

**State of Texas  
County of Bexar  
City of San Antonio**



**Meeting Minutes  
City Council Budget Work Session**

Council Briefing Room  
City Hall  
100 Military Plaza  
San Antonio, Texas 78205

**2023 – 2025 Council Members**

Mayor Ron Nirenberg

Dr. Sukh Kaur, Dist. 1 | Jalen McKee-Rodriguez, Dist. 2  
Phyllis Viagran, Dist. 3 | Dr. Adriana Rocha Garcia, Dist. 4  
Teri Castillo, Dist. 5 | Melissa Cabello Havrda, Dist. 6  
Marina Alderete Gavito, Dist. 7 | Manny Pelaez, Dist. 8  
John Courage, Dist. 9 | Marc Whyte, Dist. 10

**Wednesday, September 11, 2024**

**2:00 PM**

**Council Briefing Room**

The City Council convened a Budget Work Session meeting in the Council Briefing Room beginning at 2:11 PM. City Clerk Debbie Racca-Sittre took the Roll Call noting a quorum with the following Council Members present:

**PRESENT: 11** – Nirenberg, Kaur, McKee-Rodriguez, Viagran, Rocha Garcia, Castillo, Cabello Havrda, Alderete Gavito, Pelaez, Courage, Whyte

**ABSENT:** None

**ITEMS**

1. Staff presentation on the FY 2025 Proposed Budget focusing on, but not limited to, the following City Departments of Initiatives: [Erik Walsh, City Manager; Justina Tate, Management and Budget]

A. All other City Departments that have not presented on the FY 2025 Proposed Budget.

Freddie Martinez, Assistant Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) stated that 96.0% of \$3.96 Billion in the FY 2025 Proposed Budget was presented in previous work sessions. He reported that the remaining 20 department's Proposed Budgets were \$158.3 million combined.

Martinez listed the Community Services Departments and their proposed budgets: 3-1-1 Customer Service (\$5.1 million, increased by 2.8%), Center City Development & Operations (\$35.6 million, increased by 16.3%, with reduction of one staff position, Historic Preservation (\$3.6 million, increased by 8.6% and one position), Office of Integrated Community Safety (\$1.1 million, increased by 40.1%), and World Heritage (\$2.6 million, increased by 24.3%).

Martinez listed the Operational Support Departments and their Proposed Budgets: City Attorney (\$22.8 million, increased by 20.9% and one position), City Auditor (\$3.5 million, increased by 0.7%), City Clerk & Municipal Elections (\$9.8 million, increased by 70.1% due to anticipated elections and 1 position reorganized from Finance), City Manager (\$4.2 million, decreased by 0.5% and two positions), Communications and Engagement (\$9.5 million, increased by 3.3%), Government Affairs (\$2 million, an increase of 21.2%), Mayor & Council Support (\$16.2 million, an increase of 3.3%) and Military & Veteran Affairs (\$4.3 million, an increase of 3.2%).

Martinez listed the Internal Services Departments and their Proposed Budgets: Office of Management and Budget (3.6 million, 2.7% increase), Building & Equipment Services (\$145.2 million, 2.7% increase), Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Accessibility Office (\$3.1 million, a 2.2% decrease), Finance (\$33.5 million, a 3.1% increase, with a reduction of four positions reorganized to other departments), Innovation (\$1.7 million, a decrease of 19.4% and three positions reorganized to Information Technology Services Department), Information Technology Services Department (\$122 million, a 4.3% increase), and Risk Management (\$34.6 million, a 3.4% increase with one additional staff reorganized from Finance).

Martinez also listed the performance measures for each department. The FY 2025 non-departmental Budget was \$26 million, a decrease of 7.5%, according to Martinez. He highlighted the following: \$8.3 million in sales tax collection expense, \$6.3 million for City Hall, Municipal Plaza, International Center, and City Tower Maintenance, \$4.8 million for the Bexar Appraisal District, \$1.7 million for property tax collection, \$886,000 in association dues, and \$285,000 in credit card fees.

Martinez closed his presentation by highlighting General Fund transfers to other funds including: \$9.8 million to the Resiliency, Energy Efficiency & Sustainability Fund, \$1.4 million for facility maintenance, \$1.2 million for the Edwards Aquifer Debt Payment, \$197,000 for two positions in the Development Services Department for Large Area Rezoning Zones (LARZ), \$60,000 to the Solid Waste Fund for professional support, \$6.0 million for sidewalks moved to the Capital Budget, \$3.8 million for park shade structures moved to the Capital Budget, and \$1.8 million for the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) moved to the Capital Budget.

## DISCUSSION:

Councilmember Pelaez noted that some City Council district offices gave up a position to fund the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) and requested a leveling of positions to get the

positions back.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia requested information about the disposition of City vehicles noting that there was a portable diaper changing service by the non-profit Disability SA that needed a vehicle to pull their station. Director of Building and Equipment Services Jorge Perez stated that vehicles that were no longer needed were generally auctioned off, but there was precedent for a vehicle to be donated to a non-profit so long as the City received fair market value.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia supported making the Municipal Court parking lot free and asked if the downtown parking meters that were going to be removed would be free. Director of Center City & Downtown Operations John Jacks stated that the infrastructure was being removed but the parking application would still be used to charge for parking.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked if the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) Office could help assess the needs of special needs children at Brackenridge Park. DEIA Director Jennifer Mata stated that the Disability Access Office would take between 30 and 90 days to respond to the specific complaint. Councilmember Rocha Garcia requested a list of complaints per department.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia noted the reduction in dues to the Austin/San Antonio Corridor Council under Government Affairs (GA). GA Director Sally Basurto explained that the City Council was identified as a part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Legislation and while the City would not be a dues paying member, we could still coordinate with the existing partners.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia supported the work of 3-1-1 Customer Service and asked whether the current staffing level could support the new programming requests noting that call volume was lower in 2024 than in 2023. Paula Stallcup, 3-1-1 Director stated that with a 96% answering rate, they could continue to support all the calls and the new IVR would help route calls; she also noted that the change in garbage collection days in 2023 resulted in a lot of calls.

Councilmember Castillo supported the streamlined process for reducing wait time for Vital Records under the Office of the City Clerk. Councilmember Castillo requested that the Office of Innovation consolidate databases for complaints such as 3-1-1, Code, and other systems. John Peterek, Interim Assistant City Manager stated that the goal was to integrate back to 3-1-1, however, several offices had decided to use their own non-integrated tool. She requested that City Council district offices have access to the other systems.

Councilmember Castillo asked if there was an opportunity to help with youth services and noted that there was a Youth Budget Townhall facilitated by the Department of Human Services (DHS). She was grateful that her DART CCR was going to Committee for review and suggested that there could be opportunities to support an additional code officer or home relocation.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked about the timing relative to the call answer rate. Stallcup stated that the answering hours were 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. and the 96% answering rate was high but it could be dependent upon staffing fluctuations. Coyle mentioned that people who hung up due to being distracted or needing to tend to something else counted against 3-1-1. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez supported council district offices to have access to all case management

systems. Stallcup indicated that all the notes came back to 3-1-1 and she would circle back with the council district. City Manager Walsh agreed it would make sense to have the council district offices on one system.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez supported more grants for the Integrated Community Safety Office and partnerships with other departments and organizations. Maria Vargas, of the Integrated Community Safety Office stated that the priority was to seek grants to provide housing, educational, vocational, and mental/physical wellness to at-risk individuals.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez suggested that there might be opportunities for more people to engage in controversial areas similar to the process followed for horse-drawn carriages. Communications & Engagement (C&E) Department Director Alana Reed stated that there were opportunities and lessons learned that had allowed the department to be nimbler and more innovative.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez recommended a restoration of positions to the council district offices. He commented that it was difficult to get computers and email addresses for new staff members and asked what might fill that gap. Information Technology Services Department (ITSD) Director Craig Hopkins stated that this was driven by staffing issues and vendors getting the equipment to the City.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito supported the council district offices being looped into the 3-1-1 call Case Management System seamlessly and asked Stallcup to describe the process of loose dog calls including when a resident trapped a loose dog. Councilmember Alderete Gavito did not want to put the burden on the resident to follow up on a dog that kept roaming. Stallcup noted that residents were not encouraged to trap and hold loose dogs as those became a lower priority than a loose dog. Councilmember Alderete Gavito asked about the expanded 3-1-1 application capabilities and virtual agent noting that sometimes the computer had a hard time understanding the customer. Stallcup stated that the application would include a better user experience and new resources starting in October 2024; residents could ask for a person but the virtual agent handled 200,000 calls for information only.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito asked the Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) what the newly added position would be responsible for. Director Shanon Miller stated that the position was to support the Alamo and special events managed downtown. Councilmember Alderete Gavito recommended more staffing for the Vacant Building Program and requested a process flow description. Miller indicated that she had redirected some staff within OHP to serve the Vacant Building Program and enhance enforcement, but the priority was to get buildings back into compliance rather than file cases with the Municipal Court. City Manager Walsh stated that he would work with Judge Obledo to get the case numbers from the Municipal Court.

Councilmember Kaur asked why the number of calls in 2024 were higher than the requests processed. Stallcup stated that service requests could come through the 3-1-1 calls, the application or Code Enforcement. City Manager Walsh explained that all cases had a number and a closure but they came into the system differently. Coyle explained that half the calls were for information, the rest were classified as service requests and were always handled by a call taker.

Councilmember Kaur requested customer traffic at La Villita and Market Square and revenue data on river barges. Jacks replied that this information was available and he would get it from VSA. Tate reported that the river barge revenue was \$11.4 million for FY 2025. Councilmember Kaur recommended more support for C&E and suggested that the department Public Information Officers coordinate with or report to C&E and advocated for new technology for the department.

Councilmember Kaur asked of the delay in payment to vendors and recommended moving from check to Automated Clearinghouse (ACH). Elliott said the department tried to work with vendors to correct invoices and had made a large dent in moving to ACH.

Councilmember Kaur recommended providing more language access for languages other than English and Spanish. Mata stated that there were "I Speak" Cards available which were small cards that allowed people with limited English proficiency to communicate.

Councilmember Kaur requested a list of projects that the Office of Innovation was working on. City Manager Walsh stated that next year there would be the comprehensive budget reviews with a goal of \$5 million in savings.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda supported reinstatement of the full time position back to the council district offices that gave them up for other uses in prior Budgets. She wanted to ensure that the Office of the City Clerk's digitation of the archives was included in the Budget.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda asked what the 96% call response rate at 3-1-1 measured and what percentage of service calls were ultimately resolved. Stallcup explained that some were calls for information and some were service requests, and she would try to get the data on service requests that were completed. Councilmember Cabello Havrda suggested including closure information on the application and a way for the resident to provide feedback as well as on the call. Coyle noted that 3-1-1 surveyed customers for satisfaction. Councilmember Cabello Havrda requested regular heat maps of 3-1-1 calls.

Councilmember Whyte opposed \$465,500 in taxpayer-funded lobbying included in the Government Affairs Proposed Budget. He asked how the department determined which group we were no longer going to pay dues to. City Manager Walsh stated that when there was no demonstrable change by the organization, he recommended a reduction in participation and added that there was a recent Resolution approved to recommend a fellow Councilmember on the National League of Cities Board and felt that was a City Council decision.

Councilmember Whyte supported adding back the staff to each council district to make them equal. He recommended more information about 3-1-1 calls closed satisfactorily and suggested a review of the validity of department metrics such as efficiencies. City Manager Walsh stated that some metrics were a measure of workload but he agreed to include more efficiency and effectiveness measures.

Councilmember Whyte asked how vacant structure numbers compared to last year. Miller explained that the Vacant Building Program was not City-wide and focused on certain areas such as downtown, historic districts, TIRZ, and military buffer zones and since its inception in 2015,

the number of vacant buildings was relatively constant.

Councilmember Viagran recommended getting another position for council districts that were more in need. She asked if the City had enough to advocate for Federal and State grants as well as threats to local control. Coyle argued that the Legislative Agenda was representative of the community and there were not many political fights; hiring lobbyists was the most effective way to advocate because they did not work on off years when the State Legislature was not in session. Councilmember Viagran recommended maximizing the Communication & Engagement Department's ability to get revenue for services provided to other departments and supported the work of Innovation. Councilmember Viagran requested information on the revenue collected from parking operations and requested an optimization of parking technology downtown as well as downtown film permits.

Councilmember Viagran recommended that the 3-1-1 application be connected to the City's dashboard and requested a review of ITSD's security Budget. She supported DEIA working with the hearing impaired and persons with mobility issues. Councilmember Viagran recommended that the Military & Veteran's Affairs Office explore working more with local VFWs. General Juan Ayala stated that many of the members on the Veteran and Military Affairs Commission were members of the VFWs but most were looking for funding and noted that they had membership issues as their members were aging. City Manager Walsh indicated that most of the City's Budget for membership dues was \$613,000 to the Centro Public Improvement District. Mayor Nirenberg commented that much of our Federal Grants were competitive and advocacy was a return on investment.

Councilmember Courage commended 3-1-1 on the new action codes that offered a better description of case closure and supported enhancement of the 3-1-1 application to make it more user-friendly and responsive. Stallcup explained the new application functionality and vendor.

Councilmember Courage recommended that CCDO coordinate regularly with Centro. Jacks stated that most events were a partnership, but there were some events solely funded by Centro. Councilmember Courage supported the deconstruction effort of OHP and requested outcomes from the Program. Miller reported that about 50 tons of materials came to the Material Innovation Center itself and there was another amount that went directly to other projects; the deconstruction Ordinance categories were expected to expand in January 2025. Councilmember Courage clarified that this would make newer homes eligible – from 1945 to 1960 circa homes in historic areas.

Councilmember Courage asked where the funding came from to pay out legal settlements. First Assistant City Attorney Liz Provencio stated that the City Attorney's Office paid legal defense costs and the settlement funds were from the Risk Management Fund. City Manager Walsh stated that there was an annual actuarial review of legal liabilities and expenses were apportioned to departments for general liability and worker's compensation.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked what happened to unused funds when a department had a vacancy. Deputy City Manager Villagomez stated that OMB performed an analysis of attrition and the Budget included a turnover rate so that there would not be excess funds at the end of the year. City Manager Walsh mentioned that if there were additional funds at the end of the fiscal year, the remaining funds went back to the General Fund. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez

requested the number of vacancies and the average length by department.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia commented that NLC was one of the five lowest dues paid by the City but also supported membership in the Alamo Area Council of Governments (AACOG) which was the most expensive organization. She stated that she represented other taxing entities on the Bexar County Appraisal District and not just the City of San Antonio. She asked about the South Central Texas Certification Agency payment noting that there were leadership issues at the organizations. City Manager Walsh noted that the \$50,000 had been the same amount for many years and shared by 13-14 other public entities but was a part of Supply SA. Councilmember Rocha Garcia requested the amount paid to Sister Cities International.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia supported the FY 2025 Audit Plan. She asked ITSD how to get additional applications for the departments. Hopkins recommended working with the Department Director to see if a new application could be added.

Councilmember Whyte agreed that the majority of the Legislative Agenda was to support community needs but added that some items were political such as access to reproductive health care which he thought was mostly about abortion, climate change issues, and HB 2127 regarding local control. Councilmember Whyte reiterated that citizen's tax dollars should not be used for lobbying. Coyle agreed that the agenda should not be made up of radioactive issues but clarified that reproductive healthcare was related to extending Medicaid coverage for women post-partum and not abortion.

Councilmember Whyte recommended that the World Heritage Office collaborate with Visit San Antonio. He asked if there were specific initiatives in FY 2025 to improve efficiencies. Interim Director Kate Kinnison stated that the Office of Innovation would complete comprehensive Budget reviews. City Manager Walsh stated that our contractors were engaging on the City's dime on other issues.

Councilmember Viagran requested a list of who the lobbyist met with and their work. Coyle stated that there was a post-session recap and City Council decided what issues they wanted to promote. Councilmember Viagran recommended a review of this issue and discussion with the lobbyist consulting team at the Intergovernmental Relations Committee.

Mayor Nirenberg stated that there was no lobbying performed that the City Council did not approve and if a member did not like something, they should speak up but that the democratic process meant that we might not all agree. Mayor Nirenberg expressed concern that taxpayer funded lobbying was an issue because some legislators did not want cities to compete with well-funded industry lobbyists, often at the cost of local taxpayers.

Mayor Nirenberg supported memberships in City trade organizations such as NLC and the International City Manager's Association (ICMA) as it allowed us to compare our City's performance with others. He thanked all the departments for the fantastic job they were doing and noted that a metric for success was when other cities looked up to how San Antonio was doing things.

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Executive Session was not held.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 4:33 p.m.

**Approved**

**Ron Nirenberg  
Mayor**

**Debbie Racca-Sittre  
City Clerk**