

CITY OF ALAMO HEIGHTS
CITY COUNCIL
June 05, 2025

A workshop of the City Council of the City of Alamo Heights, Texas was held at the Council Chambers, located at 6116 Broadway, San Antonio, Texas, at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, June 05, 2025. A teleconference was held via Zoom.

Present and composing a quorum were:

Mayor Albert Honigblum
Mayor Pro Tem Trey Jacobson
Councilmember Karl P. Baker
Councilmember Blake M. Bonner
Councilmember Lynda Billa Burke

Also attending were:

City Manager Buddy Kuhn
City Attorney Frank J. Garza
Assistant City Manager Phil Laney
Assistant to City Manager Jennifer Reyna
City Secretary Elsa T. Robles
Police Chief Rick Pruitt
Fire Chief Allen Ottmers
Community Development Services Director Lety Hernandez
Deputy Police Chief Cindy Pruitt

Absent:

Councilmember Lawson Jessee

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Mayor Albert Honigblum opened the meeting at 5:31 p.m.

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Item # 1 Mayor Honigblum read the following caption.

Discuss the Argyle Specific Use Permit (SUP) and project

Mayor Honigblum addressed the audience and stated this was a workshop to discuss openly the Specific Use Permit that was submitted by the Argyle. No decision would be made; however, Council will gather information regarding the policy issues at hand. He stated Council had formed a subcommittee composed of staff, Mayor Pro Tem Trey Jacobson and Councilmember Lawson Jessee who would provide their findings. Anyone who signed up to speak will have two minutes to share their thoughts. Mayor Honigblum asked speakers to be respectful of the time to allow their everyone to voice their opinions.

Mayor Honigblum asked to hear comments from citizens who signed up to speak.

- Mr. Louis Cooper, former Mayor of Alamo Heights and current resident, stated he wanted to speak to all his friends in this room on both sides. He commented he did

not like division in the community and hoped that Council will soon make a decision based on the information they have gathered. Mr. Cooper provided Council a letter written by a neighbor who was unable to attend the meeting.

- Mr. Mel Weingart, resident, stated he was a former General Manager of the Argyle for 30 years. He stated he was in favor of the proposed SUP. He commented the Argyle was featured in 1986, Texas Monthly Magazine because of what it became and the reputation it had achieved. Texas Biomed and the Argyle have both grown very significantly due to the great financial support of the club's members and their dedication to the Institute work in the Advancement of Human Health through basic research into the nature causes prevention and eradication of disease.
- Mr. Joe Straus Jr., resident, stated he has lived across the street for over 40 years and has never had a problem. He stated supports the SUP, is 98 years old and hopes they hurry up with this project so he can see it completed.
- Mr. John A Oberman, resident and Argyle member, stated many of the people opposing the proposed expansion have a lot to be grateful for due to the beautiful neighborhood they live in and the value of their homes. He commented the Argyle is very responsive to neighbor's concerns and he supported the project because it is an improvement for the neighborhood, and it will continue to exist. He noted the opposition has been driven by hate and resentment and has become toxic for the community. He urged Council to make a decision.
- Ms. Olga Brown, resident, stated her concern is that friends and neighbors do not support the Argyle's request. She shared this is because of the signs that are in the neighborhood that state the Argyle is an event center. She lives directly across the Argyle for 45 years and has never had one complaint about how the Argyle is run and supports the expansion.
- Mr. John MacDougall, resident, stated he lived outside the impact zone, but shared that with the expansion, the Argyle will be 38,000 square feet, which will make it the largest nightclub in San Antonio. He commented it may help lower property values and asked if the City Council would pledge to lower the budget to take that lower income and not push the tax assessments on the rest of the city residents.
- Ms. Priscilla MacDougall, resident, stated she wished to express compassion for the City Council who are in a difficult situation since some are Argyle members. Whether they vote for or against, there will be unhappy people. She noted she really appreciated the good governance and the peacefulness in the City and hoped that this ends in a peaceful way.
- Ms. Chris Lopez, resident, stated she is concerned with the proposed SUP and hoped there can be something put forth that can help with the size, scale and the concerns of the neighborhood. She added she is troubled and concerned when it is phrased as an all or nothing deal, and commented the people she has talked to have not been saying they don't want the Argyle, but that they're concerned with the proposed SUP.
- Mr. Andrew Hunt, Member of the Board of Governors of the Argyle, appointed by Texas biomed, and present Chair of the Building Committee. He stated as a supporter of Texas Biomed, and a very passionate supporter of the historical significance of the Argyle, he ask that Council approve the SUP. He commented

the Argyle is at the core of the city's founding. The SUP will allow the Argyle to continue its mission while both reducing the load on the beautiful mansion and helping fund her maintenance, which is important for its historic nature. He noted the SUP codifies extraordinarily good neighbor policies.

- Mr. Mark Thorton, resident, stated his property abuts the ancillary Argyle parking lot parking lot. He and his wife found the parking and lighting problematic but found that speaking to the Argyle these issues have been resolved and is in favor of the SUP.
- Mr. Boo Hausser, past chair of the Building Committee at the Argyle for the last 3 years. He stated their core mission for the Argyle addition is to design it in such a way as to respect and complement the architecture and old house feel. He commented they have spent over 70 meetings and countless hours for 3 years, including working on revamping the original design of the new addition to address the concerns expressed by a few of our neighbors. He noted many of the immediate neighbors support the addition.
- Mr. TBO Bowman, resident and member of the Argyle stated sometimes they had failed to be a good neighbor but stated the Argyle was the 1st neighbor and shared some history on how Alamo Heights became a city. He supported the proposed expansion.
- Mr. Claude Koontz, resident, stated he was in favor of the SUP and proposed expansion and commented people knew there was a social club in the neighborhood when they bought their homes and should not be surprised by the noise and encouraged Council to approve the SUP and the addition.
- Mr. Forrest Word, resident, stated his grandparents were approached when the Argyle was first built. He is supportive of the Argyle SUP and the increased restrictions even though some seem unnecessary. He commented the Argyle helps to keep the neighborhood safe and the addition will take events inside making it quieter for the neighbors.
- Rev. Jay Buzzini, resident, stated his family has lived directly next door to the Argyle for 80 years. He stated his mother still lives there and was concerned with the integrity of the addition. He noted he is convinced that the Argyle has bent over backwards to accommodate all the concerns that have been broached. He added they are excellent neighbors and are responsive to residents' concerns.
- Mr. Kennon Guglielmo, resident, stated he was encouraged that this SUP will be a win/win for everyone and asked Council to pass the SUP and expansion being proposed. He commented it is not an event center, but rather a dining hall which will be used appropriately, and will be an upgrade, not a downgrade for the neighbors.
- Mr. Steve Chiscano, resident, with any project you will always have the naysayers and appreciates the naysayers with this project because it allowed everyone to improve upon the original SUP and allowed people to critique one another and question if it could be done better for the neighborhood. He recognized the many hours spent on this project and asked Council to approve the SUP and expansion.
- Ms. Alice Foultz, resident, stated if approved, there has been no discussion of where the vehicles for construction will park during construction phase and if there will

be penalties applied if they go over the construction timeframe. She asked for the 6-month SUP Council review with neighbors include those who live within the 200 ft boundary.

Mayor Honigblum stated with no further citizens to be heard, Mayor Pro Tem Jacobson would present the Council Subcommittee findings.

Mayor Pro Tem Jacobson stated he was presenting on behalf of the Council Subcommittee and reminded everyone in April 2025, the Planning and Zoning Commission approved an SUP as an ordinance and was forwarded to the City Council with a recommendation to approve as presented. The City Council heard the request and held a public hearing in but voted to table the request for 60 days because of the opportunities and the needs to understand what was being proposed and how it would impact the neighborhood.

Mayor Pro Tem Jacobson reiterated the intent of the work session was to try to inform everyone about its contents and the policy considerations within it and stated he was going to cover a lot of topics during this presentation to include the Argyle properties, prior City approvals, historical information regarding events at the Argyle, current impacts of events on neighbors, the proposed expansion project and need for this SUP, the proposed operating conditions of the SUP, enforcement of the SUP, and recommendations of Subcommittee. He stated topics that would not be covered include historical retrospective on the Argyle, historical review of past City Council actions, even to present, evaluation of the Argyle's business model or strategy, taxation or revenues related to the Argyle, or related legal matters.

The Argyle main structure is located at 934 Patterson and has purchased surrounding properties for parking as approved at different points by the City Council from 2008-2018 as SUPs related to the development of surface parking lots. Over time, activities around the Argyle have included and incorporated traffic. Even though the Argyle is a private dining club, it has bars and members visit it daily except when it's closed. On top of those operations there are functions, private events that are being held at the Argyle which have impacts on the neighborhood beyond its property line. Under the SUP, Permitted Functions at The Argyle are defined as: A private special or social event, for Argyle members; Guests of Argyle members; or Third-party organization events, sponsored by Argyle members, by invitation only; not open to the general public. The Argyle also hosts educational events for Texas Biomed, open to the public.

In order to understand the nature of the operations and what this means in respect to the SUP, Mayor Pro Tem Jacobson shared historical event data (excluding COVID-impacted years) and noted currently there are no regulations or restrictions on the number of events. He added at least 4-6 times per year large structural outdoor tents are used to accommodate 601-1200 event guests.

Total Events per Year	Avg.	Max/Yr
less 250 attendees	296	319
250 to 400	12	16
401 to 600	3	5
601 to 750	1	2
751 to 1200	1	2
Over 1200	0	1
TOTAL EVENTS PER YEAR	314	
<i>*Years 2015-2019; 2022-2024</i>		

Mayor Pro Tem Jacobson reviewed parking availability during events and how it would compare with the proposed SUP.

Parking Shortfall	Currently		Under SUP	
	Low	High	Low	High
less 250 attendees	155	59	297	201
250 to 400	59	-1	201	141
401 to 600	-1	-81	141	61
601 to 750	-81	-141	61	1
751 to 1200	-141	-321	1	-179

Key findings identified by the Council Subcommittee were that the vast majority of events are small, well-below 250 guests. The existing on-site parking can accommodate these guests. Currently, there is insufficient off-street parking for over 400 guests. At 700 guests, there is 100+ space parking shortfall. The parking situation may improve remarkably with the proposed parking lots on Torcido and under US 281; however, future events with more than 750 guests will likely face a parking space shortage, without alternative transportation such as rideshare or guest shuttles.

Mayor Pro Tem Jacobson continued and shared current parking related impacts on neighbors which include extensive street parking in public right-of-way (ROW) by guests, a deficiency in off-street parking capacity for events, street parking is unregulated in this area, there is annoyance to many in the area, and some neighbors have experienced blocked driveways. In reference to noise nuisance, the biggest complaint registered by City/Police are night/late night noise, occurring with outdoor/tented parties/events, bands and/or amplified music, loud percussion (drums) and late-night guest noise. Mayor Pro Tem Jacobson noted other identified nuisances were valet operations can cause vehicular queuing, some events use motor coaches or shuttles for guests who parking in remote lots. Occasionally, these buses will park on residential streets or Argyle parking lots and may idle awaiting guests for pick-up which create unnecessary exhaust fumes.

In reference to the proposed expansion project, Mayor Pro Tem Jacobson stated, during the April public hearing, Council heard a lot of assertions about the project itself and shared there was confusion as to what development was being proposed. The Council Subcommittee identified the Argyle proposes to expand from 28,279 sq-ft to 38,169 sq-ft, a net increase of 9,890 sq-ft. He stated, in addition to the enclosed building area, there is also 5,900 square feet of exterior outdoor seating area verandas and would also be used as dining area.

Mayor Pro Tem Jacobson continued and stated they will also retain the opportunity for occasional front lawn use, but even though the building is getting bigger it does not mean the capacity is getting bigger. Indoor seating/dining in the Argyle accommodates 648 guests. With tented events, the total number of seated banquet/event guests is 1,248 which is the maximum allowed under the fire code. However, if it were a standing event, like a wedding, 1,615 people are allowed per the fire code. He reiterated, currently, there is no limit other than what the fire code dictates and are able to host events of any size. With the expansion, indoor seating capacity will be 918 with the new facility adding 387 seated guests. The outdoor terrace will add 85 more guests for a total of 1003 excluding front lawn seating.

Mayor Pro Tem Jacobson addressed the proposed SUP and land use. The Argyle is located in a Single-Family residential district (SF-A) as adopted by the city's zoning code. The Argyle requested a variance in 1955 for the nonconforming land use to operate the dining facility and hotel. He explained due to the nonconforming use; city code prohibits the expansion of a nonconforming building or land use. The city will not issue a permit for the North Addition expansion without this SUP. The proposed SUP ordinance would immediately repeal all prior SUPs and permit the land use granted in the 1955 variance. The SUP can define new development standards that differ from the SF-A requirements such as setbacks, floor area ratio, building height, and parking.

In reviewing permitted and non-permitted used, the City Council can, and often will, impose certain conditions on not only just the development but the operations of the land use which will become effective immediately upon passage. Current permitted use as a Private Philanthropic Club allows them to provide dining and bar services (members/guests), catering and hosting of "permitted functions", off-street parking of vehicles, admin. offices, meeting rooms, and five guest units for overnight lodging. Prohibited uses include hosting shows/functions open to general public, on-premise retail sales (other than dining/bar services), third-party fundraising or promotion of commercial goods (excludes Argyle-sponsored political fundraiser events – by invitation only).

Mayor Pro Tem Jacobson discussed development requirements and standards.

- If the Argyle is permitted to build the North Addition expansion. A rear buffer yard shall be required behind the North Addition.
 - Off-street vehicle drop-off to be constructed. *16-car queue for passenger drop-off/valet services.
 - Construction of 56 parking spaces at 401 Torcido.* Standards for development based on Parking District requirements, plus additional landscape buffer.
 - Construction of improved parking lot under US281 at East Olmos Drive. *
- (* requirements for North Addition certificate of occupancy)

He addressed a comment made by a resident regarding construction vehicle parking and noted the “lay down” area would be on 820 Patterson for the construction site. He added there was on there was a large focus on the require limitations on the number of events and reviewed current events as opposed to limited events under the SUP.

Additional conditions for events include:

- Prior to completion of North Addition, tents may continue to be installed for outdoor events.
- Outdoor events are permitted
 - o Monday-Thursday until 10:00 pm
 - o Friday-Saturday until Midnight
 - o Sunday until 4:00 p.m.
- All Argyle event guests must depart by:
 - o Sunday-Thursday by 11:00 pm
 - o Friday-Saturday by 1:00 am (following morning)

Additional conditions on noise include:

- No amplified music permitted outdoors at Argyle.
 - o Amplified music may not emanate from properties.
- Non-amplified music is permitted within allowed hours.
 - o Outdoor percussion instruments are never allowed.

Valet Services Required:

- Complimentary valet parking services will be required for events.
- Cars will be parked off-street by valets.
 - o Valet services will be conducted in new drop-off area.
- Bigger events require additional valet staffing:
 - o 1-100 event guests = 4 valets
 - o Over 100 guests = 4 valets, plus one for every 50 additional guests.

Off-Street Parking Requirements:

- Off-street parking required for operations and events.
 - o Parking areas are specified in exhibit (includes new 281 lot).
- Argyle shall also discourage its members, guests, contractors, employees and event attendees from parking private vehicles on surrounding streets.
- Failure to maintain proposed parking spaces reduces maximum occupancy (2:1) until additional parking secured.

Mayor Pro Tem Jacobson clarified proposed parking ratio: 1 space per 2 event guests, noting the current Argyle parking covers events up to 400 guests. Future parking lots would cover most other events. The parking space requirement is reduced by shuttle bus operations & rideshare. He noted rideshare services will occur in drop-off lanes once the North Addition is completed. Chartered buses and similar vehicles may drop-off at curb or within the new drop-off lanes (closer to North Addition). Any chartered buses will be prohibited from being parked and idling for more than 5 minutes, other than within the 281-parking lot.

In reference to security services, certified peace officers will be required during events. Bigger events will require additional security as defined:

- 1- 250 event guests = 1 peace officer
- 250-399 guests = 2 peace officers
- 400-499 guests = 3+ peace officers (one assigned to compliance)
- 500+ guests = 4+ peace officers (at least one for compliance)

Mayor Pro Tem Jacobson shared other required conditions. All exterior lighting fixtures (temporary or permanent) shall comply with City codes. No additional properties shall be acquired by Argyle or Texas BioMed for parking purposes. Twice annually, the City will convene meetings regarding the Argyle SUP and will ensure to include 200' notice area. No gasoline leaf blowers will be allowed at the Argyle Properties, only electric or battery-powered leaf blowers may only be operated on Monday-Friday: 8:00 am-5:00 pm and Saturday-Sunday: 9:00 am-5:00 pm.

Proposed conditional operating conditions following issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy (temporary or final) for the North Addition, temporary event structures (i.e., tents or entrance canopies):

1. May only be erected within the property bounds of 934 Patterson, and limited to the North side or East side of the main structure; and
2. Shall be no larger than 44 feet by 103 feet, which is a standard size designed for the anchor infrastructure on The Argyle front lawn.
3. May only be installed by The Argyle if the weather forecast during the preceding week indicates a probability of rain.

Mayor Pro Tem Jacobson briefly recapped the SUP impact regarding noise, parking, and shuttle services.

Currently no City noise ordinance and noise-related nuisances are addressed case-by-case by officers on scene. There are no operating restrictions on either. With the SUP there would be limited operating hours, guest departure deadlines, the North Addition will reduce outdoor sound, no amplified outdoor music would be permitted and would limit the use of outdoor musical instruments and gas leaf blowers.

In regards to parking, currently the Argyle guests may park on streets without restriction. Argyle facilities address up to 250-person events, staff, members, and there are no valet service standards. The SUP will identify a requirement for off-street parking (1:2 guests, proposed) a requirement to construct new parking spaces, there will be valet service requirements by event size, and on-site security requirements.

Currently there are no regulations around shuttle buses or motorcoaches, other than traffic laws. The proposed SUP will impose a five-minute limit on idling and designated pick-up locations.

To address residents' concerns regarding enforcement of the proposed SUP, the Council Subcommittee suggests an Alternative Enforcement Proposal with the requirement that The Argyle apply for and receive a special event permit for every event over 250 anticipated guests. This may not be delegated or assigned to another party. The Special Argyle event permit (SEP) application

may be necessary. The application creates an important process “friction” to better ensure that The Argyle (as the only permitted applicant) is ensuring its responsibilities under the SUP are being met. The SEP application creates a public record of The Argyle committing to meet SUP/event requirements. Failure to comply with the event permit is subject to citation and fine (maximum of \$2000 per occurrence, per Texas law). Additionally, if The Argyle is found to have violated any event permit requirement, the Argyle would forfeit one of the subsequent year’s 52 event days for each violation. Failure to pay any required fine would mandate City withholding any additional special event permits until fully paid.

With regards to the revocation process, the Council Subcommittee suggests it be changed entirely to allow for a variety of things that Council could consider, and it would be through a public hearing process that is specified by code and law such as a conviction of multiple violations of any of the provisions of the conditions set forth in the approval of the special use permit; the building, premises, or land uses under the special use permit is enlarged, modified, structurally altered, or otherwise significantly changed without the approval of a separate special use permit or amendment for such changes; or the SUP was obtained by fraud or deception.

In closing, Mayor Pro Tem Jacobson reviewed the Subcommittee’s recommendations.

- The P&Z-approved SUP ordinance needs to be re-organized and key provisions clarified.
- The enforcement provisions should be revised by City Council.
- Changes require the City Council to propose an amended SUP ordinance at the time of consideration.
- A revised draft ordinance should be produced, reviewed by the City Attorney, and circulated to the public for awareness.
- Additional time should be provided to permit ordinance review and briefings of neighbors and interested parties.

He noted the Enforcement provisions he reviewed should be considered as a strengthening provision to address and ensure enforcement. Mayor Pro Tem Jacobson stated since City Council has the application in the form of a draft ordinance, in order make the changes that are being suggested, City Council would have to put forward an amended version of that current proposed SUP ordinance. He suggested Council move forward with that process to revise the draft with the help of the City Attorney, review and circulate it back out to the public as an amended proposed SUP from the City Council. He further suggested Council not adhere to the 60-day window for approval but instead grant some additional time to allow for everyone to review and for Council to have conversations with the community as to what this includes.

Mayor Honigblum thank Mayor Pro Tem Jacobson for all this hard work, effort, and expertise in researching and presenting the Subcommittee’s findings.

Councilmember Baker shared concerns about the impact of traffic with the new expansion and noted this was not addressed in the presentation. Additionally, he is concerned with the proposed event center in a Single-Family district with some limitations but with a lot of leeway for a lot of activity in a residential area.

Councilmember Lynda Billa Burke stated the Argyle has addressed the problem of traffic during large events. She was concerned with the use of the word “event” center when describing the Argyle and its use. She noted this SUP has been discussed for three years and wanted to come to a resolution soon.

Mayor Pro Tem Jacobson addressed Councilmember Baker’s question on traffic. He stated he does not have a way to measure traffic and evaluated effectively in reference to Argyle events.

Councilmember Baker explained his comment referenced the proposed expansion of a non-conforming use, understanding that the Argyle is pre-existing; however, typically a commercial use is not approved in a residential area. He added imagine that the older building is not there, and we are going to put a 10,000 square foot building to host events anywhere in a residential neighborhood, no one would consider doing that. He asked to re-visit the events under 250 guests in terms of limiting that because that has another impact that doesn't exist today but could very well be sort of a frequency event in the future.

Mayor Honigblum discussed current traffic problems in the city. He noted other facilities such as the schools, ballpark, etc. that is surrounded by neighbors, but unfortunately, it is not something that can be solved in these areas. He requested Council to take action to extend the Argyle SUP for additional time beyond 60 days granted on April 28, 2025.

City Manager Buddy Kuhn stated staff would add this as an action item at the next Council meeting on June 9, 2025.

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With no further business to consider, Councilmember Bonner moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:07 p.m. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Baker and passed by unanimous vote.

PASSED AND APPROVED THIS 23rd DAY OF JUNE, 2025.


Elsa T. Robles, TRMC
City Secretary




Albert Honigblum
Mayor