


**CITY OF SAN ANTONIO  
OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER**

**TO:** Mayor and City Council

**FROM:** Sheryl Sculley, City Manager 

**COPY:** Tricentennial Celebration Commission; Executive Leadership Team

**SUBJECT:** TRICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION COMMISSION

**DATE:** January 12, 2018

This memo describes the going forward strategy for the 2018 Tricentennial year.

**Background**

The Tricentennial Celebration Commission was incorporated by City Council action on June 18, 2015 as a Local Government Corporation under state statute, with Robert Thraikill, Katie Luber, and Nancy Hunt serving as incorporators. Mayor Ivy Taylor appointed three Co-Chairs: Robert Thraikill, Katie Luber, and Fr. David Garcia; and County Judge Nelson Wolf appointed two Co-Chairs: Lionel Sosa and Dr. Alfonso Chiscano, for a total of five. The City Council and County Commissioners appointed 14 members for a total of 19 members on the Board.

In creating the Local Government Corporation, the City Council ceded all planning and decision making authority to the Tricentennial Commission. Thus, the City did not approve any contracts related to the Tricentennial since inception.

While decision making for the Tricentennial was ceded to the Tricentennial Commission, the City of San Antonio assisted by appropriating funding for operations in FY 2016, FY 2017 and FY 2018 and by allowing Tricentennial staff to remain City of San Antonio employees so that the Tricentennial organization did not have to create a Human Resources department for the limited duration of its existence. The City also provided accounting and accounts payable services for the Tricentennial organization. However, a Local Government Corporation by law is not required to adhere to City rules and regulations for procurement.

In the fall of 2015, a five-member panel comprised of three Tricentennial Co-Chairs, the Mayor's Chief of Staff and the City Manager interviewed three finalists from a field of 40 applicants for the Executive Director position and selected Edward Benavides for CEO and Asia Ciaravino for COO (Ciaravino resigned in May of 2017).

In June of 2016, at the request of the Tricentennial Co-Chairs, Mayor Taylor asked Edward Benavides and the attorneys to develop procedures to enable the Commission to act more quickly

to organize the Tricentennial events. The Tricentennial Commission voted to give decision making authority to the Executive Director (CEO) and the five Co-Chairs. The Tricentennial Commission bylaws were amended by City Council to reflect this change.

For the past two years, the Tricentennial Commission has been working to plan, organize and approve the various events and celebrations that have occurred and will occur throughout the year.

On November 13, 2017, Edward Benavides resigned from his position as the Executive Director (CEO) of the Tricentennial Commission amidst criticism concerning Tricentennial operations and processes, particularly the selection process for official media partners, communication with Tricentennial Commission members and the public, and fundraising. The Co-Chairs of the Tricentennial Commission accepted his resignation.

Following Edward's resignation, I asked Assistant City Manager Carlos Contreras to serve as Interim Executive Director until a permanent replacement was selected. The Tricentennial Commission confirmed the appointment for Carlos in November. In December Mayor Nirenberg nominated Dr. Cynthia Teniente-Matson and Dr. John Folks as Co-Chairs and members of the Executive Committee of the San Antonio Tricentennial Commission, and the City Council approved the changes in Tricentennial Commission membership after Co-Chairs Robert Thraikill and Katie Luber resigned.

### **Issue**

While the Executive Director position is currently filled in an interim capacity, the Tricentennial Commission Co-Chairs have expressed a desire for Carlos Contreras to continue to serve as the permanent Executive Director.

In consultation with Tricentennial Commission President Dr. Cynthia Teniente-Matson and Mayor Nirenberg, moving forward the Tricentennial Commission will continue to be led by Carlos Contreras as Executive Director. Vanessa Hurd has agreed to stay on with an expanded role as Deputy Director, giving Carlos a strong partner. Over the coming days and weeks, I will also assign additional City of San Antonio staff to the Tricentennial Commission to support Carlos leading the effort.

While Carlos serves as the Tricentennial Commission Executive Director, he will continue to oversee the Aviation Department, which, in addition to regular operations, will support the new Airport System Development Committee appointed by the Mayor and develop the Airport Master Plan, as mandated by the Federal Aviation Administration. Carlos will also lead the Convention and Sports Facilities Department in a time of transition following Mike Sawaya's departure. Carlos is a valuable resource to the City of San Antonio and is needed to lead crucial City service departments as Assistant City Manager.

It is proposed that the Tricentennial Commission will take action at its next board meeting on January 24, 2018 to appoint Carlos as permanent Executive Director. In addition to staff that I will temporarily assign to the Commission, Carlos is developing a staffing plan for the balance of the

year in order to execute all activities planned by the Tricentennial Commission. I anticipate that the Tricentennial Office will also add non-City staff to support the effort.

Finally, in lieu of reassignment, Edward Benavides tendered his resignation from the City of San Antonio on January 11, 2018. As a part of his separation agreement, he will remain available until March as a resource to Carlos for questions that arise regarding the planning and execution of the Tricentennial events occurring during Commemorative Week, which will take place May 1-6<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

The City of San Antonio remains committed to providing support to the Tricentennial Commission to ensure a successful 300th anniversary celebration. If there are additional questions, please feel free to contact me or Carlos.