



**RECORD OF WORKSHOP
WESLACO CITY COMMISSION
TUESDAY, JUNE 2, 2026**

On the 2nd day of June 2026 at 4:06 p.m., the City Commission of the City of Weslaco, Texas convened in a Workshop in the Legislative Chamber Room located at 255 S. Kansas Avenue with the following members present:

PRESENT:	Mayor Mayor Pro Tem Commissioner Commissioner Commissioner	Adrian Gonzalez Pete Garcia Jr. Letty Lopez Israel Gonzalez Jr. Josh Pedraza
ABSENT:	Commissioner Commissioner	JP Rodriguez Adrian Farias
STAFF PRESENT:	Xavier Salinas Norma A. Cantu Benjamin Castillo	City Manager City Secretary City Attorney

Also present: Omar Rodriguez Asst. City Manager, Antonio Lopez, Asst. City Manager/Fire Chief, Aida Vega, Deputy City Secretary, Rosie Cavazas, Finance Director, Rebekah De La Fuente, Planning and Code Enforcement Director, Peter Hermida, City Engineer, Armando Espinoza, Asst. Police Chief, Nick Castillo, Public Works Director, David Arce, Utilities Director, Eddie Serna, Parks & Recreation Director, Maricarmen Garcia, Asst. Library Director, Krista Cheramie, Animal Care Services, Rick Mendoz, IT Director, Celine Pardo, Municipal Court, and other staff members.

I. CALL TO ORDER

A. Certification of Public Notice.

Mayor Gonzalez called the meeting to order and certified the public notice of the meeting as properly posted Wednesday, May 27, 2026.

B. Roll Call.

Norma A. Cantu, City Secretary, conducted roll call to show attendees.

II. NEW BUSINESS

A. Presentation by Knapp Community Care Foundation on the Blue Zones Ignite Readiness Assessment for Weslaco.

Mayor Gonzalez noted that while the Knapp Community Care Foundation representatives were unable to attend in person, he, Assistant City Managers Omar Rodriguez, and Antonio Lopez had participated in two prior meetings with them and were prepared to brief the Commission on the initiative.

Mayor Gonzalez provided background for the program's relevance to Weslaco, noting that when Blue Zones were originally introduced to the Rio Grande Valley, the cities mentioned were Brownsville, Harlingen, McAllen, and Edinburg. He thanked Knapp Community Care Foundation, Ms. Christina Trejo, for advocating to have Weslaco added to the initiative.

Overview of the Blue Zones Program

Antonio Lopez provided an overview of the Blue Zones concept, explaining that it originated from research into regions around the world where residents were living notably longer and healthier lives; acknowledged that the culture of the Rio Grande Valley — while rich in family and community traditions — is also associated with elevated rates of diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, and other chronic conditions and emphasized that this initiative is not a short-term fix, but a multi-year, data-driven program aimed at improving community health outcomes over time. Outlined several core components of the program, including the importance of identifying community champions such as the city, local healthcare community, faith-based organizations and Weslaco Independent School District. A two-day kickoff meeting was planned for September, at which all stakeholders would be convened to collectively commit to the program's goals.

Financial and Operational Implications

Antonio Lopez stated that other cities participating in Blue Zones programs have achieved reductions of 25 to nearly 50 percent in hospitalizations and doctor's visits among their employees. He emphasized that with over 400 city employees, even a measurable health improvement over six months could translate into meaningful cost savings during insurance negotiations. He further noted that approximately 75 percent of the Fire Department's emergency calls are EMS-related, and that improved community health could help reduce that demand over time.

Omar Rodriguez explained on the structure of the engagement, explaining that the current grant — funded by Methodist Healthcare Ministries and facilitated through Knapp Community Care Foundation — covers the first phase: a comprehensive readiness assessment. This assessment will establish a baseline by measuring the community across nine identified dimensions drawn from Blue Zones research, including natural movement, diet, social connectivity, and overall well-being. He noted that the assessment process would bring together parties that do not always communicate with one another and could surface partnerships not currently on the city's radar. He noted the initiative aligns directly with broader city planning efforts, including the Unified Development Code, subdivision standards requiring sidewalk connectivity, and quality-of-life improvements in the downtown area.

Commissioner Pedraza inquired whether the program would include a mental health component. Staff noted that while the program's primary focus is physical health, mental health benefits are inherently embedded — particularly through the promotion of group activities, walking clubs, and social engagement. Community participation can meaningfully address loneliness and mental

well-being and added that Tropical Mental Health has been invited to participate in the core planning group.

Mayor Pro Tem Garcia Jr. raised the value of organized adult recreational leagues and opened gym programs for both youth and adults and expressed the need to see those programs restored. Mayor Gonzalez agreed, sharing that he had already been in conversations with the school district's Athletic Director toward that goal.

Omar Rodriguez noted an article on the Blue Zones website highlighted research on how the built environment — walkability, park access, and connectivity between residential, commercial, and civic spaces — directly influences physical activity and well-being, affirming the city's important role in the initiative.

Next Steps:

Antonio Lopez confirmed that the internal core group, consisting of city staff and Knapp Community Care Foundation representatives, are currently meeting weekly or bi-weekly to prepare logistics for the kickoff. A VIP virtual meeting will precede the in-person September event, and Commission members will be included in both. The Blue Zones team has also requested a tour of Weslaco during their September visit to better understand the city's character and existing assets before finalizing their assessment recommendations.

The commission did not enter the closed portion of the agenda.

III. EXECUTIVE SESSION

A. Personnel — Discussion regarding the goals, objectives, and evaluation of the City Manager for the City of Weslaco as authorized by Section §551.074 of the Texas Government Code.

B. Legal Consultation — Consultation with the City Attorney regarding Liquid Environmental as authorized by Section §551.071 of the Texas Government Code.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Pro Tem Garcia Jr. seconded by Commissioner Gonzalez Jr. moved to adjourn the workshop meeting of June 2, 2026 at 5:16 p.m. The motion carried unanimously; Mayor Gonzalez was present and voting.

CITY OF WESLACO

Adrian Gonzalez, **MAYOR**

ATTEST:

Norma A. Cantu, **CITY SECRETARY**