

# City of San Antonio



## Minutes Public Safety Committee

### 2023 – 2025 Council Members

Melissa Cabello Havrda, Dist. 6, Chair  
Dr. Sukh Kaur, Dist. 1 | Jalen McKee-Rodriguez, Dist. 2  
Marina Alderete Gavito, Dist. 7

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**Tuesday, April 16, 2024**

**10:30 AM**

**City Hall**

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The Public Safety Committee convened a regular meeting in the City Hall Council Briefing Room beginning at 10:32 AM. City Clerk Debbie Racca-Sittre took the Roll Call noting a quorum with the following Committee Members present:

**Members Present:** Melissa Cabello Havrda, *Chair*  
Dr. Sukh Kaur, *Member*  
Jalen McKee-Rodriguez, *Member*  
Marina Alderete Gavito, *Member*  
Marc Whyte, *Member*

**Members Absent:** None

### Approval of Minutes

#### 1. Approval of minutes from the March 19, 2024 Public Safety Committee Meeting

Councilmember Kaur moved to Approve the minutes of the March 19, 2024 Public Safety Committee meeting. Councilmember Alderete Gavito seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye:** Cabello Havrda, Kaur, McKee-Rodriguez, Alderete Gavito  
**Abstain:** Whyte

### Consent Agenda

2. **Briefing and possible action on the submission of a High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) grant application and acceptance of funds upon award in an amount up to \$2,181,533.00 from the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) for the period of January 1, 2024, through December 31, 2025 as well as accepting additional grant funds up to 20% of the grant and authorizes a budget and personnel complement of 16 positions.** [María Villagómez, Deputy City Manager; William McManus, Police Chief]

Councilmember Alderete Gavito moved to Approve on the Consent Agenda. Councilmember Kaur seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye:** Cabello Havrda, Kaur, McKee-Rodriguez, Alderete Gavito, Whyte

3. **Briefing and possible action on the acceptance of grant funds in an amount of \$196,084.00 from the Office of the Governor, Public Safety Office for the FY2023 DNA Testing Grant Program for the period of January 1, 2024, through December 31, 2024.** [María Villagómez, Deputy City Manager; William P. McManus, Chief of Police]

Councilmember Alderete Gavito moved to Approve on the Consent Agenda. Councilmember Kaur seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye:** Cabello Havrda, Kaur, McKee-Rodriguez, Alderete Gavito, Whyte

#### **Briefing and Possible Action on**

4. **Briefing by the Animal Care Services (ACS) Department on the Strategic Plan initiatives for FY 2024.** [David W. McCary, Assistant City Manager; Shannon Sims, Director, Animal Care Services]

Shannon Oster Gabrielson, Assistant to the Director for Animal Care Services (ACS), provided an update on the ACS Strategic Plan. The first initiative was to improve critical call response rates from 44% to 64% which included the hiring of eight new Officers and conducting an unrestrained dogs survey; the Officers had been hired and the survey was being developed.

Oster Gabrielson stated that another initiative was to enhance bite and dangerous dog investigations which included the hiring of four Bite Officers, two Dangerous Investigators and one Dangerous Investigation Supervisor. She reported that the plan to develop more spay/neuter locations was underway beginning with a mapping of areas that were veterinary care deserts and a recommendation would be brought forward in June 2024.

Another focus area was to increase animal wellness by serving twice the number of pets from 2,400 to 4,800 per year in 36 clinics (last year 29 clinics were held). Oster Gabrielson listed metrics being tracked such as the number of pets sterilized, microchipped and vaccinated. ACS planned to partner with the community to establish a standard of care for pets which had begun with a community survey.

Oster Gabrielson reported that the goal to increase adoptions had begun with the hiring of a trainer that would conduct bios and behavioral assessments of the pets while Veterinarians performed wellness services which resulted in a 21% increase in adoptions so far. She noted that rescues were also on track to meet their metrics as they were at an 11% increase after increasing the payment to \$200. Oster Gabrielson reported that the overall live release rate had increased to 85.4% which was a 2.4% increase over the same period the prior year.

She concluded that the focus for FY 2025 included marketing, placement, and networking, Spanish Language Accessibility, and community engagement, according to Oster Gabrielson. She noted that staff support had been increased in the area of data analytics, contracts management, and facilities management with three new positions.

#### DISCUSSION:

Chair Cabello Havrda stated that the report was encouraging but expressed concern that her office had difficulty scheduling wellness clinics in her council district due to lack of cooperation from ACS even though Petco Love was supposed to perform the vaccinations and microchipping. She also noted that the ACS facility was in Council District 6 and her office had not been outreached to help advertise clinics.

Chair Cabello Havrda commented that messages were inconsistent coming from the department as ACS had told her office that they could not transport pets only to see a pet transport announced the following week on social media. She recommended hiring of compassionate and engaged employees and requested a regular quarterly update from ACS to the Committee.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez spoke in support of his Council Consideration Request (CCR) to assist with pet rental deposits which was a collaboration with the San Antonio Apartment Association. He hoped the ACS Master Plan developed ambitious goals rather than the same metrics already being worked toward and asked what part of the Plan focused on removing barriers. ACS Assistant Director, Brad Davenport, stated that there were 12 Cadets in the academy who were expected to graduate on May 18, 2024. He noted that ACS had 13 new trucks and a new Cadet class would begin on May 28, 2024. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked how many Officers there were on each shift. Davenport replied that there were two night shifts with three Officers each and two day shifts, one with 9 and one with 10 Officers. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked how many SAFFE Officers there were. McManus reported that there were 122 SAFFE Officers.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez recommended a plan for more hiring and training. Deputy City Manager Maria Villagomez stated that improvements had been made to include the addition of the night shift staffing and that other expansion of funds for ACS would be discussed at the Goal Setting Session this week. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked how many surgeries could be performed at a spay/neuter hub. Gabrielson stated that an additional 13,000 spay/neuter surgeries in total could be performed at the two spay/neuter hubs. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked why ACS did not have a mobile spay/neuter van. Oster Gabrielson stated that 3-4 times more surgeries could be performed in brick and mortar facilities and Veterinarians preferred doing more surgeries at brick and mortar facilities.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito noted this was a top public safety concern and a community problem and that partnerships were very important. She commented that many dogs were dumped at Woodlawn Lake and noted there were not enough Officers to patrol all the areas and asked how the number of Officers hired was determined. Gabrielson stated that the staffing analysis was based on the number of calls.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito commented that in March 2024, Council District 7 held a Town Hall to get feedback for ACS and Municipal Courts. She supported the increase in criminal citations as did most of her residents to hold neighbors accountable. Councilmember Alderete Gavito looked forward to having a new spay/neuter clinic serving Council Districts 1, 5, and 7 in September 2024 noting that education and access was also an important component.

Chair Cabello Havrda recommended more coordination with Municipal Courts as the Judges had requested more information in the affidavits associated with ACS cases.

Councilmember Kaur supported adoption events and asked staff to ensure that they notified the council districts of those events. She requested a breakdown of the spending of the additional funding received by ACS in FY 2024 next to the outcomes and other metrics. Councilmember Kaur stated that the largest number of open 3-1-1 customer service calls were for spay/neuter services and she recommended more coordination between the council district offices, 3-1-1 and ACS. Davenport stated that ACS was working to improve its responses to be more understandable in layman's terms as well as being more complete.

Councilmember Kaur requested more information on the citations to determine how many were repeat offenders. Davenport stated that 94% were one-time citations with the rest being repeats and 52% of critical response calls had been answered.

Councilmember Whyte supported the enhanced communication with 3-1-1 and asked about the protocol on dog bites. Davenport stated that ACS received dog bite reports from 3-1-1 or hospitals, depending on the severity of the bite and whether the victim was the owner which would determine further action such as quarantine, citations, and dangerous dog assessments.

Councilmember Whyte asked if the organizations that received compensation/incentives for rescue were in San Antonio and asked of the criteria to participate and what relationship ACS had with the groups. Oster-Gabrielson stated that each of the 11 paid rescue partners went through a formal solicitation and were under contract. Assistant City Manager David McCary noted that there could be multiple contracts with rescue agencies such as the Animal Defense League which might simply receive the fee or help build a facility in lieu of getting a fee for each animal. Councilmember Whyte recommended periodic meetings with all providers.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez commented that some of the buildings identified as potential spay/neuter sites were in poor condition and expressed concern that there would not be enough funding to address needs and suggested using the mid-year Budget to fill in any gaps.

Councilmember McKee- Rodriguez recommended that the department commit to a no kill policy and requested information on how we could meet that objective in a future meeting.

Councilmember Kaur asked about the purpose of the unrestrained dog survey. Oster Gabrielson

stated that they could not find other cities conducting this type of survey and the purpose was to know how effective our programs had been. Councilmember Kaur requested the return on investment analysis on a mobile spay/neuter clinic. Oster Gabrielson clarified that a mobile clinic would perform 20 surgeries per day and a brick/mortar facility would perform up to 60 per day and the facility at Brackenridge had a transportation program.

Councilmember Kaur recommended a stronger community engagement and education program. Oster Gabrielson stated that the visual design had been professionalized and community outreach had been accomplished through employee overtime.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito asked how partnerships with partners such as Pets Alive were developed. Oster Gabrielson stated that this was through a Request for Proposals (RFP) but there was a shortage of providers nationwide and added that ACS staff planned to increase networking opportunities.

Item was for briefing only so no action was taken.

**5. Briefing on Year 1 of the Violent Crime Reduction Plan.** [María Villagómez, Deputy City Manager; William P. McManus, Chief of Police]

Deputy City Manager Maria Villagomez introduced the Chief of the San Antonio Police Department (SAPD) William McManus who provided information on the 306,332 emergency and non-emergency calls between January and March 2024. He noted that during that period, violent crimes decreased in every category by 5.7%, crimes against society had a 4% decrease, and property crimes were down 4.5%.

Dr. Robert Tillyer, University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) Criminal Justice Professor, provided a report on the first year of the Citywide Violent Crime Reduction Plan which included a near-term strategy to increase police visibility in hot spot areas, mid-term strategy focused on violent places using the Place-Based Policing (POPBP) approach and a longer-term approach focused on repeat offenders. In Calendar year 2023, the Hot Spot Program was continued and the POPBP began.

Tillyer explained that the hot spot strategy identified crime prone areas and located Officers in those areas for visibility with a goal to drive down violent crime (murders, aggravated assaults, robbery, and deadly conduct). Tillyer showed a chart that indicated that the trend in crime was increasing before the Plan began from 2019 to 2022 but there had been a 7.3% reduction in 2023 since the Plan had been implemented. Tillyer reported that crime in the treatment areas had decreased by 36.9% and nearby catchment areas were also down by over 5% indicating that the crime was not simply moving next door.

Tillyer charted arrests in 2022 and 2023 noting that citywide arrests were up slightly and in the hot spot treatment areas they were up 15% due to weapons and drug arrests, but violent crime arrests were down 44% in those hot spot locations. Across the city violent crime arrests were up 1.2% but the hot spot treatment areas were decreased 14.41%. Tillyer noted that the hot spot treatment locations were adjusted every two months which meant that SAPD had to organize their work to

continue the hot spot effort.

Tillyer stated that the second phase of the Plan which was the POPBP which included identification of a board, training, formation of a working group, initial site selection, and development of an operational plan. He added that the third phase of the Plan had not yet begun but would be focused on direct case management of repeat offenders and victims.

#### DISCUSSION:

Chair Cabello Havrda spoke in support of the Plan and concluded that proactive calls helped decrease crime and drugs on the streets. She asked what the metric was that would define success. Tillyer stated that the results indicated the intervention was making a positive impact and the hope was that these strategies would continue to reduce violent crime. Chair Cabello Havrda requested a comparison of other cities such as Dallas. Tillyer stated that the trends were similar but a direct comparison between cities might be more challenging, however, Deputy City Manager Villagomez stated that she would provide the information. McManus reported that the Plan had been a success even though many questioned its simplicity in the beginning.

Chair Cabello Havrda asked how UTSA controlled for other factors that could be influencing the reduction in crime. Tillyer stated that his analysis suggested that the Plan seemed to clearly be a major factor in the reduction of crime, particularly in the hot spot areas but there could be other factors and strategies that SAPD was employing that was making an impact.

Chair Cabello Havrda requested a timeline for implementation of the next phase. Tillyer stated that phase two would be layered on top of the first phase and was currently underway with the operational plan being finalized now. Deputy City Manager Villagomez stated that the workgroup recommendations would be presented to Chief McManus and City Leadership in early May 2024; a report would be presented to the Committee in June 2024. Chair Cabello Havrda recommended representation of Patrol Officers and community members on the working group.

Councilmember Whyte asserted that the hot spot policing was working and there was a direct correlation between the increased police presence and reduction in crime. Councilmember Whyte asked if the scope could be widened to include other hot spots with additional resources and Officers. Tillyer stated that that crime tended to be concentrated in certain locations inherently and these were the locations identified for hot spot treatment. McManus stated that it was a capacity issue for the substations not simply Officer availability but hiring more Officers would help.

Councilmember Whyte requested clarification on deterrence strategies that would be included in phase three. Tillyer stated that conversations regarding offender focused strategies were preliminary and other programs might be replicated which partnered law enforcement with social services to provide more options and services for repeat offenders or victims.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito prioritized safety and expressed concern with the rise in gun violence and asked how gun violence could specifically be targeted. Tillyer stated that the Plan included the goal of addressing gun related violence and some improvements had been made,

noting that the Plan was only in phase one of three and only had one year of implementation. Tillyer cautioned that the third phase was necessary to achieve sustained long-term change so that people did not engage in violence. McManus stated that the Covert Unit and Street Crimes Unit recovered a lot of guns and he did not support a stop and frisk approach as it was criticized for potentially violating civil rights. McManus noted the cumulative effect had not been felt because we were only beginning phase two of the Plan.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito noted that gun violence was a huge concern of residents. Deputy City Manager Villagomez stated that Metro Health had been developing strategies to address gun violence and they could provide a report to the Committee. Councilmember Alderete Gavito commented that residents did not want San Antonio Fear Free Environment (SAFFE) Officers taken away from their daily work. McManus stated that the reality was that SAFFE Officers were participating in the violence prevention strategies including hot spot policing.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez commented that cite and release was still a policy of SAPD and suggested that the practice was not making us less safe noting that crime statistics were down. He requested information on repeat offender programs as well as an overlay of other community investments such as SA CORE with the Plan. He asked why the numbers at the Prue Road Substation seemed to be increasing. Tillyer stated that the increase percentage was due to small sample size and really was only one more incident. He indicated that some grid locations might be right next to other concerning areas but generally there had not been a regular pattern that crime simply moved nearby. He recommended advocating in the next legislative session for the State to significantly fund gun violence prevention and mental health programs.

Councilmember Kaur agreed that there needed to be more narrative and description of fidelity in the presentation. Tillyer explained that the detailed report included the details and the fidelity target was 100% but from a research perspective anything above 80% was great as it meant the Officers were located in the place and at the time they were expected.

Councilmember Kaur was interested in learning more about the next phases of the Plan, its metrics and impacts. Tillyer stated that the detailed Plan for the second and third phases were still under development, but reports would be provided regularly and would include strategies and results. Councilmember Kaur also noted that her residents had called about hearing gunshots and requested more information on how hot spots were selected. Tillyer stated that there were many problems considered that might be criminal and some might not such as litter, graffiti, broken doors, etc.

Councilmember Kaur asked about the non-emergency calls versus emergency calls and recommended more education to support people in calling the non-emergency line.

Item was for briefing only so no action was taken.

## **Executive Session**

No Executive Session was held.

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

**Adjournment**

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 12:28 p.m.

**Approved**

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*Melissa Cabello Havrda, Chair*

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*Debbie Racca-Sittre, City Clerk*

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