

# City of San Antonio



## Minutes Economic and Workforce Development Committee

2023 – 2025 Council Members

Chair: Manny Pelaez, Dist. 8

Phyllis Viagran, Dist. 3 | Dr. Adriana Rocha Garcia, Dist. 4

Teri Castillo, Dist. 5 | Marc Whyte, Dist. 10

Friday, June 14, 2024

2:00 PM

City Hall Complex

The Economic and Workforce Development Committee convened a regular meeting in the City Hall Council Briefing Room beginning at 2:00 PM. Deputy City Clerk Aurora Perkins took the Roll Call noting a quorum with the following Committee Members present:

**Members Present:** Manny Pelaez, *Chair*  
Phyllis Viagran, *Member*  
Dr. Adriana Rocha Garcia, *Member*  
Teri Castillo, *Member*  
Marc Whyte, *Member*

**Members Absent:** None

### Approval of Minutes

1. **Approval of the minutes from the Economic and Workforce Development Committee meeting on May 28, 2024.**

Councilmember Rocha Garcia moved to Approve the minutes of the May 28, 2024 Economic and Workforce Development Committee meeting. Councilmember Castillo seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye:** Pelaez, Viagran, Rocha Garcia, Castillo, Whyte

### Public Comments

None.

### Briefing and Possible Action on the following items

2. **Briefing from Visit San Antonio on its strategic plan implementation and results, including an update on the status of the local tourism and hospitality industry.** [Alejandra Lopez, Assistant City Manager; Patricia M. Cantor, Executive Director, Convention and Sports Facilities]

Hope Andrade, Board Chair with Visit San Antonio (VSA), provided a mid-year update briefing of the Strategic Plan implementation and results of the local tourism and hospitality industry. She noted that the hospitality and tourism industry contributed \$261.5 million in taxes and other revenue to the City of San Antonio.

Andrade noted that the San Antonio convention and tourism events were impactful to the City and spoke of the recent CVent Connect event that brought over 4,000 tourism visitors to the City. She spoke to the Budget and noted that efforts yielded a return of \$5.00 for every dollar invested.

Andrade reviewed the organizational structure and strategic planning of the VSA organization which was developed based on community and the Board of Directors' input; Solidified the mission of bringing the world to San Antonio and leading through recovery; Final year of three-year, short-term recovery plan; and Focused efforts under five strategic priority areas.

Andrade introduced Andres Munoz, Chief Marketing Officer for VSA, who reviewed the FY 2024 goals. He noted that the event bookings goal was 680 for 2024 and year to date, 503 bookings had been finalized. A. Munoz reviewed the other goals which included marketing, communications, and membership.

A. Munoz stated that a priority of VSA was to tell the story of San Antonio adjusted based on the season of the year to ensure relevance. A. Munoz spoke to paid marketing efforts performed in partnership with other community stakeholders including Fiesta Texas.

A. Munoz spoke to the impact of the summer heat and noted that staff developed a summer campaign to market a "cooler and refreshing" experience in San Antonio. He stated that the campaign was released in the spring and would run through the summer.

A. Munoz presented a video to discuss brand campaign videos which spoke to San Antonio attractions and events for people of all ages and all different attractions. He reviewed print and social media engagement activities to market San Antonio.

A. Munoz spoke to culinary activities to promote San Antonio's culinary scene to include a recent visit to Mexico City with four local chefs. He also spoke about travel improvements and flight expansion from the San Antonio International Airport to include new international nonstop flights.

A. Munoz provided an overview of priority activity associated with the Strategic Sales category, including corporate marketing and drawing new large-scale events to San Antonio. He discussed recent corporate booking successes including those with Keller Williams, Whataburger, Emerson, and the Nationwide Marketing Group. He also spoke to conventions in the cyber and technology industry events. He also spoke to trade show booking successes that had not previously been booked in the San Antonio market.

Justin Munoz, VSA Chief of Staff and head of The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Department, spoke to activities supporting advocacy and diversity. He noted that VSA had developed a Diversity Action Plan to address demographics and diversity.

J. Munoz reviewed activities associated with growing membership and partnerships to support tourism activities to include:

- Grow membership program with continued emphasis on increased diversity of membership
- Fundraising for 501c3 to support local educational scholarships
- Increased programming for small businesses
- Partnering with the Economic Development Department to offer complimentary one-year Silver-level memberships with VSA to small businesses in construction zones.

J. Munoz spoke to storytelling collaborations to include “Holidays on Houston Street” and “Stars & Stripes on Houston Street”.

J. Munoz spoke to the success of the IPW San Antonio 2023 convention which was held in San Antonio for the first time on May 20-24, 2023.

J. Munoz provided an overview of activities associated with Cvent Connect event.

## DISCUSSION

Chair Pelaez spoke about the success of VSA.

Councilmember Viagran congratulated VSA on their success of marketing San Antonio internationally and of the recent Cvent Connect event. She expressed her support of work conducted and asked if VSA would plan more virtual marketing of the not-so-well known sites such as the Westside murals and area parks. A. Munoz stated that VSA had already planned to expand storytelling of the culture of San Antonio to include areas outside of downtown San Antonio.

Councilmember Viagran asked if there were VSA Board Members who understood the diversity and inclusion of San Antonio.

J. Munoz stated that the goal was to expand diversity and inclusion and that staff had invested internally and in membership to expand DEI efforts. Councilmember Viagran stressed that it was important to use not only HOT funds and other funding to expand area parks and attractions. She commended VSA and their efforts since the COVID-19 Pandemic and the concept of live/work/play downtown.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia thanked VSA for their efforts and recognized the City staff at the Convention and Sports Facilities (CSF) Department for their growth and successes. Councilmember Rocha Garcia stated that she would like to plan and assess where the outcomes were being realized or where there were shortcomings.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia reviewed the different funding sources that could be used for building and expanding tourism efforts. Councilmember Rocha Garcia requested data on the average wages for tourism employees at all levels and pushed for living wage expectations. She also requested turnover rates for VSA staff to be presented at the next VSA Board meeting.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia stressed the need for continued focus on marketing to Latin America.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked how cookie and web location intelligence was being used to track interest in San Antonio. A. Munoz spoke to the limitations of web cookie tracking from third-party vendors and noted that staff had started collecting their own data on website hits and expanding their first-party data and were not dependent on a third party cookie. He noted that this made data smarter and more useful. Andrade stated that the requested data would be presented at the next VSA Board meeting.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia spoke to the recent PRIDE River Parade and noted that it had not been advertised at great lengths locally and had more individuals attending from outside the City.

A. Munoz stated that local advertising had previously expected to be advertised by the organizing organizations.

Councilmember Castillo expressed her support of marketing the Pearl District and recommended further marketing of Westside Districts such as the Deco District which had a large culinary and art scene.

Councilmember Castillo asked for clarification on the applicants of the VSA scholarship program and asked who was applying for scholarships. Michelle Moon, Vice President of Partners, Experience, and Events at VSA, stated that applicants came from high school and local upper level education institutions to include St. Phillips College. Councilmember Castillo stressed that it was important to apply useful skills to scholarship recipients and to learn about livable wages. She spoke to unionized hotels and noted that the wages of the Grand Hyatt were not aligned with the City. She asked if there was an opportunity to work with the Grand Hyatt to get wages aligned with the City.

Councilmember Whyte asked what specific outcomes were sought in the international market. A. Munoz stated that non-stop international flights were crucial in expanding tourism in the San Antonio market. He noted that VSA worked with Condor Airlines who had developed a non-stop flight, to determine the strongest source market of flights out of connectivity from Europe.

Councilmember Whyte spoke about the success of the IPW and CVent Connect events and asked what other events were being planned.

A. Munoz stated that the evaluation of success and other event bookings took up to three years and

it was crucial to build on the event successes and marketing of San Antonio. He also noted that the expansion of the Convention Center was also a great marketing tool.

Councilmember Whyte asked if data was available on tourists traveling by car or air.

A. Munoz stated that in 2022, 78% of travelers arrived by car and 9% arrived via air travel. He added that most of those driving were from Texas and eight surrounding States.

Councilmember Whyte asked which was the most successful marketing effort to date. A. Munoz stated that the tracking and expansion of web media site hits and expansion of that type of marketing were very successful.

Councilmember Whyte spoke to his concerns that the City of San Antonio did always market itself internationally and nationally but he felt that the proposed storytelling communicated that there was a lot for all persons to enjoy in San Antonio.

Chair Pelaez spoke to the attraction of success of Morgan's Wonderland and stressed that San Antonio was a true destination attraction city. He stressed the importance of marketing Latino music in marketing campaigns. He also spoke to events such as Dinali which had marketed itself and VSA needed to expand those efforts. He also spoke to ESport marketing and education of available activities. A. Munoz stated that VSA had begun marketing ESports.

Chair Pelaez stated that it was important to get convention visitors to stay longer after conference/convention meetings ended.

A. Munoz stated that VSA worked closely with the Convention Center to educate and coordinate events to ensure that visitors stayed longer or returned with their families.

Chair Pelaez spoke to the marketing of activities to grandparents and grandchildren and asked if marketing was conducted to that market. A. Munoz stated that marketing was made to families but not the grandparent market. He stressed that expanded marketing was being made to younger parents and marketing

Assistant City Manager Alex Lopez acknowledged City staff and leadership from CSF and their collaborative efforts with VSA in marketing San Antonio.

**3. Briefing on the analysis of location intelligence resources and potential uses by the City.**  
[Ben Gorzell, Chief Financial Officer; Craig Hopkins, Chief Information Officer, Information Technology Services]

Craig Hopkins, Information Technology Services Department (ITSD) Chief Information Officer, provided an overview of location intelligence and stated that the hypothesis of commercially available, commodity "off the shelf" data could be purchased through a vendor subscription to: 1) Track accurate visitor counts at specific locations and times and 2) Provide aggregated data to give insights into where visitors came from; and 3) Define the origin, destination, trend, and demographic data. He spoke to challenges in collecting data which included the elimination of web

cookie tracking and the ability to buy data due to cookie tracking.

Hopkins spoke of the market analysis of vendors and their tools that tracked needed data. He reviewed the key findings of the staff analysis and noted that there were no “one size fits all” solutions for CoSA use cases. Hopkins noted that commodity mobile location data was now skewed due to Android and Apple privacy features disabling mobile location data.

Hopkins spoke to the next steps for use case solutions. He stated that ITSD would work with the World Heritage Office (WHO) and the Parks and Recreation Department on technology solutions (sensors, vehicle tracking, etc).

## DISCUSSION

Councilmember Rocha Garcia noted that she had recently attended a conference and asked of the City’s policy on Artificial Intelligence (AI). Hopkins replied that AI was not involved with the Item and noted that the City had several AI standards and policies in place.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia was pleased with staff participation on use cases and identification of solutions to data needs. She noted that the European Union (EU) had a more elaborate data privacy policy and asked if there were tools that could be used. Hopkins stated that he did not currently know of the exact tools used but staff was working with the City Attorney’s Office (CAO) to look at more international policies.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia stated that the swarm data models were the best alternative to predict the trends. Hopkins stated that the City had to abide by the policies of the EU while its citizens were in San Antonio.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia requested an organizational chart or identification of staff for technology solutions. Hopkins stated that he would provide that information and noted that ITSD was a partner with departments in addressing solutions.

Councilmember Viagran offered to provide Council District 3 sites for pilot programs to include parks and attractions. She stated that event data was important for WHO and final four data. She asked who would analyze the data collected.

Councilmember Castillo spoke to data collected by the State of North Carolina and asked if said data was used by the City of Asheville. Emily Royall, ITSD Smart City Administrator, stated that staff found that data sharing was not occurring.

Councilmember Castillo asked how the City would protect the privacy and the identity of individuals who may be tracked.

Councilmember Whyte stressed that resident data privacy was crucial to maintain. He asked how ITSD and WHO would test tracking of event attendance. Hopkins stated that staff would require sensor technology to solve a problem. He added that the City would need to contract with a

vendor to try out sensors.

Councilmember Whyte asked what the benefits and drawbacks were of using off-the-shelf technology. Hopkins stated that many of the off-the-shelf solutions did not provide all the components needed and noted the associated costs for prolonged data acquisition. Councilmember Whyte stated that it was important to try and understand visitor activity and project it once that data was collected. Hopkins stated that it could be tracked for local visitors.

Chair Pelaez stated that data of where visitors were coming from and information on Riverwalk attractions were needed. He noted that swarm data could also be used for evacuation and safety preparations. He stressed that it was important to be proactive in planning rather than reactive in gathering data. Hopkins spoke to the divergence of vehicle and personal tracking sensors and the various collection of data.

Chair Pelaez asked for clarification on the next steps. Hopkins spoke to user case scenarios from a department that needed solutions. Assistant City Manager Alejandra Lopez stated that this needed to be rolled out to department directors to identify user cases and challenges. She noted that the WHO user case could be used more extensively in the downtown area and in city parks.

Chair Pelaez spoke to assets such as parks that were not utilized and the need to assess the Return on Investment.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 3:33 p.m.

**Approved**

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*Manny Pelaez, Chair*

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*Debbie Racca-Sittre, City Clerk*