

**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, October 2, 2024

2:00 PM

Council Briefing Room

The City Council convened a B Session meeting in the Council Briefing Room beginning at 2:05 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. Briefing on the City’s Legislative Program for the 89th State Legislative Session. [Jeff Coyle, Assistant City Manager; Sally Basurto, Director, Government Affairs]

City Manager Erik Walsh introduced the Item and provided an overview of the development of the Legislative Program as well as the process and timeline. Director of Government Affairs (GA) Sally Basurto noted that there had been several retirements at the State Legislature that could

change the committee compositions.

Basurto explained that the City of San Antonio's 89th State Legislative Program outlined the community's policy priorities and legislative goals. She noted that the Program aimed to improve residents' quality of life through policy and funding. Basurto stated that the Government Affairs Department's role was to advocate on behalf of San Antonio residents to secure the authority and resources needed to deliver quality services. Basurto asserted that the City of San Antonio's legislative priorities could only be accomplished in collaboration and alignment with community partners and the State of Texas.

Support for the development of an East-West Corridor across the southern region of San Antonio providing access to major manufacturing employers was a significant initiative, according to Basurto.

Under the Protection of Community Interests pillar, Basurto stated that the City's overarching legislative priority was to preserve the voice of the community (as expressed through the City Charter and other voter-approved amendments) and maintain a fiscally sound and well managed organization to allow for continued high-quality services to our residents and local businesses through support for Local Governance. She added that the Program would support legislation that protected the municipal utility model for CPS Energy and the San Antonio Water System (SAWS).

The Protection of Community Interests pillar, according to Basurto, supported the goals of Military City USA which included support for increased funding for the Defense Economic Adjustment Assistance Grant (DEAAG) and other programs that add military value to missions in San Antonio and Texas, support basing actions that would increase the number of Department of Defense and Texas National Guard military missions in the San Antonio region. Basurto stated that the agenda would oppose legislation that undermined the City's ability to sustain and enhance Joint Base San Antonio's (JBSA) and the Texas National Guard's mission readiness to ensure the long-term protection of its military bases.

Basurto listed Community Development as another pillar with a goal to ensure that the City of San Antonio was prepared for growth in a way that was compatible with the community's vision. She noted that this vision included investments in a strong local economy, increasing housing stability for residents, and an educated and trained workforce. Basurto indicated that the Program would also support the continuation of local and State incentives to supplement local economic development strategies to recruit and retain employers and compete for major sporting events and conventions that grow the local and State economy and support additional funding for the arts and film industry, increased flexibility in grant programs, and protecting the current Texas Moving Image Industry Incentive Program (TMIIIP) guidelines.

Also included in the Community Development pillar was a goal of Housing Stability through legislation that helped local governments to increase affordability, quality, accessibility, and choice in housing and provided sustainable property tax relief to San Antonio residents, according to Basurto. She stated that workforce legislation that invested in educational and job placement programs and increased access to childcare to provide support for our growing workforce was also included in the Community Development agenda.

Under the Public Health and Safety pillar, Basurto stated that San Antonio's healthcare mission was to protect and improve the health of our community so that all people thrive in a healthy and safe environment. She noted that the strategic priority areas were access to care, nutrition and food insecurity, violence and crime prevention, health equity and social justice, and mental health. Basurto reported that this would support funding to expand San Antonio's psychiatric and behavioral health system and add facilities to provide additional mental health services to our community, legislation that improved access to healthcare services, additional funding for services and programs that provided food assistance, increased access to nutritious foods, and promoted food security.

Basurto stated that the Public Health and Safety agenda also supported improved State funding and access to comprehensive and timely mental health care in Texas and legislation that encouraged responsible pet ownership and improved the health, safety, and welfare of our residents and pets. She included violence prevention and efforts to prevent and mitigate domestic and targeted violence in order to ensure the safety and well-being of all citizens as well as responsible firearm safety practices and additional resources to help aid in the prevention of gun violence in our community.

Basurto stated that expanding infrastructure was needed to create a resilient future for San Antonio. She indicated that San Antonio's priorities were to make strategic investments that acknowledged the need for digital inclusion as a necessity in a rapidly changing society; create transportation infrastructure that incorporated safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists; and prepare for the impacts of extreme weather events and natural disasters.

Basurto noted that the City of San Antonio coordinated with local, State, and national partners in support of their Legislative Agendas that enhanced the health, safety, and vitality of the community, provided it did not conflict with the City's own Legislative Agenda. She mentioned tracking three Council Consideration Requests (CCR) that would need changes to State Law to move forward. These were CCR 2023- 0025 BYOB, Councilmember Pelaez, 2024-0014 Loose Dogs, Councilmember Alderete Gavito, and 2024-0024 BREATH, Councilmember Courage. Basurto closed her presentation by providing dates of interest and introducing staff and the City's Legislative Team.

City Manager Erik Walsh stated that the broad plan was to prepare for the start of the Legislative Session in November 2024 and would allow the City Council, IGR, and the staff to act in accordance with the Legislative Program. He noted that the highlighted East-West Corridor Initiative was crucial for growth in the southern sector. He added that CPS Energy was developing a policy regarding large power users.

City Manager Walsh noted that he had been discussing options for CCR 2024-0014 Comprehensive Measures for Loose and Dangerous Dogs with Councilmember Alderete Gavito and had considered whether non-responsible pet owners should be allowed to own animals which was a State issue.

Mayor Nirenberg and Councilmember Pelaez, Chair of the Intergovernmental Relations Committee recognized staff and the State and Federal advocates. Mayor Nirenberg supported the Legislative Agenda especially to protect the rights of municipalities. Councilmember Pelaez acknowledged the important work of the National League of Cities and commented that the broad

Legislative Agenda had been meticulously crafted and he encouraged his City Council colleagues to visit State lawmakers.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda offered to testify on issues at the State Legislature. She requested clarification on the East-West Corridor as she was a representative on the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and wanted to ensure coordination with the MPO and Port Authority. City Manager Walsh stated that there was a need for a major thoroughfare to facilitate the flow of materials and employees between IH 35 and IH 37 for the large manufacturers on the South Side of town which would need to be Federally funded. She recommended providing support for the Veteran's Affairs Department (VA). General Juan Ayala, Director of Military Affairs stated that the City could advocate for the VA to keep its employees and not outsource. Councilmember Cabello Havrda asked if there were any bills filed that threatened our municipal utilities, economic development, mental health, or the resiliency plans in general.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez supported the Legislative Agenda overall but recommended that the City address attacks on LGBTQIA+ and immigrant communities. He requested explicitly opposing legislation that discriminated based on race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, and gender identity not only the Non-discrimination Ordinance (NDO), however, staff told him there was a fear that specific language would inhibit the negotiating power of the City in other areas. He recommended including LGBTQIA+ organizations in the agenda as well as the LGBTQIA+ Chamber of Commerce in the SA to DC tour.

Councilmember Whyte recommended placing the Legislative Agenda online and including those we were advocating for or against on our site. Basurto stated that this would be difficult because of the quick turnaround and fast pace of the Legislature and offered to provide regular updates. City Manager Walsh expressed concern with the volume, however, he understood that Councilmember Whyte wanted transparency so he would explore the idea.

Councilmember Whyte highlighted that there was a 34.4% increase in criminal mischief and recommended strengthening State Laws regarding property crimes noting that many of the offenders did not have money. Basurto stated that there was an agreement that the Texas Penal Code already addressed this issue. Segovia stated that State Law set the maximum fine for these Class C misdemeanors.

Councilmember Whyte expressed concern about vape shops opening up near schools as included in Councilmember Courage's CCR. City Manager Walsh stated that the CCR needed to go through the committee and if it was finalized in time, could be included in the Legislative Agenda. Councilmember Whyte expressed concern that cities had been known to go too far which resulted in HB 2127 being enacted by the 88th State Legislature. Councilmember Whyte recommended nonpolitical advocacy.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito agreed that there needed to be a list of bills the City was tracking. She was happy to see that SA Digital Connects, gun violence, and property tax relief were included. The \$18 billion property tax relief last session included a raised homestead and other exemptions and set appraisal caps, according to Basurto. Councilmember Alderete Gavito supported holding negligent dog owners accountable. She recommended expansion of construction mitigation grants to the State or other resources to ease the burden of small businesses

and residents.

Councilmember Castillo recommended inclusion of Vision Zero principles into the design of the East-West Corridor that would be a TXDoT Roadway. Councilmember Castillo recommended opposing any bill that put our public schools at risk or removed rights from workers including the right to organize; and supporting Teacher's Unions and others. Councilmember Castillo supported the regulation of vaping stores near schools and was also concerned about vape shop advertising targeting youth.

Councilmember Castillo prioritized flood mitigation and funding for diabetes test strips and other medical assistance. She commented that if we wanted to keep incarcerating folks, a bigger jail would be needed; the jail impacted Council District 5 the most because of its current location.

Councilmember Courage commented that State Legislature decisions affected everyone in Texas and hoped they would stay open-minded to ensure that all Texans benefitted including those living in cities and protected classes. Councilmember Courage recommended that the City develop a position on education, healthcare, and energy. He noted that the State had \$30 billion left in their coffers that could have been used to fund public education since lack of education led to poverty, homelessness, and crime. He also suggested that healthcare was underfunded and noted that recently more children were removed from Medicaid because of Texas' refusal to expand Medicaid. Councilmember Courage supported the inclusion of stabilizing the energy grid and the development of sustainable energy. He suggested a review of data centers that drained energy but employed few people.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia supported the East-West Corridor and recommended engaging with the Kelly neighborhoods and Texas A&M-San Antonio. Councilmember Rocha Garcia noted that the Lieutenant Governor had promised to support economic development tied to the Alamo. She supported the focus on access to childcare, food insecurity, and property tax exemptions to assist long-time homeowners. She asked if lobbyists tracked bills daily but realized that bills changed quickly such as the Telecon AI system. Basurto stated that the Statewide tools were limited and the process was manual entry at the State level. Assistant City Manager Jeff Coyle stated that Telecon was a proprietary system that the City subscribed to. Councilmember Rocha Garcia supported adding the protected classes specifically to the agenda as proposed by Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez.

Councilmember Viagran noted that the November election could change the makeup of the State Legislature. She agreed that the East-West Corridor was a priority to keep the City and the State economically competitive. Councilmember Viagran cautioned that any dashboard put out by the City would be seen as partisan and recommended that the City link to other stakeholder's websites such as the San Antonio River Authority or Chambers of Commerce. She noted that the City was monitoring many bills but maybe not actively for all of them. Councilmember Viagran asked if Councilmembers could testify at the State Legislature. Segovia stated that if Councilmembers were testifying at the State Legislature as a Councilmember, they needed to support the City's Legislative Agenda.

Councilmember Viagran supported the inclusion of digital security and SA Digital Connect in the agenda. She also supported any legislation that created affordable housing and recommended including public transportation and other stakeholders as well as Vision Zero in the discussions

related to transit-oriented development on the East-West Corridor.

Councilmember Kaur recommended that the delegation pursue bills that the City supported last year but were not approved or were vetoed by the Governor. She recommended more support for education, housing, healthcare, nutrition, and mental health and asserted that when the State Legislature told women what they could not do with their bodies, it was political. Councilmember Kaur recommended increased penalties for taking advantage of houseless persons such as selling drugs to them. She suggested more support for small businesses including loan programs. Councilmember Kaur supported Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez request to spell out opposition to discrimination based on race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, and gender identity.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda suggested including Transit-Oriented Development. City Manager Walsh stated that there was a B Session scheduled for October 16, 2024. Coyle stated that every one of the classes listed was included in the Non-Discrimination Ordinance. Basurto stated that the current language would give us the ability to oppose anti-LGBTQIA+ legislation. Councilmember Cabello Havrda suggested spelling out support for LGBTQIA+ and recommended communication with other stakeholders such as the Chambers of Commerce.

Councilmember Pelaez clarified that positions on bills were not concrete until the final version of the bill so trying to keep up with bills and categorizing them in a dashboard was a challenge because the bills changed so quickly. Councilmember Pelaez suggested that transparency could be through the hosting of open conversations in the Intergovernmental Relations Committee meetings which were televised and posted online; Councilmembers could also post on their newsletters.

Councilmember Pelaez noted that the root work of politics was policy and everything the City Council discussed as policy was, by definition, political. He commented that everything that happened at the State legislative level affected San Antonio residents.

Councilmember Courage supported including child care as an important topic in the agenda.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez clarified that he was asking to include explicit language that we were going to oppose discrimination of protected classes and naming them. He stated that any advocacy or testimonials by him would include his role as a Councilmember.

Councilmember Whyte clarified that he did not mean politics but rather partisanship noting that streets and sidewalks were nonpartisan but issues such as reproductive health were partisan. He advocated for a dashboard so residents would know what they were paying for and recommended more trust and transparency.

Councilmember Castillo and Viagran supported the clear description of non-discrimination protected classes. Councilmember Viagran commented that it was the Councilmember's responsibility to let their community know where the City stood on an issue and did not support a dashboard.

Mayor Nirenberg stated that one of the goals was to have an effective Legislative Agenda that was a consensus document that would represent all of the residents of San Antonio. He mentioned that

large cities were targeted by the State Legislature and he understood there were differences of opinions but when advocating for a position on a bill, he recommended that Councilmembers stick to the consensus document.

Mayor Nirenberg agreed with Councilmember Courage that there were community crises and diminishing parity for public schools that were not handled by the State with their funding. He suggested that the City Council could discuss the issue of school vouchers and determine if this should be included in the Legislative Agenda. He saw no harm in defining the protected classes in the Legislative Agenda as they were already included within the Non-Discrimination Ordinance.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mayor Nirenberg recessed the meeting into Executive Session at 3:55 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 Nirenberg reconvened the meeting in Open Session at 4:43 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 4:43 p.m.

Approved

**Ron Nirenberg
Mayor**

**Debbie Racca-Sittre
City Clerk**