



Carlos R. Lozano, President or
Oscar Delgado, 2nd Vice President

BARGAINING TEAM MEMBERS

1. Jesus C. Cuello

[Signature] Lead

2. Jesus Espinoza

[Signature]

3. Linda A. Brinato

[Signature]

4. Juan B. Caballero

[Signature]

5. [Signature]

Leo E. Mendez

6. _____
