

**STATE OF TEXAS
COUNTY OF HIDALGO
CITY OF MCALLEN**

The McAllen Board of Commissioners convened in a Workshop on **Monday, February 9, 2026**, at 4:30 pm, in the McAllen City Hall Third Floor (3rd) Commission Chambers.

Present:

Mayor Javier Villalobos, Mayor Pro Tem Victor "Seby" Haddad, Commissioner Antonio "Tony" Aguirre, Jr., Commissioner Joaquin Zamora Commissioner Rolando "Rolly" Rios, Commissioner Rodolfo "Rudy" Castillo and Commissioner Jose R. "Pepe" Cabeza de Vaca were present

Staff Present:

City Manager Isaac Tawil, City Attorney Austin Stevenson, Deputy City Manager Michelle Rivera, Assistant City Manager Jeff Johnston, Assistant City Manager Elvira Alonso, City Secretary Perla Lara

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Javier Villalobos called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm.

1. PRESENT QUESTIONS RELATING TO STAFF RELATING TO THE FEBRUARY 9th REGULAR MEETING AGENDA, TO BE DISCUSSED AT SUCH A MEETING.

The City Commissioners had no questions for staff concerning the February 9th regular meeting agenda.

2. PRESENTATION OF FILM FRIENDLY TEXAS CERTIFICATION.

Staff delivered a presentation on the Film Friendly Texas certification program and discussed its relevance to the City of McAllen. The purpose of the discussion was to ensure understanding of the program's benefits, process requirements, and implications for city operations.

Staff discussed why Film Friendly Texas matters to McAllen and highlighted several key reasons the certification is beneficial:

- **Signals McAllen is "Open for Business"** – Positions the city as organized, responsive and ready to outside investment
- **Supports local economic activity** – Generates hotel stays, restaurant traffic, and local vendor spending
- **Strengthens tourism and city branding** – National and international media exposure reinforces McAllen's image as a destination city
- **Low Cost, Staff – Led Certification** – No new funding required within existing staff capacity
- **Keeps City Authority Intact** – Certification does not obligate approvals or limit city discretion

Staff discussed the purpose of the Film Friendly Texas noting it is a statewide certification program administered by the Texas Film Commission that helps cities demonstrate readiness for film, television, and digital media production. Staff also discussed what it signals to the industry and designation:

- It is a **Texas Film Commission program** that certifies communities as ready and supportive of film/media activity.
- **State-Led Certification** – Administered by Texas Film Commission
- **Industry Signal of Readiness** – Indicates the city is organized and production ready.
- **Statewide Production Network** – Connects McAllen to Texas' official film ecosystem
- **Used by Producers** – A standard credential considered during site selection

The required steps for obtaining the Film Friendly Texas designation were reviewed:

1. **Designate a City Liaison** – City assigns a single point of contact for film and agenda inquiries
2. **Attend the State's Film Friendly Training** – Staff completes Texas Film Commission training workshop

3. **Adopt Standardized Filming Guidelines** – Standard filming policies adopted using statewide models
4. **Submit Local Filming Locations** – City locations upload to the statewide production database

Staff discussed the purpose of the database and expectations:

- Include **real McAllen locations**, focusing on practical, scout-friendly visuals
- Avoid “glamour shots” and highlight sites that demonstrate McAllen’s versatility

Staff reviewed the potential benefits for McAllen, including:

- **Hotel stays and spending**
- **Use of local vendors and workforce**
- **National exposure**
- **Tourism promotion**
- **Strengthened city branding**
- **Positive community profile**

Staff clarified the internal governance impact:

- **Financial Neutrality:** No City funding required, no incentives or tax abatements
- **Local Authority Preserved:** All filming permits remain under city control
- **No Approval Obligation:** Certification does not require accepting or approving projects
- **Increased Visibility & Readiness:** this certification increases visibility and readiness without changing city authority, budgets, or approval processes

Staff concluded by mentioning the next steps and the following action items:

- **Complete the Certification Requirements** – Staff-led process to finalize Film Friendly Texas requirements and designation
- **Add McAllen to the State Database** – McAllen locations submitted to the Texas Film Commission production database
- **Commission Updates as Needed** – Commission informed only if film or media projects move forward

Council members shared comments and questions, and Mayor Villalobos thanked staff for the presentation.

3. **EXECUTIVE SESSION, CHAPTER 551, TEXAS GOVERNMENT CODE, SECTION 551.071 (CONSULTATION WITH ATTORNEY), SECTION 551.072 (DELIBERATION REGARDING REAL PROPERTY), SECTION 551.074 (PERSONNEL MATTERS) AND SECTION 551.087 (ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT).**

- A) **CONSULTATION WITH CITY ATTORNEY REGARDING PENDING LITIGATION. TEX. GOV'T. CODE §551.071.**
- B) **CONSIDERATION OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MATTERS. TEX. GOV'T. CODE §551.071**
- C) **WITH CITY ATTORNEY REGARDING LEGAL ASPECTS OF ENACTED LITIGATION. TEX. GOV'T. CODE §551.071.**

PUBLIC COMMENT:

The following individuals addressed the Council during the public comment portion of the meeting:

- James Alexander
- Raul Ivan Cortina

ADJOURN

Without objection, the meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Attest:



Perla Lara, TRMC/CMC, CPM
City Secretary

Javier Villalobos, Mayor

