

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



**Meeting Minutes
City Council B 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, March 26, 2025

2:00 PM

Council Briefing Room

The City Council convened a B Session meeting in the Council Briefing Room beginning at 2:10 p.m. City Clerk Debbie Racca-Sittre took the Roll Call noting a quorum with the following Council Members present:

PRESENT: 9 – Nirenberg, Kaur, McKee-Rodriguez, Viagran, Rocha Garcia, Castillo, Cabello Havrda, Courage, Whyte

ABSENT: 2 - Alderete Gavito, Pelaez

BRIEFING ONLY

1. Briefing on the FY 2024 Homeless Annual Report [Lori Houston, Assistant City Manager; Melody Woosley, Director, Human Services]

City Manager Erik Walsh introduced the Item and the Director of the Department of Human Services (DHS), Melody Woosley, who presented the first ever Homeless Response System Annual Report. Woosley stated that the report listed City of San Antonio internal coordination for

Planning and Policy Development, Public Safety, Coordination and Facilitation, Financial Investment, and Direct Services. She indicated that Close to Home was the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) designated lead Continuum of Care agency that provided program evaluation, monitoring, and data system governance. Woosley added that additionally, DHS coordinated with other community funders.

Woosley described the role of DHS as providing planning, coordination, and oversight of the City's homelessness investments. Additionally, the department contracted with external providers for outreach, shelter, housing, and services, according to Woosley. She reported that DHS provided the following direct services: Community Connections Hotline, Homeless Street Outreach, Encampment Response Team, Homeless Veteran Coordination, Homeless Youth Assistance, Data Reporting, Dashboards, Policy Research, and Communications.

Woosley reported on the 2024 Shelter and Housing Inventory, which included 1,012 Low-Barrier Shelter beds, 1,656 Emergency Shelter beds, 363 Transitional Housing beds, 1,973 Rapid Rehousing and Permanent Supportive Housing (scattered-site) units, and 124 Permanent Supportive Housing (site-based) units. She added that, additionally, between FY 2022 and FY 2024, SHIP partners completed 6,070 Public Housing units, and 1,598 Deeply Affordable Housing units.

According to Woosley, the Bexar County Area Homeless Point in Time Count showed a 6.8% increase between 2023 and 2024, however, the per capita homeless rate remained low with a growth rate of 0.4% while nationally, the rate was closer to 11%. She mentioned that the homeless rate in Travis County, Dallas County and Tarrant County was much higher at 15.3%, 24.8% and 32% respectively.

Woosley stated that San Antonio's system was effective and had decreased the unsheltered count by 25% over the past five years, while the U.S. saw an increase of 29.7%. She noted that the national increase in homelessness was 33.8% since 2014, however, in San Antonio, the increase over the same time was 16.6%. The chronically homeless represented 20% of the nation's homeless population, compared to 14% of San Antonio's, according to Woosley, and family homelessness increased in San Antonio by 11.7% between 2023 and 2024, while nationally, it increased by 39.4%.

Woosley presented a dashboard of services. She broke out \$32 million in direct costs for FY 2025, which included 47% from the City's General Fund and Solid Waste Fund \$15,222,238; 14% from Federal HUD Grants in the amount of \$4,454,524; 1% from State grants in the amount of \$417,481; and 38% from Federal COVID Grants in the amount of \$12,300,856. She broke out \$20 million in indirect cost as \$19,683,577 from the General Fund, and \$409,644 from the South Texas Regional Advisory Council (STRAC) Program for Intensive Care Coordination (PICC) Grant.

Woosley outlined the FY 2024 City of San Antonio Homeless Investments by Strategic Priority and noted that DHS and its partners implemented a staff training framework, continued to develop supportive housing, initiated a Skilled Nursing Pilot Program, completed the 90 families in 90 days, utilized the Homeless Community Court in partnership with Bexar County and Municipal

Court, and provided Medical Respite Care and Street Psychiatric Care both in partnership with Christian Assistance Ministries (CAM).

Woosley listed the following objectives for the Homeless Response System for 2025: 1) Prevent Homelessness and Reduce Inflow, 2) Expand Housing Options and Accelerate Housing Placements, 3) Strengthen Homeless Response and Services for Youth and Young Adults (YYA), 4) Improve Coordination and Access to Domestic Violence Services, 5) Improve Access to Healthcare Services, 6) Strengthen Street Outreach Coordination, 7) Effectively Address Equity and Accessibility, and 8) Strengthen System and Partner Capacity.

Woosley reported that strategic priorities for 2025 included creating an annual report on the City's homeless response efforts, development of the Community Connections Hotline, increase housing options, and response to 1,300 encampments, over 500 clients placed through Centralized Shelter Coordination, maximization of opioid treatment programs for unsheltered clients, and advice on updated strategic plan process would be led by Close to Home.

DISCUSSION:

Mayor Nirenberg stated that this was a good step in the transparency of efforts. He thanked the community partners for their work and coordination with the City of San Antonio. Mayor Nirenberg noted that the percentage of San Antonio's unsheltered homeless population had decreased due to strategic outreach and programs. He stressed that keeping the cost of living up and the cost of housing down was important to ensure that we met the housing needs of our community.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked how much data was collected as to why individuals returned to homelessness after being housed, and what were the challenges. Woosley stated that those returning to homeless were experiencing the same issues as newly homeless such as job loss and other economic factors, which could also include drug use. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez requested data that could indicate the root cause of homelessness including veterans with mental illness, youth kicked out of their parent's homes, and parents not being able to pay rent. Woosley indicated that the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) was a standardized database platform that all providers were required to use to enter information on their clients, and the Homeless Point in Time Survey would also collect this data.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked who was responsible for data analysis to make policy recommendations. Woosley stated that Haven for Hope owned the HMIS but worked with Close to Home to pull the reports and provide them to the City of San Antonio and also to the U.S. Department of HUD. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked how long an individual was followed through the system and suggested that there could be opportunities to collect feedback as to what happened and why they lost their housing. Woosley noted that those returning to the streets and accessing homeless services were immediately tracked again. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez recommended identifying gaps in services and opportunities. He expressed concern that we still had a large number of homeless individuals in the City and warned against taking a pat on the back.

Councilmember Courage commented that two tenths of one percent of the population was

homeless. He asked if there were new partners in the system and if there were any new strategic priorities. Woosley mentioned that medical respite programs were new and preventing re-homelessness as well as improving access to healthcare services were new priorities. Councilmember Courage suggested that more outreach workers, housing units, mental health professionals/beds, and alcohol/drug treatment beds were needed to eliminate or drastically reduce homelessness, but all these costs more money. He expressed concern that San Antonio still had a larger number of homeless even though the percentages were decreasing. Councilmember Courage commented that the rain had collected garbage and trash in the drainage culvert near Henderson Pass from homeless encampments and suggested doing more to prevent homeless individuals from collecting items that they would use to create encampments such as banning using shopping carts outside of shopping areas.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda commented that the first objective was to prevent homelessness, however, more efforts were being spent reactively rather than proactively. Woosley stated that benefit navigators provided more upstream services to individuals who were in crisis to address their issues before it led to homelessness. Councilmember Cabello Havrda noted that kids aging out of the foster care system were at risk of becoming homeless and there were other causes that could be addressed by a more proactive policy. She noted that going into the Zero Based Budgeting Process might help identify more upstream programs that could be more effective at prevention. Woosley stated that DHS had resources and contracted with Delegate Agencies that focused on these issues.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda requested a presentation on HMIS and how the data was gathered as well as more upstream programs. Assistant City Manager, Lori Houston, stated that HMIS data revealed that addiction, mental health and loss of income were the reason for homelessness as well as domestic violence, but the City had strategies such as Ready to Work, Emergency Rental and Utility bill assistance. Councilmember Cabello Havrda requested more data to be able to make more informed decisions.

Councilmember Viagran recommended keeping the presentation focused on the spending and programs and while she would like to see more caseworkers, it was important that there be places to send clients for services such as more Permanent Supportive Housing. She noted that once a homeless individual was feeling better, they were able to check themselves out of the hospital. Councilmember Viagran recommended understanding the services of others such as the Schools and Bexar County. Key was making sure we had an inventory of affordable housing, according to Councilmember Viagran, and suggested a report from the San Antonio Housing Trust (SAHT) or the Neighborhood and Housing Services Department (NHSD). Director of NHSD, Veronica Garcia, stated that she would provide a status report on housing.

Councilmember Viagran asked Woosley what the council district offices could do to help with the point in time count and keep people off of the streets. Woosley recommended education and hosting of community meetings. Councilmember Viagran noted that there was generational poverty as well as generational acceptance of abuse that would be a challenge. While there was not a dollar amount that could fix this issue, it did not mean we should stop spending money, according to Councilmember Viagran. City Manager Erik Walsh reminded the City Council that it was important to provide annual reports in order to be accountable and communicate to the residents what was

being done. City Manager Walsh indicated that there needed to be both policy and fiscal conversations by the City Council to get to future conversations about Budget goal setting. Councilmember Whyte expressed concern that a rosy picture was being painted, noting that what was being done was not working as San Antonio's homeless count had surpassed that of Austin, Houston, and Fort Worth to become second in the State. He commented that there was good information in the Report including facts and figures but stressed that the definition of success needed to be that all able-bodied individuals were taken off the streets and turned into a self-sustaining member of the community rather than remaining homeless.

Councilmember Whyte requested data on the number of individuals that went through the system and ended up in permanent housing versus remaining homeless. He also expressed concern with a direct spend of \$14 million in General Funds and \$16 million indirectly to solve the homeless program as he felt it was not making a large impact on citizens' day-to-day life. Councilmember Whyte suggested that most of his colleagues agreed that the real problem of preventing homelessness in the first place was not being addressed. He noted that the Low Barrier Shelter was paid with ARPA Funds, which would run out later this year. Councilmember Whyte recommended a citizen's assembly to find out what they would like to see and collect ideas about how to address the problem. He mentioned that the Close to Home website data was updated in 2023. Woosley stated that DHS' website launched in May, was comprehensive and included updated data.

Councilmember Whyte requested comparison of outcomes reported with those that directly tied to the Homeless Strategic Plan goals. He suggested that if the data did not prove results, the funding should be reallocated to other strategies. Woosley noted that San Antonio was the second largest city in Texas and also had the second largest homeless count, however, per capita San Antonio was much lower than other cities.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia thanked the outreach team for their work and confirmed that part of the services included enrolling homeless veterans in benefits. She asked if the Community Connections Hotline was open only during extreme weather and how it was advertised. Woosley stated that the hotline was open Monday through Friday but for 24 hours during extreme weather and advertised with providers and social media. Councilmember Rocha Garcia commented that resident perceptions were that there were more homeless encampments even though the data shows fewer homeless individuals. Woosley noted that the problem became more visible with tents and encampments than others that might be considered homeless.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked about strategies to ensure that housing was maintained and asked what happened with the mobile showering unit. Woosley listed some wrap around services and noted that the homeless shower was being turned over to Catholic Charities. Councilmember Rocha Garcia suggested that there had been a program in the past related to shopping carts. City Manager Walsh stated that many years ago, some Councilmembers had requested an Ordinance, but it never resulted in policy.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia noted that families might be carrying their family heirlooms or using the shopping carts to collect recycling to make money so she suggested compassion. Councilmember Rocha Garcia suggested that access to affordable housing and jobs was crucial and lauded the dashboard for providing education and transparency.

Councilmember Castillo highlighted the Community Courts Initiative with Haven for Hope as it was making significant impacts on the lives of participants and recommended that the City of San Antonio support the program. Councilmember Castillo suggested looking at the Harris County Mental Health Felony Court model that connected qualified offenders with rehabilitation services and detox. She expressed concern with the Close to Home and Point in Time Data showing an increase in youth and an aging population experiencing homelessness. Councilmember Castillo noted that sometimes she had to personally call to get help for folks and it should be easier to get access to shelters by reducing barriers.

Councilmember Castillo noted that housing and encampments were top priorities in the Community Budget Survey last year and suggested more coordination with the County and creation of more low-barrier shelters. She asked that her constituent services team have access to HMIS to better service residents. Councilmember Castillo asked if ID recovery was still being provided. Woosley replied that the services were still being provided. Councilmember Castillo recommended more education for front-facing City staff to understand the homeless issue as well as more investment in public housing. Councilmember Castillo recommended a new housing bond perhaps before 2027. She was pleased that Christian Assistance Ministry (CAM) was providing psychiatric services.

Councilmember Kaur commented that the dashboard was challenging because it was only numbers and she recommended showing more details and historical data. Woosley commented that the street outreach team and partners collected data on where the people were from. Houston noted that this was the first year we had an automatic feed from all databases into the dashboard. Councilmember Kaur recommended removing the Year-to-Date tag because it was fiscal year information, which was confusing. Councilmember Kaur asked why the City could not access HMIS. Woosley replied that it contained a lot of personal information that needed to be kept secure.

Councilmember Kaur suggested there could be better analysis of data to help the City Council make better strategic decisions. She commented that there seemed to be a connection between drainage areas and encampments and wanted to see a map of reoccurring encampments and suggested that activating them as parks could help curtail encampments. Councilmember Kaur suggested a plan for continued funding of low-barrier shelter as well as increased vouchers for housing and increasing employment.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez expressed concern that the City provided so much money to Haven for Hope, yet we did not have access to HMIS data. He recognized that homelessness was a challenging issue and commented that we were spending more money on responding to issues such as crime and homelessness and less money preventing them. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez suggested strategically matching investments with prevention efforts and preparing proactively for the next housing bond. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez understood the frustration with the trash, shopping carts, and panhandling but these were symptoms of a larger problem, which needed to be addressed at its root in a compassionate way.

Councilmember Whyte agreed that while homeless individuals might be hurting, so were the residents that were not homeless as they wanted cleanup of encampments. He recommended a

Budget debate related to the potential to continue to fund low-barrier shelters. Councilmember Whyte noted that a 6.8% increase in homelessness could include people being brought to our City from other cities including an agreement between Haven for Hope and Bexar County to cleanup other cities.

Councilmember Courage asked how many people had been kept from becoming homeless since the pandemic through the Rental Assistance Program. Mayor Nirenberg stated that the Rental Assistance Program during COVID-19 alone helped 55,000 people. Councilmember Courage asked why the City was not doing everything other cities were doing to combat homelessness. Woosley stated that DHS learned from other cities and Houston added that San Antonio was a leader in some of these programs such as the Nursing Home Program, CAM's Psychiatric Nursing Program, and donated funds to Corazon Ministries to get a mobile medical unit. Councilmember Courage noted that no other city in the country had solved this problem and there were no solutions that we were not trying but the community needed to understand that. He suggested finding relatives of homeless people and helping them reunite. Councilmember Courage respected people who wanted to collect aluminum cans or take their groceries home but sometimes it was easier for people to be homeless than to help themselves.

Councilmember Castillo commented that prevention and intervention was more effective than helping people become rehoused. She supported more funding for rental and utility assistance to prevent eviction.

Mayor Nirenberg stated that one of the great innovations was the alignment of our housing strategy. He agreed that we needed to partner with our neighboring cities and recommended more upstream investments to prevent homelessness. He agreed with Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez that the San Antonio Police Department Budget did not prevent crime and prevention was key to homelessness as well. Mayor Nirenberg lamented the shutdown of mental health facilities that made the problem more difficult. He supported the continuation of low-barrier shelter as well as investment to keep families in their homes. He thanked the Continuum of Care Program for their work.

2. Implementation of Small Business Economic Development Advocacy (SBEDA) Ordinance Amendments. [Alejandra Lopez, Assistant City Manager; Brenda Hicks-Sorensen, Director, Economic Development Department]

City Manager Erik Walsh noted that Councilmember Viagran had requested an update on the SBEDA Program and introduced Assistant Director of the Economic Development Department, Ana Bradshaw, who reported that City Council adopted the SBEDA Ordinance Amendments on December 5, 2024, which went into effect on January 1, 2025, and implementation was to be completed by July 1, 2025, in two phases of implementation.

Bradshaw reported that Phase One included the following administrative changes that would become effective April 1, 2025: 1) Sunset the SBEDA Goal Setting Committee, 2) Consolidate the Diversity Action Plan with the communication and engagement plan, and 3) Establish monthly, semi-annual, and annual reports to publish publicly. She stated that Phase Two included the following SBEDA Eligibility and Tool Changes that would become effective July 1, 2025: 1) Implement Personal Net Worth Requirement, 2) Change Significant Business Presence to only be

Headquartered in the San Antonio Metropolitan Statistical Area (SAMSA), 3) Eliminate Minority/Woman Business Enterprise (M/WBE) Prime Evaluation Preference Points, 4) Apply Emerging Contracting Goals on City Solicitations, 5) Allow Small/Minority/Woman-Owned Business Enterprises (S/M/WBE) to Self-Perform SBEDA contracting goals on all contracts, 6) Allow S/M/WBEs Joint Venture Partner(s) to count toward SBEDA contract goals, and 7) Eliminate Joint Venture Incentive, Distributorship Incentive, and the Historically Underutilized Business Zone (HUBZone) SBEDA tool.

Bradshaw outlined outreach and communication strategies and timelines and closed her presentation noting that program results would be made available on the Economic Performance Dashboard with a Monthly Utilization Report that provided comparison of payments to S/M/WBEs by fiscal year, Bi-Annual Response Analysis with comparison of discretionary solicitation responses by S/M/WBEs by fiscal years, and an Annual Report that provided evaluation of S/M/WBE aspirational goals versus S/M/WBE payments.

DISCUSSION:

Councilmember Viagran requested some information flyers and community education about the personal net worth requirement and the certification agency Supply SA. Bradshaw indicated that Supply SA was working through their backlog and information on requirements would be provided at the information sessions. City Manager Walsh stated that all public entities had committed to having their CEOs on the Supply SA Board and he had agreed to be the Chair for the first year with Maria Villagomez serving as Vice Chair since the City of San Antonio used the certification the most. Councilmember Viagran commented that her support stemmed from Supply SA having committed to being responsive to the City.

Councilmember Whyte supported the amendments made last year to the SBEDA Ordinance.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mayor Nirenberg recessed the meeting into Executive Session at 4:13 p.m. to discuss the following:

- A. Economic development negotiations pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 551.087 (economic development).
- B. The purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 551.072 (real property).
- C. Legal issues related to litigation involving the City pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 551.071 (consultation with attorney).
- D. Legal issues relating to emergency preparedness pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 551.071 (consultation with attorney).
- E. Legal issues related to collective bargaining pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 551.071 (consultation with attorney).

Mayor Pro Tem Kaur reconvened the meeting in Open Session at 5:24 p.m. and announced that no official action had been taken in Executive Session.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 5:34 p.m.

Approved

**Ron Nirenberg
Mayor**

**Debbie Racca-Sittre
City Clerk**

DRAFT