



**EMMA S. BARRIENTOS MEXICAN AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER  
REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES  
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6, 2025**

The Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center convened in a Regular meeting on Wednesday, August 6, 2025, at City Hall – Board and Commissions Room located at 301 West Second Street in Austin, Texas 78701. (Some members of the ESB-MACC Advisory Board participated via videoconference.)

Chair Navarro called the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center Meeting to order at 6:08pm.

**Board Members in Attendance:**

Angelica Navarro, Chair  
Lillian “Lily” Zamarripa-Saenz, Vice Chair  
Hilario “Larry” Amaro, Member  
Noemi Castro, Member  
Alexander “Al” Duarte, Member (Arrived at 6:43pm)  
John Estrada, Member  
Lynda Quintana, Member  
Raul “Roy” Reyna, Member  
Selma Sanchez, Member

**Board Members in Attendance Remotely:**

Cynthia “Cy” Herrera, Member

**Board Members Absent:**

Anthony Martinez, Member

**Staff in Attendance:**

Marjorie Flanagan, PARD Division Manager of Museums and Cultural Programs  
Michelle Rojas, ESB-MACC Culture and Arts Education Manager  
Marie Ortiz, ESB-MACC Culture and Arts Education Supervisor  
Tina Davila, ESB-MACC Administrative Specialist

**PUBLIC COMMUNICATION: GENERAL**

**Speaker 1:** Iván Dávila, Founder of Coalition for Austin's Arts & Spanish-language Theater (CAAST), shared that he lived in Austin for over 20 years and that during that time, he performed with Teatro Vivo, a Latino theater comedy project. Through that experience, he had witnessed firsthand the challenges that Latino artists-particularly Spanish-language artists-face in Austin. Those challenges ultimately inspired him to join forces with other Spanish-language artists to form CAAST. Dávila emphasized there was a lack of dedicated space, production support, sustainable funding, and infrastructure necessary for artists to develop their work both responsibly and artistically. He requested the board include CAAST on their September 10,

2025, agenda to present their pilot proposal and to vote on the creation of an infrastructure working group made up of artists and board members.

**Speaker 2:** Anjanette Gautier Castro introduced herself as a business owner, actress, artist, and member of CAAST. She stated that she was present to respectfully request the Board's support in forming a working group to explore an initiative that aligns closely with the mission and strategic goals of the ESB-MACC. The proposed initiative would focus on expanding production support and creating dedicated opportunities for Spanish-language performing artists. She expressed her belief that the MACC had the potential to bridge the cultural gap and truly serve as a home for artists.

**Speaker 3:** Karla Gutierrez, theater actress, producer and member of CAAST shared her background and experiences during her residency at the MACC. While she expressed gratitude for having access to the space, she highlighted a lack of support—specifically, no technical assistance, production help, or marketing. Without a solid infrastructure, she explained, it becomes nearly impossible for artists to apply for grants or sustain their work. She stressed that the MACC had the potential to become a central hub for addressing long-standing challenges. To that end, she urged the board to take action by voting in favor of forming a working group composed of Latino artists and MACC board members to explore the creation of a theater production department within the MACC. She also requested that CAAST be granted the opportunity to present a formal proposal at the September board meeting.

**Speaker 4:** Maria Soledad “Sol” Bautista Mariscal, a performing artist and film maker, shared her personal experiences as a Mexican immigrant auditioning in Spanish. She commented on how her experiences had significantly influenced her artistic trajectory and expanded her understanding of what is possible within her career. She expressed concerns that the current residency model was insufficient to meet the needs of artists and the broader community. She advocated instead for a more comprehensive production model—one that includes real infrastructure, strong leadership, proper budgeting, marketing strategies, and realistic timelines. She voiced her support for the CAAST proposal, stating that it aims to address those gaps and offers a more sustainable and effective approach. In conclusion, she formally requested the board vote to form a working group that includes community representation and to allow CAAST to present their proposal at the board's September meeting.

**Speaker 5:** Norma Del Toro, actress, dramaturg, and activist shared that she attended the meeting as a representative of CAAST, but to also let the board know that theater can transform lives. Especially for immigrants like herself through the stories that are told. Reflecting on her past experiences, she recalled that the MACC's bureaucratic hurdles made it nearly impossible to access indoor spaces. As a result, her group was limited to rehearsing outdoors in challenging weather conditions, both during the summer heat and winter cold. Despite those challenges, she remains hopeful that the MACC will evolve into a true support system for theater arts—not just a place to produce work, but a space to dream and share it. In closing, Ms. Del Toro requested the board establish a working group focused on theater arts and asked to be included on the agenda for the next scheduled board meeting.

**Speaker 6:** Antonio Medrano, theater arts actor and resident of Austin, addressed the Board, letting them know for the last decade, he had dedicated his life to the theater arts, with a strong focus on ensuring Spanish-speaking communities had access to theater spaces that represent their stories and culture. Mr. Medrano felt cultural spaces were becoming increasingly inaccessible and unrepresentative, particularly for communities on the margins. Highlighting the importance of equity, he stated language could not be excluded from the conversation. “Spanish is not just a language,” he said. “It is a doorway to our culture and a vital connection to our identity.” Despite ongoing challenges—including limited funding and a lack of accessible spaces—he affirmed that Spanish-language theater continues to be a powerful way to engage and connect with the community, even though it is often underrepresented in Austin's local art scene. Considering these concerns, he requested the creation of a theater arts working group that would explore pathways to increase resources and placement of CAAST on the September agenda. He reinforced his message by underscoring the request was not solely about supporting theater arts in general but about supporting a sustainable infrastructure for Spanish-language theater. Approving those measures, he stated, would represent a meaningful step toward true equity and diversity.

**Speaker 7:** Valeria Guillen, family member of the late Vanessa Guillen introduced herself and provided context regarding the tragic death of Vanessa Guillen, who was murdered in Fort Hood in 2020. She spoke

on the advocacy efforts led by family, friends, and the broader community, which culminated in the introduction of the I Am Vanessa Guillen bill in 2021. Ms. Guillen formally requested the establishment of a memorial to honor Vanessa as a hero at the MACC. She proposed that either July 12 or September 30 be considered for commemorative recognition. Additionally, she requested the dedication of an art room in Vanessa's name, as well as the creation of a mural in the garden area where community members could leave flowers in remembrance.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

1. The minutes from the Regular meeting of June 4, 2025, were approved on Member Duarte's motion. Vice Chair Zamarripa-Saenz seconded. Unanimous vote (10.0). Motion passed. Member Martinez absent.

### **STAFF BRIEFINGS**

2. **Staff briefing on staffing updates, June, July and August programs, marketing and outreach efforts, and updates on signature event planning.**

Olivia Tamzarian, ESB-MACC Culture and Arts Education Marketing & Outreach Representative provided updates on Holistic Wellness Programs (HWP), Education, Caminos Teen Leadership programming, current and upcoming marketing and outreach, collaborations and signature events. (Please see the Board and Commissions Website for backup material.)

### **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

3. **Update on Phase 2 Construction Project.**

Michelle Rojas, ESB-MACC Culture and Arts Education Manager provided a brief overview of the current project timeline, announcements, scheduled milestones, as well as photos showing the construction progress.

(Please see the Board and Commissions Website for backup material.)

### **DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS**

4. **Presentation and recommendation on an updated budget request to support Academia Cuauhtli's programming for fiscal year 25-26 budget.**

Dr. Maria Del Carmen Unda, Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Texas and long-standing volunteer with Academia Cuauhtli, expressed her appreciation and thanked the board for their previous support, specifically referencing the recommendation letter issued and signed in March in support of their initiative. However, she shared that through recent conversations with teachers and families involved in the program, it was clear there was a need for a full-time Program Coordinator to ensure effective and sustainable operations. She respectfully requested the Board's support in securing operational funding and the creation of a full-time coordinator position.

(Please see the Board and Commissions Website for backup material.)

5. **Creation of Grand Opening Working Group**

Vice Chair Zamarripa-Saenz motioned to create an ESB-MACC working group dedicated to support MACC staff in preparation for the grand reopening of phase II. The working group would collaborate directly with MACC staff and be available at any capacity needed. Whether through event logistics, community outreach or general support to ensure a successful and meaningful reopening that reflects the culture and communities' significance. Including consulting community members as needed and inviting them to meetings for public comment. Member Reyna seconded. Unanimous vote (10.0). Motion passed. Member Martinez absent.

### **WORKING GROUP UPDATES**

6. **Update from Music Hub Programming Working Group**

Vice Chair Zamarripa-Saenz stated that due to several conflicts, the working group was in the process of rescheduling their meeting. Once all members are present and available they would provide an update.

**FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

Presentation by Iván Dávila from the Coalition for Austin's Arts & Spanish-language Theater (CAAST). (Sponsors: Estrada, Reyna)

**ADJOURNMENT**

Vice Chair Zamarripa-Saenz motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:58pm. Member Herrera seconded. Unanimous vote (10.0). Motion passed. Member Martinez absent.

The minutes were approved at the September 10, 2025, Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center meeting on Vice Chair Zamarripa-Saenz's motion, Member Duarte seconded on a 7-0 vote with no vacancies. Board Members Herrera, Quintana, Martinez and Sanchez absent.