



***EMMA S. BARRIENTOS MEXICAN AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES
NOVEMBER 5, 2025***

The Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center convened in a Regular Meeting on November 5, 2025, at 301 W. 2nd Street in Austin, Texas. (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 6:10 p.m.

Board Members in Attendance: Angelica Navarro, Hilario “Larry” Amaro, Alexander “Al” Duarte, Lynda Quintana, Selma Sanchez.

Board Members in Attendance Remotely: Lillian “Lily” Zamarripa-Saenz (left at 7:40 p.m.), Raul “Roy” Reyna.

Board Members Absent: Noemi Castro, John Estrada, Cynthia “Cy” Herrera, Anthony Martinez.

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION: GENERAL

Speaker 1: Emilio Zamora, Ph.D., Co-founder, Academia Cuauhtli and University of Texas Professor addressed the Board to provide an update on Academia Cuauhtli’s ongoing activities and noted their intention to report to the Board every three to four months. He provided information on a proposed historical exhibition of the MACC, stating the exhibition would cover the history from the 1970s to the present. He indicated that the written narrative for the exhibition was halfway complete, and they were actively seeking funding to support the project. Dr. Zamora added that the plan would be to present the exhibition following the facility’s reopening.

Speaker 2: Gonzalo Barrientos, Former State Senator made a statement to the Board, explaining that he frequently receives inquiries from community members regarding events such as quinceañeras and other celebrations. He stated that he informs callers that the facility is operated by the City of Austin and governed by the MACC Board, clarifying that the center is simply named in honor of his late wife. He offered suggestions regarding oversight of the MACC, emphasizing the roles of governing bodies, staff, and the use of public funds. He expressed his hope that the questions he commonly receives could be answered through clear communication of departmental responsibilities, programs, projects, and future plans. Mr. Barrientos added that he would be willing to return to the Board if they wished to discuss any specific questions further.

Speaker 3: Anna Maciel, Former MACC Advisory Board Member spoke to the Board regarding Pan Am Hillside. She expressed her support for the MACC hosting events at the hillside, provided certain conditions were met. Ms. Maciel stressed the importance of unified communication and collaboration among all parties. She recommended that a community group be invited to work with the MACC to support community-driven events at hillside, making it clear that the goal would be to establish a

community group to provide input on the types of music, programming, and activities community members would like to see on the Pan Am Hillside stage.

Speaker 4: María Luisa Gutiérrez, Founder of Casa Costura, provided remarks regarding her community-based sewing and cultural arts program. She explained that Casa Costura fosters and supports the discipline of sewing through classes and workshops, while also promoting cultural knowledge and preservation through this artistic medium. She stressed that Casa Costura offers free sewing instruction and cultural education to immigrants, adults, youth, and children, but also to other diverse nationalities, emphasizing art is a universal language.

Ms. Gutiérrez requested two forms of support from the MACC:

- Recognition of Casa Costura as an important cultural and community arts program and that this discipline is present within the MACC's programming.
- A consistent, dedicated space to hold workshops, pointing out that Casa Costura currently has no permanent location or home.

She shared her positive experiences partnering with the MACC, expressed appreciation for previous support received, and would like to continue counting on future support. She spoke not only on her behalf but also on behalf of her community, making it clear it was a community need. She underscored her experience along with the program's demonstrated impact among participants, including increased confidence in communication, development of various artistic skills beyond sewing (like designing), and learning to engage collaboratively within the community. Ms. Gutiérrez encouraged the board to value the cultural knowledge and experience of community elders and reiterated her desire to continue collaborating with the MACC for the benefit of the community.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approve the minutes of the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center Regular Meeting of October 1, 2025.

The minutes from the Regular meeting of October 1, 2025, were approved on Vice Chair Zamarripa-Saenz's motion. Member Duarte seconded. Unanimous vote (7.0). Motion passed. Members Castro, Estrada, Herrera, and Martinez absent.

STAFF BRIEFINGS

2. Staff briefing on staffing updates, October and November programs, marketing and outreach efforts, and updates on signature event planning.

Olivia Tamzarian, ESB-MACC Culture and Arts Education Marketing & Outreach Representative, reported updates on their Casa de la Cultura, Latino/a/e Artist Access Program (LAAP), Youth and Family Education, Caminos Teen Leadership programming, and current and upcoming marketing and outreach events. She also provided details on the attendance for their Dia de Los Muertos event and acknowledged the board for their help and support.

Michelle Rojas, ESB-MACC Culture and Arts Education Manager, provided an update on the FY25 budget and program development process. She also informed the board of staffing changes within the City of Austin's Arts, Culture, Music, and Entertainment (ACME)

department, announcing that the assigned Acting Division Manager over cultural sites would be Tony Vo. Tony Vo was in attendance and introduced himself to the Board as the Culture and Arts Education Manager at the Asian American Resource Center but would be stepping in as Acting Division Manager overseeing all the cultural centers as well as the Millennial Youth Entertainment Complex. He commented that it was a temporary assignment, highlighting his experience collaborating with the MACC, and expressed enthusiasm for contributing his expertise and leadership to the division.

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

DISCUSSION ITEMS

3. Update on Phase 2 Construction Project.

Heidi Tse, Capital Delivery Project Manager, Austin Capital Delivery Services provided a brief overview of the current project timeline, key announcements, and scheduled milestones, accompanied by recent photos illustrating construction progress.

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

Recessed at 7:36pm. Reconvened at 7:41pm

4. Presentation by Manuel Zamarripa on history and culture literary programming.

Manuel Zamarripa delivered a presentation on history and culture literary programming. He noted that his remarks were a continuation of comments shared during the November board meeting regarding observations and potential recommendations for MACC programming aimed at sustaining Mexican American traditions. Mr. Zamarripa highlighted the importance of recognizing that Latino communities encompass multiple countries and cultures, all of which should be honored. He felt that losing sight of those cultural foundations risk losing essential historical context and reaffirmed that the broader purpose of the MACC programming should be to remain rooted in legacy and uplift community voices. He stated that the MACC holds a unique and significant role in the community, and that when Mexican American-focused programming is not offered at the MACC, it is unlikely to be offered elsewhere in the city. He advised the Board to consider whether programs at the MACC are already available in other local venues and, if so, to evaluate whether alternative culturally specific programs may be more appropriate for the Center. As an example, Mr. Zamarripa cited yoga, noting that it is widely accessible across Austin in both English and Spanish. In contrast, he identified opportunities for programming that reflect Mexican American culture and history, including community plays rooted in Mexican history, visual and performing arts, literary arts, Mexican American history classes, and education programming on figures such as Gus Garcia and Martha Cotera, as well as Austin-specific historical events. He also suggested art and essay competitions as additional avenues for cultural engagement. Mr. Zamarripa concluded by stating that the MACC has been a “shining star” and encouraged continued reflection to ensure the Center remains aligned with its mission and cultural priorities.

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

5. Conversation on current Mexican-American cultural artists and programming offered by the ESB-MACC, followed by a discussion on how the Advisory Board can provide input and recommendations for future programming and activities.

Member Amaro spoke about the importance of Mexican-American history and the ethnic identity of children and adults who may not be fully aware of their cultural background. He noted that much of this history is not taught in schools and expressed that incorporating Mexican history, music, and cultural education into MACC programming would help the community deepen its understanding of its identity and heritage. He also mentioned that the budget committee should be starting discussions soon to begin planning for future programming.

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS

6. Approve the 2026 annual schedule of the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center Advisory Board.

Member Quintana motioned to move the July 1, 2026, meeting date to July 8, 2026, and November 4, 2026, meeting to November 5, 2026. Member Sanchez seconded. Unanimous vote (6.0). Motion passed. Vice Chair Zamarripa-Saenz and Members Castro, Estrada, Herrera, and Martinez absent.

7. Create a Creative Reset Phase 2 (CRII) working group to help with putting together small group meetings facilitated by Marion Sanchez, Interim Communications and Engagement Manager with the Austin Arts Culture, Music and Entertainment Department.

Marion Sanchez provided recommendations regarding the Board's participation in the Creative Reset Phase II. She requested the Board's feedback and support so it may be incorporated into the forthcoming report. Ms. Sanchez explained that the assignment involved summarizing key observations to inform leaderships decision for the upcoming budget cycle. She noted that while there are several opportunities for engagement, this initiative was one of the primary avenues currently available.

Member Duarte motioned to discuss at the December 3, 2025, meeting as a board to avoid creating another working group. Member Quintana seconded. Unanimous vote (6.0). Motion passed. Vice Chair Zamarripa-Saenz and Members Castro, Estrada, Herrera, and Martinez absent.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Request for Roger O'Brien and Miro Rivera representative to provide an update on the Phase 2 Construction Project and go over geotechnical report(s). (Sponsors: Quintana, Sanchez)

Conduct a Creative Reset engagement session with board members, facilitated by Marion Sanchez, Interim Communications and Engagement Manager with the Austin Arts Culture, Music and Entertainment Department. (Sponsors: Navarro, Zamarripa-Saenz)

ADJOURNMENT

Member Duarte motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:23pm. Member Quintana seconded. Unanimous vote (6.0). Motion passed. Vice Chair Zamarripa-Saenz and Members Castro, Estrada, Herrera, and Martinez absent.

The minutes were approved at the January 7, 2026, Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center meeting as amended on a motion by Board Member Duarte and a second by Vice Chair Zamarripa-Saenz. Amendments included revisions to Discussion Item 5, clarification of terminology from “Mexican American” to “Mexican-American” The motion passed on a 9-0 vote. Board Members Herrera and Martinez absent.