

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



**Meeting Minutes
City Council Special Meeting**

Council Briefing Room
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

Tuesday, June 18, 2024

2:00 PM

Council Briefing Room

The City Council convened a special meeting in the Council Briefing Room beginning at 2:00 PM. City Clerk Debbie Racca-Sittre took the Roll Call noting a quorum with the following Council Members present:

PRESENT: 8 – Kaur, McKee-Rodriguez, Rocha Garcia, Castillo, Cabello Havrda, Alderete Gavito, Courage, Whyte

ABSENT: 3 - Nirenberg, Viagran, Pelaez

ITEMS

1. Briefing on the release of a solicitation for multiple contracts (up to ten) with the San Antonio Metropolitan Health District to promote community capacity-building, health care navigation and reproductive and sexual healthcare services funded by the Reproductive Justice Fund for a total value of \$500,000 for a one-year term. [Erik Walsh, City Manager; Claude A. Jacob, Director, Health]

City Manager Erik Walsh introduced the Item and Local Public Health Authority Dr. Junda Woo

representing the San Antonio Metro Health District (Metro Health). Dr. Woo explained that there would be three funding focus areas: upstream, midstream, and downstream. She reported that upstream services funded at up to \$50,000 could include support for capacity building initiatives and shared storytelling by partners in the Health Equity Network such as food insecurity, housing insecurity, and access to respectful care.

Midstream activities funded at up to \$250,000 could include reproductive health-focused community health workers, care navigators, patient advocates, sexual health education for youths, more contraception providers in priority geographic areas, navigation to insurance and Texas programs, well-woman care, family planning, showcasing accessible, respectful providers of quality women's health care, and doula training scholarships, according to Dr. Woo. She noted that downstream needs funded at \$200,000 included home pregnancy tests, emergency contraception, transportation to prenatal care, subsidized doulas, Black maternal mental health care visits, telehealth visits for sexually transmitted illnesses (STI). STI home test kits, and transportation to abortion care.

Within the Request for Proposals (RFP), according to Dr. Woo, preference would be given to organizations that proposed to serve and empower those most affected by reproductive health disparities, provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services in priority geographic areas, including midstream/upstream approaches and could demonstrate an evidence base and Return on Investment (ROI). She stated that the scoring criteria included 30 points for Experience, Background and Qualifications, 30 points for Proposed Plan, 15 points for pricing, five points for Small Business Enterprises that acted as the Prime Contractor, five points for Minority or Women-Owned businesses, and 10 points for local businesses and five points for Veteran-Owned Small Businesses.

Dr. Woo stated that the RFP would be released on June 24, 2024, with responses due on August 9, 2024. She added that the evaluation would be completed in September 2024 and contracts would be taken to the City Council in February 2025 with services beginning in the spring of 2025.

DISCUSSION:

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez commented that contract start dates were not until spring 2025 and suggested that the timeline be moved up since the Budget was approved in fall 2023. City Manager Walsh explained that the timeline would allow for additional City Council feedback but could be accelerated depending on the feedback received. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked if there was funding in the Trial Budget for FY 2024 and FY 2025. City Manager Walsh stated that the funding was only in the FY 2024 Budget at the present time.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez suggested the Small Business Economic Development Advocacy (SBEDA) Program and Veteran-owned business points might be better served since most of the respondents would be non-profits. Small Business Manager Michael Sindon with the Economic Development Department stated that when solicitations were open to more than just non-profits, they recommended SBEDA points to ensure a level playing field for small businesses.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez recommended the inclusion of the upstream focus language in the RFP “a full range of family planning options without bias or coercion.”

Councilmember Whyte expressed concern about the Reproductive Justice Fund paying for abortions and opposed any taxpayer funding of out-of-state abortions. He recommended funding for sidewalks, streets, and homeless encampments instead asserting that San Antonians did not want to fund abortions. Councilmember Whyte stated that he fully supported women’s health.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda commented that this was a large step forward to break down barriers to ensure women had comprehensive healthcare and asserted that abortion was women’s healthcare. She supported all levels of approaches and noted that Texas ranked 49th out of 50 in women’s health and recommended that the funding be used to give women control of their bodies, health, and futures. Councilmember Cabello Havrda fully supported all healthcare options for women’s healthcare even if they had to travel out of state to obtain treatment. She asserted that San Antonians wanted access to healthcare, contraception, and other services.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda asked how many contracts would be awarded and when they would be awarded. Dr. Woo stated that Metro Health could fund up to 10 contracts depending on the strength of the submissions which were due August 9, 2024. Councilmember Cabello Havrda commented that the fund was a crucial resource for women of all incomes, races, and sexual orientations.

Councilmember Kaur supported funding for all levels of care with more money for Midstream and Downstream issues and stressed that the program was about women’s health and commented that access to abortion was healthcare. She mentioned the urgent need for services so she supported moving the timeline to begin contracts before the end of September 2024 so services could start in FY 2024 which is when the funds were allocated.

Councilmember Kaur expressed concern that the playing field needed to be leveled but wanted to ensure that a business not aligned with the goals of the program would receive SBEDA points and then we would focus on the wrong type of services. City Manager Walsh stated that SBEDA was included as there was not a clear understanding as to whether for-profit and non-profits would apply noting that the scoring process was segregated and the evaluation panel did not see the SBEDA points. Councilmember Kaur hoped the organizations that aligned best with the services needed would receive a higher score in the other areas to make up for the SBEDA points that a firm might receive if they offered different services or had less experience. She supported the inclusion of clear language in the RFP to ensure the City received the services we were looking for.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito looked forward to seeing the proposals that were received and asked what sort of community engagement would be conducted to see what services were important to residents. Dr. Woo explained that Metro Health provided the data surrounding the gaps in services and hoped that the respondents would provide their best program proposals. Councilmember Alderete Gavito expressed concern that some sexual health education would not be allowed under State Law and asked what types of providers could provide contraceptive services. Dr. Woo stated that voluntary education outside of the classroom was allowed by law and depending on the type of contraceptive services, would depend on who could provide the

services.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito supported more funding for downstream services and the staff's recommendation of providing 40% of funds for downstream services because other services were not provided to prevent the need for downstream services. She noted that the State of Texas was in a reproductive health deficit and 3,000 women traveled out of state this year to get an abortion. Councilmember Alderete Gavito supported programs and acceleration of the RFP.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia supported adding the "full range of family planning options without coercion" language into the RFP. She noted that her summer youth interns both in high school and at the college level had stated that they had not received any sex education since middle school so there was a deficit. Councilmember Rocha Garcia supported strengthening upstream services including sex education for youth, family planning, contraceptive services, and quality women's healthcare in underserved areas.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia suggested that an online marketing campaign would be a great use of a small amount of funds. Councilmember Rocha Garcia supported maternal mental healthcare visits, telehealth visits, and home tests for STIs. Councilmember Rocha Garcia supported culturally and linguistically appropriate services and appreciated support for doulas. She asked what type of businesses might apply for these services as she was focused on non-profits. Dr. Woo stated that healthcare providers might be a for-profit business.

Councilmember Castillo expressed concern with the slow roll out of the RFP noting that this was initiated and proposed by non-profit organizations and residents that asked for this fund which was appropriated in September 2023. She noted that 70% supported abortion access and she stated that the New York Times had reported that 14,000 women had crossed the border seeking an abortion last year. Councilmember Castillo supported sexual health education for youth and supported ensuring that the RFP included the "full range of family planning options without coercion" language.

Councilmember Castillo noted there were record increases in teen pregnancy and many residents were traveling to New Mexico to access abortion and related reproductive healthcare. She also noted the high uninsured rates in San Antonio and encouraged the continuation of the fund in FY 2025.

Councilmember Pelaez commented that it was difficult to decide to join a fight and, in this instance, he understood the desire to use money to provide transportation to women for out-of-state abortions. While he agreed that abortion was healthcare, he expressed concern about the legal ramifications. He noted that women were treated like children and this had more impact on low-income and women of color. He thought 78% of women would agree that abortion was healthcare but he did not think they would agree that city taxpayer money should be used for out-of-state travel or that it was the City's role to intervene in this issue.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez stated that \$50,000 was set aside for capacity building and other upstream services with \$250,000 for midstream services, and another \$200,000 for the downstream services, which travel for out-of-state abortions was only one small piece. He

reminded his colleagues that the Reproductive Justice Fund was requested by members of the community, so he disagreed that no one was asking for this program. He noted that the City was asked often to stay out of private business, domestic violence, gun violence, and other quality of life issues but asserted that the City intervened to fill gaps where needed. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez urged that the program was not only about abortion and should not be characterized as a singular issue by City Council and the press.

Councilmember Whyte countered that the Reproductive Justice Fund was only about abortion, and it was merely a round end run around State Law. He insisted that women wanting access to abortion was not the same thing as whether the City should fund transportation to send folks out-of-state for an abortion.

Mayor Pro-Tempore Courage noted that the name of the fund “Reproductive Justice Fund” and noted the staff proposal listed healthcare needs at each level to allow non-profits and businesses to respond to and nothing on the list was guaranteed. He commented that 60% of the funding was in upstream and midstream services and only the downstream included access to abortion travel. He clarified that the RFP was to find partners to offer services.

Mayor Pro-Tempore Courage mentioned that some of the best treatments were out of state for cancer or heart surgery and the City would not typically pay for their travel. He stated that the City’s role was to look at zoning and placement of businesses including where a women’s clinic might be located but asserted that it was outside of the City’s role to transport residents out-of-state to seek medical treatment.

Dr. Claude Jacob stated that staff would work toward expediting the process timeline and thanked the City Council for their feedback. City Manager Walsh stated that staff would review the comments and make updates to the RFP and timeline.

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 3:08 p.m.

Approved

**Ron Nirenberg
Mayor**

**Debbie Racca-Sittre
City Clerk**