



**OSCAR LEESER**  
MAYOR

**OPEN LETTER**

March 6, 2023

As Mayor of the great city of El Paso, I was elected to represent all the citizens of this community, not any special interest group, association, or good old boy network. As such, any decisions I make will be in the best interest of the citizens of El Paso. There has been a lot of recent speculation and rhetoric regarding the City Council's decision to end the amended and restated employment agreement with the city manager, and much of that rhetoric has been incorrect and somewhat validated to some in the community by the intervention of former elected officials in news programs – rhetoric that needs to be clarified:

- Under the current contract with the city manager, the City Council has the right to end the city manager's employment *without* cause. The city manager understands this and his comments to the media after the action reflect that understanding.
- If that provision of the contract is used, you do not provide reasons or cause. It is not a reflection of performance, it is not an evaluation, and it is not a contract negotiation. It is a decision of the City Council to end the employment without cause and go in another direction. Providing cause would be disrespectful to the city manager, contrary to the provision in the city manager's contract, and I am surprised that two former Mayors don't seem to understand this.
- The action I took regarding this matter clearly reflects not only my past words but my actions as well. I participated in a campaign for Mayor against then-incumbent Dee Margo, I spoke clearly on this issue, and I won with 80% of the vote in that election. The people of El Paso overwhelmingly supported my stance on this and other issues, so for the former Mayor to say otherwise regarding community reaction to this action is disingenuous. I have been consistent in my words and thoughts on this matter, and in the past year, I vetoed amended and renegotiated employment contracts and extensions for the city manager. My vote last week reflected my words and actions accordingly.
- Any discussion and recall-talk regarding newly elected City Council members seems illogical, given that they are acting on items which they specifically campaigned on, and on which the voters in their district elected them.
- There is no effort to change the city manager form of government.

- The voters of this great community elect their Mayor and their City Representatives. The city manager is an employee of the City Council and by design follows the policies set forth by the City Council. He works at the discretion of the City Council, that exercised its right to end his employment in accordance with his amended and restated employment agreement. The action taken was not a reflection of the performance of the city manager.
- Using an example specifically used by former Mayor Dee Margo recently in media interviews, then it was under former Mayor Dee Margo, the City Council at the time and their policies, when El Paso became the most COVID-19 infected city in the United States. We were on international news in the worst way possible. Our deceased loved ones were in trailers being moved by inmates. Our hospitals were so overwhelmed they were forced to erect tents outside their buildings. And former Mayor Margo was having competing press conferences and policy disagreements with our county government. Our citizens didn't have clear unified guidance from their elected leaders, they didn't know who to listen to, and they were scared and angry. El Pasoans were heartbroken for their loved ones, frustrated, and their vote for me clearly and overwhelmingly reflected their dissatisfaction. Every El Pasoan was affected by those policies, including myself, as I lost my mother and brother during this time to COVID-19, and I was not alone. Thousands in our community lost family members, loved ones, and friends.
- My goal coming into my second term was to unify community efforts, work *with*, not against my fellow elected leaders, specifically with our County Judge, and turn our situation around. We did. We planned daily, met weekly, and spoke hourly. We went from the most COVID-19-infected city in the nation, to the first city in Texas to reach herd immunity. And we did it together. It wasn't one person that did it, in fact I would argue that it was all El Pasoans that did it for us, getting vaccinated once we as a team secured and set up to administer the vaccines, and rallying around our now-unified messaging and direction. In essence, it was the coordinated efforts of ALL as a team and the hard work of everyone involved, including County Judge Ricardo Samaniego, Congresswoman Escobar, Senator Blanco and our State Delegation, our City Council, Commissioner's Court, our citizens, hospitals, NGO's, the faith-based community, and all of the people that worked together, including the city manager and his team and the county administrator and her team, all of whom I consistently thanked as unified efforts now proved fruitful and turned our dire situation around.
- I could, one by one, refute each of the claims being made by former elected officials in interviews in an effort to retain the status quo, remain relevant, and respond to the elite in this community that move them. But this is not a campaign. They apparently are in one, I am not.

I will continue acting in the best interest of ALL the citizens of El Paso. Information regarding next steps will be announced when they are finalized, and it is my steadfast belief that the future is bright for our region. I want to assure the citizens of El Paso that this community is larger than any one person, whether that is me, the city manager or anyone else. We are El Paso Strong, and our brightest days are ahead.



Oscar Leeser

Mayor