

**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, January 24, 2024

2:00 PM

Council Briefing Room

The City Council convened a B Session meeting in the Council Briefing Room beginning at 2:08 PM. City Clerk Debbie Racca-Sittre took the Roll Call noting a quorum with the following Council Members present:

PRESENT: 10 – Nirenberg, Kaur, McKee-Rodriguez, Viagran, Rocha Garcia, Castillo, Cabello
Havrda, Alderete Gavito, Courage, Whyte

ABSENT: 1 - Pelaez

ITEMS

1. Briefing on the Violence Prevention Strategic Plan [María Villagómez, Deputy City Manager; Claude A. Jacob, Director, Health]

City Manager Erik Walsh introduced the Item and Metro Health Director Dr. Claude Jacob who provided background and an overview of the Violence Prevention Strategic Plan (Plan). Jacob declared that violence was a public health issue as a person's need for safety exceeded their need to manage other aspects of health and wellness. Jacob stated that the premise was that if we prevented violence and

improved safety and reduced injury or death, people could focus on other dimensions of health.

Jacob noted that Violence Prevention was a component of the five-year SA Forward Public Health Strategic Plan. By September 30, 2026 the Plan called for implementation of a 24/7 Community Advocate Response Program using evidence-based tools to identify people at the highest risk of experiencing domestic violence, training embedded systems serving parents on the Adverse Childhood Experiences/Adverse Community Environments and trauma-informed practices involved in the justice system and implementation of restorative justice programs in a minimum of five schools.

Jacob stated that the Plan was coordinated by the National Leadership Academy for the Public's Health Team comprised of Erica Haller-Stevenson, Metro Health, Deputy Chief Chris Benavides, San Antonio Police Department (SAPD), Dr. Kellie Lynch, UTSA and Tracy Tate, St. John Baptist Church.

Jacob stated that the Plan included development of a strategic direction for San Antonio and Bexar County, implementation of a five-year roadmap to address priorities related to violence and its causes (CY 2024-2028), a public health approach, addressing of social determinants of health, interventions both upstream and downstream, shared priorities and evidence-based strategies that allowed multiple agencies and sectors of the community to work together for greater impact and partnerships to collaborate on efforts and funding for programs and services.

The planning process began with community outreach, identification and selection of priorities, with a workgroup in each of the following priority areas: Youth, Gun Violence, Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence according to Jacob. He indicated that a dashboard of long-term indicators would be developed in accordance with the full report all with a goal of transforming the community. Jacob concluded the presentation by noting that the Plan's purpose was to utilize a wholistic approach, collaborate across the community, sectors and disciplines to develop shared priorities and a roadmap. He noted that the Plan needed to be evidence-based and include impacts upstream and downstream. He added that it should harness existing resources and align future actions.

DISCUSSION:

Mayor Nirenberg noted that many parts of our community and services were tied to violence prevention, public health and safety, not only SAPD but upstream solutions as well as those reactionary downstream services offered by SAPD. He asked Jacob how progress would be measured. Jacob stated that staff would use data and review the violent crime rates and other factors and they would create systems and monitor long-term. He noted that this would be reported to the Public Safety Committee on a regular basis. Mayor Nirenberg noted that StandUp SA could play a significant role in helping prevent violence in young people and conflict resolution techniques could be beneficial to youth and adults alike.

Councilmember Courage commented that the weapons exchange program in Council District 9 hosted last fall resulted in over 900 weapons being taken off the street and would result in reduced violence and he committed to doing another weapons exchange in the future. Councilmember Courage noted that violence prevention involved public safety by SAPD and the Courts as well. Councilmember Courage asked how much funding in Metro Health was committed for the Violence Prevention Plan. Jacob stated that there was funding throughout the City and with the partners and he stated that he would provide the

information later. Councilmember Courage commented that the best teachers were parents and were the key to making the community safer and suggested training and technical assistance for parents.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda, Chair of the Public Safety Committee, commented that this was a five-year Strategic Plan and would not produce immediate results but the focus on filling in the gaps in services and communication was the best use of resources to reduce violence. Councilmember Cabello Havrda noted that the community had asked for a better and more comprehensive way to make the community safer, not only through enforcement, but also through prevention.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda recommended addressing the costs of structures that led to violent crime and suggested engaging non-profit organizations and residents in the implementation of the Plan. Councilmember Cabello Havrda noted that while it was important to benchmark with other cities, we needed a long-term comparison of violence statistics to determine trends and make progress toward goals.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez supported using a public health framework to discuss reduction of violence rather than only a policing strategy. He noted that he had recommended creation of an Office of Crime and Recidivism Prevention because economic and racial disparities existed and contributed to unequal treatment of residents. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez recommended more collaboration among departments and asked what types of data would be collected and how it would be used. Erica Haller-Stevenson, Public Health Administrator with Metro Health, stated that step one was to identify data, then look at how people experienced change, followed by an assessment of community and partner data which would be examined regularly based upon the determined need.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked if the Plan was expected to be updated every five years. Haller-Stevenson stated that it was anticipated that, if the Plan were accepted, there would be continuation of the planning effort.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia stated that she had recently taken a one-day training on assisting people with mental health episodes and suggested that more individuals take advantage of the training opportunity. Councilmember Rocha Garcia mentioned that restorative justice programs at the school districts and with other partners were also available and suggested more funding for these programs. She mentioned that some school districts had a mobile application to help students and noted that students from CAST/STEM High School had provided violence prevention presentations.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia commented that adults experienced social isolation and suggested that group therapy at the senior centers could help. She suggested accelerating the inventory of youth programs by a year. Councilmember Rocha Garcia also recommended expansion of the Stop the Bleed Program as well as NARCAN training. She supported school-based initiatives and recommended more communication with the coalition of school district police chiefs. Councilmember Rocha Garcia supported the Plan overall but noted that her focus had been on mental health to help prevent violence.

Councilmember Viagran stated that the Plan reminded everyone of basic human needs and did a good job of identifying priorities. She recommended working with very young children on respect and good judgement. Councilmember Viagran committed to working on getting more gun safes and supported the

weapons buyback program to help get guns off the street. Councilmember Viagran suggested an educational component that focused on attitudes toward women including aggressions and microaggressions against women, as well as human trafficking.

Councilmember Viagran recommended holding criminals accountable, so they did not re-offend. She stressed that the advocates needed to hold the elected officials accountable to being committed to reducing violence and implementing the strategies.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito expressed support for the proactive approach to violence prevention included in the Plan. She clarified that the target for the Community Advocate Response Program was those at risk of experiencing domestic violence as a prevention effort. Councilmember Alderete Gavito requested examples of adverse environments for children. Haller- Stevenson provided neighborhoods without safe sidewalks or with high concentrations of lead in the soil as examples.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito asked which schools were being targeted. Jacob stated that Metro Health was partnering with Judson, Harlandale, San Antonio and East Central Independent School Districts through the UP Partnership mentioned by Mayor Nirenberg and Communities in Schools. Councilmember Alderete Gavito recommended that the focus should not only be on victims but rather on ways to reduce perpetration of crimes.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito recommended coordination between the City and the Bexar County District Attorney to ensure offenders did not keep getting out of jail and re-offending and requested information about juvenile versus adult offenders' rehabilitation rates.

Councilmember Castillo recommended a focus on youth and youth gun violence and provided information on a summer youth jobs program called One Summer Chicago to help curb youth violence. She reported that the program was for youth in and out of school and included students involved in the court systems as well. Councilmember Castillo noted that the numbers of car thefts of KIA and Hyundai were high and some other states had filed lawsuits against the automakers to help pay for the increased police costs.

Councilmember Castillo prioritized ensuring that individuals did not re-offend and were rehabilitated. She noted that the Plan declared violence as a public health issue so it should be presented to the Community Health Committee in addition to the Public Safety Committee. Councilmember Castillo mentioned that drug and alcohol use was a key factor in domestic and elder abuse so treatment for these issues as well as prevention was also key.

Councilmember Whyte supported the work so long as it produced results and prevented violence. Councilmember Whyte requested clarification on the types of programs that would be included in the schools. Haller-Stevenson stated that the Plan was an overall roadmap that would begin the work of developing partnerships and programs with a goal of embedding strategies into everyday activities.

Councilmember Whyte listed some school hardening recommendations such as live monitoring of cameras but the addition of more officers were not listed. Haller-Stevenson responded that the issue was not included because there was already legislation that required an Officer on every campus. Haller-Stevenson ensured that only evidenced-based solutions were included in the Plan, but the

recommendations came from the community and team as they were applicable to the entire community, not just the City of San Antonio organization.

Councilmember Whyte asked how often the City Council would be briefed. Haller-Stevenson stated that the briefings would be presented to the Public Safety Committee and the Committee would determine when it needed to go back to “B” Session. City Manager Walsh commented that measuring prevention was difficult and some space and time was needed to be able to compare and see what was working and what was not.

Councilmember Kaur commended Metro Health on the work that they had performed to complete the logic model. She asked what indicators could be used to measure impact on difficult items such as public policy and legislation. Haller-Stevenson noted that her role was not to make policy but to determine if it was evidence-based. Councilmember Kaur requested a plan on how the community would engage with implementation of the Plan. Haller-Stevenson suggested that a transparent report or dashboard could help make the community aware of the activities and opportunities. Councilmember Kaur supported the idea of a dashboard.

Mayor Nirenberg closed the discussion by thanking the staff for their work and looked forward to hearing more about the progress of the Plan.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Executive Session was not held.

ADJOURNMENT

Approved

**Ron Nirenberg
Mayor**

**Debbie Racca-Sittre
City Clerk**