

# City of San Antonio



## Minutes Municipal Utilities Committee

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Tuesday, February 22, 2022

10:00 AM

Municipal Plaza Building

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**Members Present:** John Courage, *Chair*  
Mario Bravo, *Member*  
Melissa Cabello Havrda, *Member*  
Ana Sandoval, *Member*

**Members Absent:** Dr. Adriana Rocha Garcia, *Member*

### Approval of Minutes

1. Approval of minutes from the Municipal Utilities Committee on January 25, 2022.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda moved to Approve the minutes of the January 25, 2022 Municipal Utilities Committee meeting. Councilmember Sandoval seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye:** Sandoval, Courage, Bravo, Cabello Havrda

**Absent:** Rocha Garcia

### Briefing and Possible Action on

2. **Briefing by CPS Energy and San Antonio Water System (SAWS) on customer accounts at risk of disconnection and use of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding.** [Ben Gorzell Jr., Chief Financial Officer; Troy Elliott, Deputy Chief Financial Officer]

DeAnna Hardwick, Executive Vice President of Customer Strategy, provided an update on CPS Energy's customer accounts at risk of disconnection of services provided to customers. Hardwick reviewed the current and past due accounts for both residential and commercial customers and data on those that were disconnected and later reconnected for services. Hardwick provided an overview of customer outreach provided and the impact of COVID to customer accounts and payment/discount programs available through American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding. She also discussed the collaborations conducted with the City, San Antonio Housing Authority (SAHA) and CPS Energy staff to assure ARPA applications were reviewed,

approved and possible extension of periods for application review and approvals. Hardwick reiterated SAWS commitment to serve residents needing assistance.

Chair Courage asked of the status of report of data to be provided of customer disconnections. Hardwick stated that the data was available and would be provided to the Committee. Chair Courage asked of the success rate of individuals who were on a payment plan to continue to pay after receiving assistance. Hardwick stated that approximately 50% of customers continued to pay for services after receiving assistance.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda requested a one-page information document of available assistance programs to be provided to residents seeking assistance. Hardwick stated that the document would be provided to all Councilmembers.

Mary Bailey, Executive Vice President of Customer Experience and Strategic Initiatives, provided an update of customer delinquency statuses for SAWS customers and reviewed the assistance programs available to SAWS customers and utilization of those programs. Gavino Ramos, VP of Communications, provided an overview of SAWS efforts related to American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) outreach and assistance application awareness. Ramos reviewed the efforts associated with residents with digital divide challenges and noted outreach coordination with various community partner organizations.

Chair Courage asked if meeting communications were provided to the general public to expand attendance at meetings that would provide program information and if SAWS collaborated with CPS Energy on those meetings. Ramos stated that SAWS continued to provide outreach communications on those meetings and noted that the attendance at the meetings was poor and staff would continue to attend meetings that were already scheduled to increase attendance.

Bailey reviewed census tract data and relation to customer delinquency statuses and noted that the data was being reviewed for outreach efforts and enrollment into assistance programs. Chair Courage noted that the census tract data was useful and requested that information be shared with Councilmembers to assist in outreach.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda requested information on collaboration between SAWS and CPS Energy. Bailey committed to provide the information to Councilmembers.

Councilmember Bravo requested clarification on the available ARPA assistance outside qualified census tract data. Deputy City Manager Maria Villagomez noted that the City and utility companies were continuously reviewing the census tract data to assure outreach for those most in need.

3. **Briefing by CPS Energy and San Antonio Water System (SAWS) on the after action report from the 2022 February cold weather to include guidance from the utilities to City Council staff on navigating outage reporting systems and communication strategies for addressing resident concerns during emergencies.** [Ben Gorzell Jr., Chief Financial Officer; Troy Elliott, Deputy Chief Financial Officer]

Richard Medina, Interim EVP of Energy Delivery Services, provided an overview of service outages and the impact to customers related to the February 2022 weather event. Medina reviewed CPS Energy's focus on reliability to include budget improvements, technology and communications, and opportunities for improvements.

DeAnna Hardwick reviewed the communication provided to customers as a result of service outages to include residential messaging, commercial messaging, neighborhood communications, and calls received by customers. Hardwick provided an overview of outage support to include online services, phone calls, critical care customer and community partnerships that could assist in providing outreach and communications.

Melissa Sorola, Vice President of Corporate Communications and Marketing, provided an overview of communications provided to customers in preparing for possible outages, social media engagement, and other on-going collaborations with community partners both in English and Spanish.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda stated that she was able to utilize outage communications and that she did appreciate the communication efforts conducted by CPS Energy. Councilmember Cabello Havrda provided some feedback on some of the communication timeliness and asked how information was provided for extended periods of time and how often communications were provided. Hardwick provided an overview of communication delivery and stated that communication efforts were continuously being refined to improve services.

Councilmember Sandoval asked of long term maintenance to trees along service lines. Medina stated that there was continuous review of lines for potential issues and CPS Energy had developed a plan for tree maintenance and possible underground line installation.

Councilmember Sandoval noted that CPS Energy had improved responsiveness to service outages and requested that focus groups be developed to address service delivery that focus groups be developed to offer feedback on CPS Energy's service updates to the public. CPS Energy CEO Rudy Garza stated that the utility company was committed to conduct focus groups.

Councilmember Bravo asked if tree maintenance was solely the responsibility of CPS Energy or was maintenance shared by telephone services or cable service providers. Medina stated that CPS Energy had set up cost sharing for maintenance. Councilmember Bravo asked for information on service response protocols and how issues were prioritized. Medina stated that he would provide protocol information to the Councilmembers. Bravo asked when and where it made sense to bury power lines. Medina stated that CPS Energy relied on their Strategic Underground Plan and reliability to prioritize placement of power lines underground.

SAWS President Robert Puente provided an overview of after action activity during the February 2022 cold weather event. Puente noted that the weather event did not have a heavy impact on the utility.

Chair Courage requested a report on the Rate Advisory Committee (RAC) recommendations statuses. Puente stated that a report would be provided.

Chair Courage asked how often outage maps were being updated during service outages. Rudy Garza stated that the maps were continuously updated and he reviewed improvements that were currently being implemented in information sharing efforts which would then provide improvements to service communications.

No action was required for Item 3.

**4. Briefing by CPS Energy on the timeline and deliverables regarding the request for proposal (RFP) for an independent study of CPS Energy's operations, management, and finances.**  
[Ben Gorzell Jr., Chief Financial Officer; Troy Elliott, Deputy Chief Financial Officer]

Janie Gonzalez, CPS Energy Board Chair, provided an overview of the timeline and deliverables regarding the Request for Proposal (RFP) for an independent study of CPS Energy operations. Gonzalez reviewed the scope of the RFP, solicitation timeline and services.

Chair Courage noted that the City Council wanted to be able to provide input on the solicitation.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda thanked CPS Energy for their commitment to conducting the study and asked for more information on the criteria of the vendor to conduct the study. Gonzalez reviewed the general criteria of the potential vendor which included financial health, operational excellence, customer engagement, user experience and service design, organizational culture and workforce development, and economic value to the community. Gonzalez noted that more than one vendor would be awarded for each of the specific areas of the RFP. Councilmember Cabello Havrda requested an update of solicitation submissions and applauded CPS Energy on their agreement to conduct the study.

Councilmember Bravo noted his appreciation for the commitment of CPS Energy to conduct the study, the timeline in which they have agreed to have completed and structure to have more than one vendor provide services for the individual areas.

Chair Courage noted that it was important to identify the value of CPS Energy as a community entity and the impact of implementing certain recommendations.

No action was required for Item 4

**5. Briefing by the CPS Energy Rate Advisory Committee liaison.** [Ben Gorzell Jr., Chief Financial Officer; Troy Elliott, Deputy Chief Financial Officer]

Councilmember Sandoval, CPS Energy Rate Advisory Committee (RAC) Liaison, provided an update on input on RAC themes and provided an overview of the RAC structure and charge to provide advisory services to the utility companies and the City. Sandoval thanked Janie Gonzalez for her commitment and development as CPS Board Liaison to the RAC and noted that she would be stepping down from her position.

Councilmember Sandoval reviewed RAC operations comment themes as collected from the City Council. She stated that the input she received from City Council included wanting: to ensure community voices were heard in the process, to have regular updates provided to MUC and City Council, to receive clarification on the committee's scope, to ensure the RAC members receive information that they request, and to ensure there is sufficient time for the committee to have meaningful discussions.

Councilmember Sandoval stressed the need for and importance of generational planning by CPS Energy and reviewed comment themes of City Councilmembers. Councilmember Sandoval noted that she received comments regarding the RAC's timeline, the need to consider costs when conducting generation planning, the need for outside experts to provide input to the RAC, and the need for RAC members to be up-to-date on emerging technologies and their potential for generation planning.

Chair Courage noted that the report provided great information on the requests of City Council and what the RAC was charged to review and provide advisory comments and recommendations on. Chair Courage requested that reports be provided to the MUC 72 hours in advance so Members would be able to prepare for meeting discussions.

Chair Courage called upon the individuals registered to speak on Item 5.

Dr. Meredith McGuire spoke on her concerns of the utility company rate increases and usage of cost analysis to be used for rate structure.

No action was required for Item 5.

**6. Briefing on the Committee on Emergency Preparedness (CEP) recommendations tracking dashboard.** [Ben Gorzell Jr., Chief Financial Officer; Troy Elliott, Deputy Chief Financial Officer]

Kevin Orton, Executive Management Assistant, provided an overview of the MUC website and noted that staff was working closely with the Information Technology Services Department to develop the website. Orton stated that the Committee on Emergency Preparedness (CEP) Dashboard was continued to be developed and updated and provided an overview of the dashboard to the MUC.

Chair Courage noted that the dashboard and website would continuously be expanded with relevant data and asked if minutes and other presentations would be available on the website. Orton confirmed that the data would be available on the website.

No action was required for Item 6.

**7. Briefing by CPS Energy and San Antonio Water System (SAWS) on future committee meeting topics and schedule.** [Ben Gorzell Jr., Chief Financial Officer; Troy Elliott, Deputy Chief Financial Officer]

Chair Courage stated that the MUC was asking that the utility companies provide topics to be covered at future meetings. Robert Puente noted that SAWS had provided a listing of topics for the MUC's review.

No action was required for Item 7.

### **Executive Session**

No Executive Session was held.

### **Consideration of items for future meetings**

The next Municipal Utilities Committee is tentatively scheduled for March 22, 2022.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 11:49 AM.

**Approved**

*John Courage, Chair*

**Respectfully Submitted**

**Debbie Racca-Sittre, Interim City Clerk**