

City of San Antonio



Minutes Public Safety Committee

2023 – 2025 Council Members

Melissa Cabello Havrda, Dist. 6, Chair
Dr. Sukh Kaur, Dist. 1 | Jalen McKee-Rodriguez, Dist. 2
Marina Alderete Gavito, Dist. 7 | Marc Whyte, Dist. 10

Monday, March 17, 2025

2:00 PM

City Council Chambers

The Public Safety Committee convened a regular meeting at the Norma S. Rodriguez Council Chamber beginning at 2:05 p.m. Deputy City Clerk, Aurora Perkins took the Roll Call noting a quorum with the following Committee Members present:

Members Present: Melissa Cabello Havrda *Chair*
Jalen McKee-Rodriguez, *Member*
Marina Alderete Gavito, *Member*
Marc Whyte, *Member*

Members Absent: Dr. Sukh Kaur, *Member*

Approval of Minutes

1. Approval of minutes from the February 18, 2025 Public Safety Committee Meeting

Councilmember Whyte moved to Approve the minutes of the February 18, 2025, Public Safety Committee meeting. Councilmember Alderete Gavito seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Cabello Havrda, McKee-Rodriguez, Alderete Gavito, Whyte
Absent: Kaur

Briefing and Possible Action on

2. Council Consideration Request by Councilmembers Teri Castillo (District 5) and Marina Alderete Gavito (District 7) to Reduce Celebratory Gunfire & a "Call the Shots" Public Service Campaign [María Villagómez, Deputy City Manager; William McManus, Chief of Police]

Deputy City Manager, Maria Villagomez, introduced the Item and Police Chief William McManus provided a presentation on the Council Consideration Request (CCR) submitted by Councilmembers Castillo and Alderete Gavito. McManus noted that CCR 2024-0025 requested staff to develop a public information campaign titled “Call the Shots” to remind residents throughout the City that celebratory gunfire was illegal and that the law would be enforced within the San Antonio City limits. He added that the campaign was to include messages that encouraged residents to call in gunshot incidents to the San Antonio Police Department (SAPD) nonemergency line.

McManus spoke to the potential dangers of celebratory gunfire, which included the potential for injury or fatalities, damage to property, and impacts to neighborhood quality of life. According to McManus, celebratory gunfire was very common within San Antonio and was illegal under Texas Penal Code (42.12) and was a Class A misdemeanor. He stated that if conduct constituting an offense under this section also constituted an offense under another section of the Code, the individual could be prosecuted under either section.

McManus reviewed the celebratory gunfire calls since 2023, noting that in 2023, the daily average number of calls was 102 with the largest number of calls being on January 1 and July 4. He noted that in 2023, Council District 5 had the highest number of calls for shots heard with 6,387 and Council District 2 had the second highest number of calls with 5,534. McManus stated that in 2024, the daily average number of calls was 79 and that incidents for January 1 and July 4 had decreased from the previous year, with Council District 1 having the highest number of calls of 5,587 and Council District 5 having the second highest number of calls with 5,447.

McManus discussed the objectives of the SAPD Public Awareness Campaign, which was to develop a bilingual campaign to raise awareness about the dangers and illegality of celebratory gunfire, encourage residents to reports gunshots, and ensure that law enforcement was supported in its efforts to address the issue. He noted that SAPD would coordinate with local media, other law enforcement agencies, and support agencies such as Metro Health and the San Antonio Fire Department in the use of social media, press releases, community meetings, public service announcement videos, and flyers. McManus added that staff would provide metrics on calls received, track engagement on social media channels, and evaluate changes in crime reports related to gunfire incidents.

McManus reviewed previous SAPD awareness efforts utilizing SpidrTech technology, which would send out text messages on celebratory gunfire dangers and legal consequences to those who signed up. He spoke to media campaigns from other national cities to include Kansas City, Missouri.

McManus stated that SAPD and the Communications & Engagement (C&E) Department would incorporate celebratory gunfire as part of Public Safety Campaign for the 4th of July and the New Year’s holidays in collaboration with local media, other law enforcements agencies, and other City departments.

McManus noted that staff recommended that the Public Safety Committee approve SAPD and C&E to move forward with implementing the campaign as presented.

DISCUSSION

Councilmember Alderete Gavito thanked Councilmember Castillo for co-authoring the CCR and spoke to the need for further education on the risks of celebratory gunfire. She asked how many arrests were

made related to the gunfire calls. McManus stated that the information would be provided. Councilmember Alderete Gavito stressed the importance of enforcement along with educational programs. She also noted the importance of gathering metrics to determine effectiveness and safety outcomes. Councilmember Alderete Gavito asked that staff consider including testimony of victims from gunfire incidents in the educational campaign.

Councilmember Whyte expressed his support for the educational campaign. He noted that he was a supporter of gun carrying laws but stressed the importance of gun safety.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito moved to Approve the implementation of the Public Safety Campaign related to celebratory gunfire. Councilmember Whyte seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Cabello Havrda, McKee-Rodriguez, Alderete Gavito, Whyte
Absent: Kaur

3. Council Consideration Request by Councilmember Marina Alderete Gavito (District 7) on Addressing Cluster Mailbox Theft in the Community. [María Villagómez, Deputy City Manager; William McManus, Chief of Police]

Deputy City Manager Villagomez introduced the Item and Police Chief William McManus, who provided an overview of the Council Consideration Request (CCR 2024-0027) submitted by Councilmember Alderete Gavito to address cluster mailbox theft in the community. He stated that the CCR requested that the City create a program to assist homeowner associations (HOA) in obtaining and installing security lighting and other theft deterrence measurements around Cluster Box Units (CBU) in partnership with CPS Energy. McManus added that it also requested the creation of a mail theft task force to better coordinate the issue of CBU theft in the community.

McManus noted that State and Federal Laws allowed for increased penalties for theft of mail and mailbox damages (State Penal Code Sec. 31.20 and Federal Law Title 18 U.S. Code 1708 associated with mail theft). He reviewed historical crime data for 2023, 2024, and 2025 year to date for offenses of fewer than 10 CBUs, 10 but fewer than 30 CBU, and more than 30 CBU. He referenced heat map statistics for each of the categories of CBU within the City limits.

McManus stated that SAPD investigated claims of property damage to cluster mailboxes and mail theft, however, he noted that SAPD faced significant challenges in investigating and resolving these crimes. According to McManus, key obstacles to resolving these crimes were the lack of physical evidence, video surveillance, fingerprints, eyewitness accounts, lack of details, and non-reporting of incidents.

McManus stated that SAPD recommended convening stakeholder groups this spring including the U.S. Postal Service, homeowner associations, apartment associations, CPS Energy, and other governmental agencies to identify specific crime prevention measures and develop recommendations. He indicated that key areas discussed would include crime prevention measures such as lighting, surveillance, and signage; a public awareness campaign; and review of existing laws to determine if any potential changes would need legislative actions to include the increase of penalties. McManus added that SAPD would develop a plan with gathered feedback and come back to the Public Safety

Committee
in August 2025 with an update.

DISCUSSION

Councilmember Alderete Gavito spoke to the issue of mailbox theft and damages, which resulted in high costs to HOAs across the City. She stated that historically, damages had been covered by the United States Postal Service (USPS) but that changed and was now a cost to the HOAs. Councilmember Alderete Gavito noted that her office had received a large number of calls on the issue, which was why she submitted the CCR.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito stated that the CCR requested that online security lighting be installed in partnership with CPS Energy due to the fact that normal street lighting had proven to be insufficient. She noted that the task force could review lighting concerns. McManus stated that staff was working with CPS Energy to move forward with online security lighting, and they would not be solely waiting for task force recommendations.

Councilmember Whyte asked for clarification on the step-by-step process for mailbox theft incidents. McManus stated that HOAs needed to report incidents to the nonemergency number to ensure that SAPD was aware of incidents so they could investigate further. McManus stressed the importance for individuals to check their mailboxes regularly to ensure that mail theft was reported in a timely manner. Councilmember Whyte asked what the average cost to repair cluster mailboxes was. Deputy City Manager Villagomez stated that staff would gather data on repair costs but noted that it varied by type of box and size.

Chair Cabello Havrda stated that there was confusion on who was responsible for repairing mailboxes and that educational information should be provided on the process for coordinating repairs. She noted that USPS had online access for mail that was scheduled to be delivered and one could determine if any mail was missing in cases of incidents.

Chair Cabello Havrda stated that she wanted to ensure that the task force researched and provided information on who was responsible for repairs (HOA/USPS). She asked what could be done if one's mail was stolen. McManus stated that a report should be made, and an investigator would be assigned to the case.

Chair Cabello Havrda asked for clarification on the task force member composition and requested that representation from State Representative Joaquin Castro be included.

Chair Cabello Havrda asked when the task force would report back to the Committee. Villagomez stated that the task force would be created immediately, and she anticipated coming back to the Committee by August 2025.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito reiterated the need for the online lighting issue to be addressed immediately with CPS Energy and that she was open to suggestions for task force member composition.

The Item was for briefing only, so no action was taken.

4. Update on Year 2 of the Violent Crime Reduction Plan . [María Villagómez, Deputy City Manager; William P. McManus, Chief of Police]

Deputy City Manager, Maria Villagomez, introduced the Item and Dr. Michael Smith with the University of Texas – San Antonio (UTSA) School of Criminology and Criminal Justice who provided the update on the Year 2 Evaluation of the San Antonio Crime Reduction Plan (SACRP).

Smith provided an overview of SACRP's three primary strategy components, which were: 1) Near-term strategies (hot spots) that include increased police visibility in areas where violent crime was concentrated and prioritize street-level deterrence; 2) Mid-term strategies focused on violent places in the City using a Problem-oriented, Place-based Policing (POPBP) approach; and 3) Long-term, Offender-based strategies that would utilize Focused Deterrence to help break the cycle of violence among a small number of repeat and high-risk offenders who were responsible for the majority of violent crimes in San Antonio.

Smith reviewed Year 2 data for the period of January 2024 to December 2024. He noted that Phase 1 (Hot Spots) was underway throughout the year in two-month intervals. He mentioned that Phase 2 (POPBP) was at its first site at 1303 Rigsby Avenue and had crime data results through December 2024. Smith stated that initial discussions had begun under Phase 3 (Focused Deterrence).

Smith reviewed data of violent crime incidents and victims per month from January 2021 through December 2024 and noted that there was a 7.8% decrease in violent crime since the development of the SACRP. He noted that San Antonio had experienced a 9.6% decrease in average monthly violent crime incidents and a 9.9% decrease in average monthly violent crime victims during Year 2 of the Plan compared to the previous year.

Smith reviewed crime changes by type with a 20% decrease in murders, 8.7% decrease in individual robberies, 7.7% decrease in aggravated assaults (non-family violence), and a 19.2% decrease in deadly conduct. He noted that there was no change in robberies of businesses since the previous year.

Smith reviewed violent crime trends by police substations in 2023 and 2024 and noted that all police substations had decreases in violent incidents ranging from .08% to 15.3%. He also reviewed Year 2 results for Hot Spot decreases in all areas except in High Visibility (HV) of officers in vehicles which was shown not to be as effective in deterring crime. According to Smith, a focus on high-risk individuals in appropriate hot spots was very effective in deterring crime incidents.

Smith reviewed Year 2 percentage changes in substation trends and catchment of violent crime incidents. He noted that in the majority of the substations there were decreases in violent crime except in the Central Police District. Smith also reviewed Year 2 results associated with arrests made and noted that with the Plan development it was expected that arrests would fall, which proved true.

Smith reviewed Year 2 results for calls for service to violent crimes and noted decreases at the city-side level (2.7%) and in violent crime treatment grids (15.6%).

Smith stated that UTSA assisted SAPD on fidelity results for Year 2 and noted that it was at an 85%

level. He further spoke to fidelity rates for treatment periods 7 through 12, which ranged from 73% to as high as 96%.

Smith provided a review of POPBP strategies, which were an analysis-driven, problem-oriented approach to reducing the proximate causes of violence at persistently violent places. He noted that department heads and POPBP working groups had been trained by UTSA in Fall 2023 and that the first site chosen for analysis was the apartment complex at 1303 Rigsby Avenue (Rosemont at Highland Park). He added that POPBP site work began at the site in June 2024.

Smith reviewed the recommendations made for the Hot Spot site at 1303 Rigsby Avenue and results that included 19 recommendations by the POPBP Advisory Board and noted that 14 recommendations were fully or partly implemented. He added that of the 16 outcome measures identified, 13 were fully or partially addressed at the site.

Smith provided an overview of the 1303 Rigsby Avenue crime statistics since January 2024 and spoke to decreases in violent offenses (50.0%), calls for service (23.9%), trespass calls for service (100.0%), and violent calls for service (29.3%). He noted increases in categories of family violence and family violence incidents but added that the increase was only one incident, which skewed the data since it was so small compared to the previous year.

Smith summarized Year 2 results stating that there was a 9.6% decrease in violent crime incidents and a 9.9% decrease in the number of individuals victimized in Year 2. He noted a 22% decrease in treated hot spots and a decrease by 6% in surrounding catchment areas compared to previous years.

Smith spoke to the next steps of the Plan, which included the continuation of Hot Spot policing treatments and analyses, continuation of POPBP at the 1303 Rigsby Avenue site, and the identification of a second POPBP site. Under Phase 3, Smith stated that staff and the task force would identify resources and needs and would begin planning for Year 3, with the Year 3 mid-year evaluation taking place in June/July 2025.

DISCUSSION

Chair Cabello Havrda stated that overall, the report was positive with a decrease in violent crimes by almost 10%. She asked for clarification on domestic violence data and whether the data was now being more accurately reported. Smith stated that there was no data on unreported incidents and noted the limitations of results not including unreported data.

Chair Cabello Havrda expressed concern regarding no change in small business crimes. Smith stated that this was the smallest category of review but that continued discussions were needed with SAPD to include additional strategies to address small business crime.

Chair Cabello Havrda asked for clarification on City-wide trends in the downtown substation area. McManus stated that the lower number of activities could be associated with concentrated efforts for all resources available in the area to include street and bike patrol. Deputy City Manager Villagomez clarified that most of the downtown area was serviced by the St. Mary's Substation along with the Central Substation.

Chair Cabello Havrda asked if the report included data associated between police units such as SAFFE, Traffic, and others. Smith stated that data was not per division, but overall City and substation related. Chair Cabello Havrda requested data on the different divisions to include SAFFE Divisions and effectiveness. Smith clarified that SAFEE was included in Hot Spot oversight. Deputy Police Chief Robert Blanton reiterated that Hot Spot policing was concentrated in high visibility crime prevention tactics and not on actual arrests. Chair Cabello Havrda stressed the importance of SAFFE Officers and the need for more in the community.

Councilmember Whyte asked if there were any other ways to look at data to report that Hot Spot policing was successful. Smith agreed. Councilmember Whyte reiterated that the City Budget concentrated on public safety and there was a need for an increase in the number of police officers in the City. He noted the need for additional officers to be immediately addressed at the upcoming Budget discussions. Villagomez stated that public safety was a top priority, and Budget discussions would be crucial in addressing police staffing. She stated that Budget discussions were to be balanced for needs and resources available but stressed that safety was always a priority. Councilmember Whyte commented that public safety and additional police resources would be his priority in the upcoming Budget discussions.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito agreed with Councilmember Whyte's comments on public safety being a priority in the upcoming Budget discussions.

The item was for briefing only, so no action was taken.

Executive Session

Executive Session was not held.

Adjournment

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 3:07 p.m.

Melissa Cabello Havrda, Chair

*Debbie Racca-Sittre
City Clerk*