

City of San Antonio



Minutes

Intergovernmental Relations Committee

2023 – 2025 Council Members

Manny Pelaez, Dist. 8, Chair

Dr. Sukh Kaur, Dist. 1 | Jalen McKee-Rodriguez, Dist. 2

Phyllis Viagran, Dist. 3 | Marina Alderete Gavito, Dist. 7

Tuesday, November 5, 2024

9:30 AM

City Hall

The Intergovernmental Relations Committee convened a regular meeting in the City Hall Council Briefing Room beginning at 9:38 AM. City Clerk Debbie Racca-Sittre took the Roll Call noting a quorum with the following Committee Members present:

Members Present: Manny Pelaez, *Chair*
Dr. Sukh Kaur, *Member*
Jalen McKee-Rodriguez, *Member*
Phyllis Viagran, *Member*
Marina Alderete Gavito, *Member*

Members Absent: None

Approval of Minutes

1. Approval of minutes from September 25, 2024 Intergovernmental Relations Committee Meeting

Councilmember Alderete Gavito moved to Approve the minutes of the September 25, 2024 Intergovernmental Relations Committee meeting. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pelaez, McKee-Rodriguez, Alderete Gavito

Absent: Kaur, Viagran

Briefing and Possible Action on

2. Briefing and possible action on the City's Federal Legislative Program for the 119th Congress. [Jeff Coyle, Assistant City Manager; Sally Basurto, Director, Government Affairs]

Director of Government Affairs Sally Basurto reviewed the Program Development Pillars for the 119th Congress Federal Legislative Program, and provided dates of interest and milestones. She explained that the Program began with City department recommendations, then the Government Affairs staff drafted a Program and requested City Manager, Mayor, and City Council input. Basurto indicated that the six pillars were: Infrastructure, Transportation & Resilience; Housing; Workforce & Education; Public Health and Human Services, Military Protection, Public Safety & Homeland Security, and Advancement of Community Interests.

For the Infrastructure, Transportation & Resilience Pillar, Basurto stated that the Program would include support and advocacy for the receipt of Federal funding to expand and improve infrastructure necessary to meet San Antonio's economic and population growth; support of funding and programs to increase San Antonio's resiliency and prepare for and mitigate the effects of climate change, including extreme heat events and flooding; support of funding and agency rules to increase San Antonio residents' access to fast, reliable, and affordable internet regardless of provider, geographic location, socioeconomic status, age, or other demographic characteristics; and preservation/revitalization of community spaces and recreational facilities.

Under the Housing Pillar, Basurto stated that the Program would support legislation and funding that expanded the availability of affordable housing through production incentives, tax credits, and innovative programs to address the shortage and high-cost of housing; support increased funding and expansion of housing and community development programs, such as the Home Investment Partnership Program (HOME), Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), and programs that enhanced the community's Continuum of Care to assist people experiencing and at-risk of homelessness; and support funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) to assist individuals' ability to stay in their home and better endure severe weather events.

Basurto explained that the Workforce & Education Pillar would support funding for workforce and education programs, including apprenticeship programs and workforce programs that targeted historically disadvantaged populations; support the creation and expansion of programs that provided affordable, high-quality, childcare and education that would prepare children for success and allow parents to participate in the workforce more easily; and support efforts to lower the cost of post-secondary education to assist at-risk youth to transition into the workforce in high-demand and well-paid occupations.

For Public Health & Human Services, Basurto stated that the City's Legislative Program would support funding and programs that increased access to fresh and nutritious food and reduced food insecurity; and support the expansion of public health funding to continue programs that would address diabetes, oral health, STD/HIV prevention, and violence prevention. Basurto asserted that public health was underfunded at the Federal level and had not kept up with San Antonio's health challenges.

Military Protection including sustaining and enhancing Joint Base San Antonio's (JBSA) mission readiness and ensuring the long-term protection of the region's military bases by helping to preserve, protect, and grow military missions and installations to improve military family quality of life in the San Antonio region.

Basurto stated that the Public Safety & Homeland Security Pillar included support for expanded funding dedicated to supporting public safety, lowering crime, and enhancing transparency, engagement and accountability through traditional and emerging grant programs, domestic violence prevention, anti-trafficking/anti-smuggling programs, office training and equipment programs; support for programs

and increased funding to promote a multijurisdictional, multi-disciplinary approach to regional prevention, preparedness, response, recovery and resiliency from a terrorist attack or natural disaster, such as FEMA's Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI), Regional Catastrophic Planning Grant Program (RCPGP), and the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program; and supported immigration reform legislation that would build a humane, just, and orderly asylum system, provide support for immigrants to become self-sufficient, and relieve the humanitarian burden on local communities.

The Advancement of Community Interests Pillar, according to Basurto, would support Federal regulations and legislation that would clearly benefit the City and its residents and oppose any regulations and legislation that would clearly be adverse to the City's and residents' interests; and support the protection of civil rights and Federal nondiscrimination statutes and regulations based on race, color, religion, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, veteran status, age, or national origin.

Basurto listed categories of partnerships for the Program including the City's Congressional Delegation, utilities, local governments, military, chambers of commerce, institutes of higher education, affordable housing, transportation, business, non-profits, workforce development, National League of Cities (NLC), and the U.S. Conference of Mayors. Basurto closed her presentation with a timeline for the Federal Program which began development in July 2024. Basurto stated that she would brief the full City Council on the proposed Program at a B Session in December 2024 after taking feedback from the Intergovernmental Relations Committee (IGR). Basurto reported that the 119th United States Congress would begin its new session on January 3, 2025, and the City's Federal Program would be approved by City Council in January 2025.

DISCUSSION:

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez stated that infrastructure was important to him and noted that railroad crossing safety was a major focus as well as burial of utility lines to protect against weather disasters. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez recommended not only expansion of affordable housing, but preservation of affordable housing through rehabilitation and weatherization of homes. He supported strong advocacy for quality childcare and insulin cost-share programs. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez supported the philosophy to relieve burdens on local communities. He cautioned against censorship of online content warning that it could backfire against the LGBTQ community.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito requested an update on the San Antonio to Austin Rail Transit System. Basurto stated that there had been ongoing conversations, but it was difficult due to many different affected jurisdictions along the path of the railways. Assistant City Manager Jeff Coyle stated that the BIL focused on funding for Amtrak but the Lone Star Rail District lost its funding; the big hang-up was the proposal to use existing Union Pacific freight rail lines and a bypass was going to be too expensive. Councilmember Alderete Gavito expressed interest in renewed conversations about the SA to Austin connection and asked who would spearhead the project request. Coyle stated that the Transportation Department would take the lead but it was not a priority currently.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito supported funding for community spaces noting that the Federal funding for Woodlawn Lake Park had made a positive impact. She prioritized maintaining the existing additional affordable housing units stock including senior citizen housing. Basurto offered to schedule a meeting with Opportunity Home to strategize. Councilmember Alderete Gavito supported all crime reduction efforts proposed but mail theft in cluster boxes had become a significant concern for residents, noting her Council Consideration Request (CCR) 2024-0027 to address the issue. Basurto

reported that Congressman Castro was poised to propose legislation to address mail theft.

Councilmember Viagran recommended aligning Chamber of Commerce partnerships and asked about timelines. Basurto stated that conversations were ongoing, but all entities were developing their agendas by the end of the year. She recommended prioritizing funding to help address climate change and address natural disasters. Councilmember Viagran reminded everyone that the missions were a National Park and wanted to ensure advocacy for those facilities. She supported legislation that would help the elderly and disabled out of poverty and move families into generational wealth. Councilmember Viagran supported a focus on childcare noting that this need disproportionately impacted women.

Councilmember Viagran noted that things might change with the election and mentioned the upcoming NLC Convention. Coyle stated that while administrations might change, the priorities of the City Council would be the same, however, the approach would change, and it was important to coordinate with other cities.

Councilmember Kaur supported applying for infrastructure grants particularly for I-35 and downtown. She agreed that maintaining affordable housing was a priority including the maintenance of public housing through Opportunity Home and the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) Program. Councilmember Kaur stated that the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) non-profit had asked the City to advocate for funding for housing for veterans and she was supportive as well as funding for more mental health beds both for veterans and others. She supported legislation to assist communities being impacted by migrants. Councilmember Kaur advocated continued support for Head Start and recommended a stronger collaboration between Head Start and PreK 4 SA. She recommended increased funding for special needs students, schools, and educators.

Chair Pelaez noted that during a recent economic development trip to South Korea, the heads of companies were very concerned about the presidential election and were holding their investments in San Antonio. Chair Pelaez requested more information about the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Chair Pelaez announced that the Item was for briefing only so no action was taken.

Adjournment

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 10:16 a.m.

Approved

Councilmember Manny Pelaez, Chairman

Debbie Racca-Sittre
City Clerk