

**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, February 5, 2025

2:00 PM

Council Briefing Room

The City Council convened a B Session 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: 11 – Nirenberg, Kaur, McKee-Rodriguez, Viagran, Rocha Garcia, Castillo, Cabello Havrda, Alderete Gavito, Pelaez, Courage, Whyte

ABSENT: None

1. Federal Overview and proposed Federal Legislative Program. [Jeff Coyle, Assistant City Manager; Sally Basurto, Director, Government Affairs]

City Manager Erik Walsh introduced the Item and Sally Basurto, Director of Government Affairs (GA), who introduced the Akin Gump and the Serna & Serna Federal Consulting Team. Basurto stated that the 119th Congress Federal Legislative Program was developed over multiple months by staff, the Consulting Team, and the Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) Council Committee.

Basurto listed the seven pillars of the Legislative Program. She noted that the Economic and Community Development Pillar had the goals of: supporting legislation and funding that expanded the availability of affordable housing through production incentives, tax credits, and innovative programs to address the shortage and high cost of housing; supporting increased funding and expansion of housing and community development programs, such as the Home Investment Partnership Program (HOME), Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), and programs that would enhance the community's Continuum of Care to assist people experiencing and at risk of homelessness; and supporting the extension and improvements to the Opportunity Zone Program to boost private investments in affordable housing.

Basurto stated that the Program supported the protection of tax-exempt municipal bonds as a critical tool to finance infrastructure projects, as well as funding and administrative actions to assist in the development and implementation of economic development and tourism initiatives in the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods, as a part of the Economic Development Pillar. She noted that this included downtown Federal building opportunities. Basurto indicated that the Military Pillar had a goal to sustain and enhance Joint Base San Antonio's (JBSA) mission readiness, and ensure the long-term protection of the region's military bases by helping preserve, protect, and grow military missions.

Basurto reported that the Public Safety and Homeland Security Pillar Initiatives included: expanded funding dedicated to supporting public safety, lowering crime, and enhancing transparency, engagement and accountability through traditional and emerging grant programs, domestic violence prevention, anti-trafficking/antimugging programs, office training and equipment programs; programs and increased funding to promote a multijurisdictional, multi-disciplinary approach to regional prevention, preparedness, response, recovery, and resiliency from a terrorist attack, cyber-attack, or natural disaster, such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMAs) Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI), Regional Catastrophic Planning Grant Program (RCPGP), the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program, and the State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program, and full reimbursement of funds owed to the City under FEMA programs, according to Basurto.

Basurto spoke positively about infrastructure resiliency and transportation opportunities within the Federal Legislative Program including advocating for the receipt of Federal funding to expand and improve multi-modal transportation, transit, aviation, and other infrastructure necessary to meet San Antonio's economic and population growth; streamlining of Federal policies and procedures to expedite the development and construction of local infrastructure projects; programs to increase San Antonio's resiliency and prepare for and mitigate the effects of climate change, including extreme heat events and flooding; preservation and revitalization of community spaces and recreational facilities; and funding or agency rules to increase access to fast, reliable, and affordable internet for all San Antonians.

Basurto stated that the Workforce Development Pillar supported: funding for workforce, education and training programs, including apprenticeship programs, for adults and youth transitioning to the workforce; and the creation and expansion of programs that provided affordable, high-quality, childcare and education to prepare children for success and allow parents to participate in the workforce more easily.

The Public Health and Human Services Pillar, according to Basurto, included supporting: funding and programs that increased access to healthy food and helped reduce food insecurity, universal access to healthcare and increased public health funding to continue and expand programs that addressed San Antonio's most critical health challenges, and funding for local programs that addressed domestic violence through prevention and intervention.

Basurto stated that the Pillar of Advancement of Community Interests included supporting Federal regulations and legislation, which would clearly benefit the City and its residents, and opposing any regulations and legislation that would clearly be adverse to the City's and residents' interests. Additionally, Basurto noted that this pillar included protection of civil rights and Federal nondiscrimination statutes, and regulations based on race, color, religion, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, veteran status, age, or national origin.

Basurto introduced the Director of the Office of Management & Budget (OMB), Justina Tate, who presented a summary of Federal funding in the City's 2025 Adopted Budget. Tate reported that \$326.8 million in Federal grant funds was included in the City's \$3.9 billion Adopted Budget, which was 8.3% of the total FY 2025 Adopted Budget, including funding for 758 positions.

Mayor Pro Tem Kaur recessed the meeting at 2:30 p.m. due to student protests outside. Mayor Nirenberg reconvened the meeting at 2:53 p.m. and asked Tate to resume her presentation.

Tate reported that the majority of the Federal funding was for child and youth services (48.9%), with childcare services, and childcare quality initiatives totaling \$116.9 million to serve over 21,000 children under the age of 13 every year and to promote certification of childcare providers as Texas Rising Star. She stated that the Early Head Start and Head Start Grants were \$34.9 million to provide early childhood learning and development, health, and family well-being to 360 children ages 6 months to 3 years, and 2,970 children ages 3 to 5 years annually. According to Tate, the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Grant was \$7.3 million and supported 35,000 women, infants and/or children less than 5 years, and promoting breastfeeding, nutrition, and nutrition education. Finally, \$419,000 was allocated for summer youth programming and community centers to serve over 3,200 youth ages 6 to 17 years old in summer youth programs and provided extended hours at community centers in the summer.

According to Tate, \$73.2 million in Federal funding was allocated to the Airport System, which was 22% of all Federal funding. She reported that funding for the Airport Improvement Program was \$24.3 million and the Airport Terminal Program, including the Terminal A Ground Loading Facility, and the Terminal Development Program, was funded for \$39.4 million. Tate indicated that funding for the Airfield Safety Enhancements & Improvements Program was \$9.5 million.

Tate mentioned that public health grants were funded for \$30.8 million to provide immunizations and vaccinations for children and adults, infectious disease prevention and control, ending the HIV epidemic and stigma, control and prevention of the spread of communicable diseases, chronic disease prevention programming and education, programs to improve birth and perinatal outcomes, dental services for eligible individuals ages 0-21, programs to strengthen public health capabilities and workforce development, and strategies to reduce lead hazards in homes.

The Housing and Homelessness Budget, according to Tate, included \$27.2 million to provide

affordable housing for low-income households, support the Fair Housing Program, connect eligible homeowners to services to assist in rectifying code violations, provide housing opportunities for persons living with AIDS, fund housing stabilization, support homeless shelter operations and supportive services for homeless, and fund homeless outreach services.

Tate stated that Federal grants for public safety and emergency preparedness included partial funding for 100 police officers, programs to reduce drug trafficking in the San Antonio area, traffic enforcement and educational activities, public safety equipment, and emergency preparedness activities.

Tate introduced Congressman Lamar Smith and Congressman Filemón Vela with The Akin Team. Vela stated that they were currently tracking 71 new Presidential Executive Orders across many disciplines. He noted that the Executive Order process was highly fluid, with orders and actions subject to being held up by judges and may require reports to be conducted by agencies before they could be implemented.

Smith thanked the GA staff, Mayor, and City Council for being great partners. He noted that every Executive Order would likely be challenged in court. Smith listed seven Executive Orders that could impact the City, including those related to immigration, agency funding pauses, and DEI recissions.

Smith stated that the airport, a direct flight from SAT to Reagan National Airport in Washington D.C., and the sale of the Federal courthouse in San Antonio were major issues being discussed and managed by The Akin Team. Smith introduced Walter Serna who indicated that his role was to work with the local delegation in Washington, D.C.

City Manager Walsh stated that an Internal Review Committee (IRC) had been formed to review Executive Orders and other directives/guidance, provide updates to the Mayor and City Council of the change in Federal policy for orders relevant to the City. He noted that the IRC would analyze and report on the impact to the City. City Manager Walsh indicated that once the impact was determined, the City Manager would provide a plan for public discussion or a potential executive session with City Council (e.g., updates on related litigation) and a plan for communication with our community stakeholders and residents, if necessary. He reported that the IRC was comprised of Deputy City Manager Maria Villagomez, First Assistant City Attorney Liz Provencio, Director of OMB Justina Tate, and Deputy Chief Financial Officer Troy Elliott.

DISCUSSION:

Mayor Nirenberg thanked The Akin Team for their bipartisan approach. He suggested that many of the Executive Orders appeared to be either illegal or unconstitutional, and recommended to continue the delivery of services and programs until the litigation was completed and the City received definitive direction that it would be required to change its course.

Councilmember Pelaez, who was Chair of the IGR, commented that there were protests occurring outside related to some of the Executive Orders. He noted that the City's efforts toward affordable housing and public health might be met with resistance, and he urged the City Council to keep pushing its policies. Councilmember Pelaez noted that a local developer had confirmed

that the first \$25,000 of each home was related to government regulations so he hoped that the President's promise to make housing more affordable would be kept. He noted that the President's recent tariffs on China, Mexico, and Canada, which was where the United States received most of its building supplies, simply hurt people and made building more expensive. Councilmember Pelaez expressed concern with previous slashes to fair housing, which caused affordable housing projects to be placed on hold during the previous administration of President Trump. Councilmember Pelaez hoped for Federal support of affordable housing and suggested that the President's promise to keep affordable housing and poor people out of neighborhoods was an affront to people of color. He was cautiously optimistic with the help from the Legislative Team.

Mayor Nirenberg noted that it was not a coincidence that there was a protest outside during this briefing, which was a high school student walkout demonstrating their opposition to the deportation and anti-transgender Executive Orders.

Councilmember Castillo noted that she had presented at Fox Tech High School and students were afraid of being deported and many had become single-parent households due to one parent being deported. She asked if funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) was expected to be slashed. Basurto noted that in the past, President Trump had recommended cutting HUD funding, but these were rejected by Congress, and this was important. Councilmember Castillo noted that affordable housing projects had been killed at all levels including at the local level.

Councilmember Castillo looked forward to the remaining infrastructure resiliency grants such as the BRIC Grant for flooding. Councilmember Castillo suggested the creation of jobs including construction jobs but suggested creating buffer zones for existing communities to prevent displacement. Councilmember Castillo wanted to advocate for San Antonio workers and construction workers and opposed any bills that would roll back Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and other worker protections.

Councilmember Castillo appreciated the dashboard tracking the bills and Executive Orders and supported the seven pillars. She recommended more investment in our community for its own interest and challenging any bills that attacked our residents, immigrants, and LGBTQ communities.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda noted that the Executive Orders seemed to be intentionally creating chaos and San Antonio was not immune to those orders. She stated that unpredictable immigration raids destabilized our community. Councilmember Cabello Havrda expressed concern that housing grants were under attack as housing supply was not meeting the demand; wages were low and interest rates were high keeping housing unaffordable. She stated that the priorities needed to be set in a transparent manner and action was needed to create a stable future for San Antonians. She wanted to ensure that the City of San Antonio received its payment from the Federal government for operation of the Migrant Resource Center (MRC).

Councilmember Alderete Gavito commented that the City of San Antonio needed to facilitate a good working relationship with State and Federal counterparts despite political differences. She noted that the homeless point-in-time count was conducted last week, and she asked the Director of the Department of Human Services (DHS), Melody Woosley, if there was a risk of losing Federal

grants for homelessness.

Woosley stated that there had been no news either way on HUD Grants but the City received an award letter yesterday for Head Start, which was a Federally-funded early childhood education program. She noted that most funding at DHS for homelessness was from the City's General Fund.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito asked about the FEMA Firefighter grant. Basurto stated that the competitive grant had been regularly funded in the past but there were many applications for equipment nationwide; however, the City would continue to apply for these grants. Councilmember Alderete Gavito noted a new cyber security grant and recommended that the City pursue this grant opportunity when available.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito supported the Federal grant for Woodlawn Lake Park and wanted to ensure that the funding was secured. She asked about reimbursement for the MRC and how long we might have to wait. Villagomez explained that the Federal reimbursements from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) historically could take years, but she noted that staff was in constant communication with FEMA and the State of Texas.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia thanked the team for their work and focused on the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) and affordable housing, noting that a few months ago the City Council voted against affordable housing in San Antonio and she urged the City Council to consider an uncertain future and how these situations could adversely impact our community. She suggested that there might be the potential to create a new Opportunity Zone such as one for healthcare.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked how the City could navigate around the potential requirement for a 2/3 vote to approve bonds. City Manager Walsh clarified that the scenario was related to the Houston Flood Control District which could be a learning opportunity for us. Councilmember Rocha Garcia stated that she was on the National League of Cities' (NLC) Finance Committee and the NLC was advocating for the protection of municipal bonds noting that many small businesses relied on those bonds for work.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked if the City should take its SA to DC trip in March 2025 if the Trump Administration did not have its cabinet members in place. Basurto indicated that they should be in place. Vela mentioned that the SA to DC trip was worthwhile to keep constant contact at the Federal level no matter where the process might be. Coyle stated that the local Chambers of Commerce largely set the agenda and coordinated the issues to be discussed and they were hosting planning meetings that the Councilmembers should attend based on the issues.

Councilmember Whyte suggested that the doom and gloom about the Federal actions needed to stop since more Americans voted for President Trump than the alternative even in Bexar County where 45% voted for his administration. He asserted that the President was doing exactly what residents wanted and we needed to support our President and get along with other jurisdictions such as the Federal government and do things to benefit the citizens of the City of San Antonio. Councilmember Whyte commented that it would be foolish to publicly criticize the administration and then expect to get grant money like in the past. He noted the recent Department of

Transportation (DOT) order that listed five criteria to determine who should receive funding and one criterion was compliance with the Federal government on immigration and other issues. Councilmember Whyte recommended being smarter and strategic in dealing with the new administration to get what we needed for our residents. Mayor Nirenberg asked the Councilmember to keep his comments germane to the Item.

Councilmember Whyte suggested that there was a good possibility that some of the City's Federal funds could be frozen or taken away and recommended including clauses in our contracts that if grant funds were eliminated, the City would be protected. City Attorney Andy Segovia stated that most contracts were contingent upon the City Council approving the budget and funding being available. Councilmember Whyte recommended potentially scaling back on those programs that relied on Federal funds to make our City less vulnerable.

City Manager Walsh clarified that nothing had changed so far, and it was critical to keep abreast of changes as they occurred, however, he noted that we had signed agreements with the Federal Government and we needed to administer those as awarded until told otherwise in order to be compliant.

Councilmember Whyte suggested the restructuring of underperforming programs to improve efficiency. City Manager Walsh noted that inefficient programs typically got defunded in the past for future years.

Councilmember Viagran mentioned that 5 or 10 years ago, high school students would not have marched; today they protested because they remember what happened the last time President Trump was in office. She stated that the issue was not immigration but was discrimination against brown people. Councilmember Viagran noted that City Council represented a diverse constituency because of the years of work in equity. She asserted that protecting the Mexican American population that lived in San Antonio was important. Mayor Nirenberg asked the Councilmember to keep her comments germane to the Item.

Councilmember Viagran suggested that the Executive Orders regarding tariffs against Mexico and immigration directly impacted the City. Basurto noted that the tariff order was recent, and she would need more time to analyze the impact. Councilmember Viagran recommended that the City be prepared to lose Federal funding and expressed concern with the loss of workers due to tariffs and deportations which could negatively impact our small businesses. Councilmember Viagran feared that housing costs would go up or building would slow because of the labor force self-deporting. She recommended a convening with NLC and HEB Grocery before the SA to DC trip.

Councilmember Kaur commented on the student protestors and wanted to frame the impact of policies on our youth. She noted that students were concerned about their rights such as LGBTQ rights and our job was to protect them. Councilmember Kaur asked if the return-to-work order impacted City employees and whether Metro Health was impacted due to the Centers for Disease Control's (CDC) information freeze and the World Health Organization (WHO) divestment. City Manager Walsh noted that Return-to-Work was only for Federal employees. Claude Jacob indicated that Metro Health was keeping abreast of issues as much as possible.

Councilmember Kaur supported more funding for affordable and veteran housing and Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) funding. Councilmember Kaur asked what it meant to have a paused Executive Order. Provencio explained that the Akin tracker followed rescissions and litigation or other actions affecting the status of an Executive Order.

Councilmember Kaur asked of the backup plan for funding if an Executive Order impacted City programs. City Manager Walsh stated that to date, there had been no changes to funding allocations. He mentioned that in the case of Aviation funding, priorities would be adjusted and funded through the Aviation Budget. City Manager Walsh noted that it could be a different case for programs such as Head Start. Department of Human Services Director Melody Woosley stated that all funding for the Head Start Program was Federal and that it would greatly impact programming such as childcare vouchers and staffing would probably cost too much money for the City to fund. Councilmember Kaur asked if the Municipal Solar Program would be impacted. City Manager Walsh noted that there was an element of that program tied to tax credits that could be impacted and he directed staff to look into potential impacts. Councilmember Kaur recommended that the City adopt a statement of values.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez commented that the student protests were germane to the conversation as youth were hurt by words and actions of political leaders including committing suicide if they did not feel supported including standing with immigrants and LGBTQ students or not militarizing schools. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez recommended a resolution to focus on the safety and well-being of our community and we should not leave or sacrifice immigrant families to build relationships with President Trump. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez expressed concern with using limited resources to carry out President Trump's agenda rather than our own.

Councilmember Courage recommended listening to constituents and providing leadership that they wanted. He expressed concern that the restructuring of Federal agencies could mean a reduction of funding for current programs, however, he noted that it was up to Congress to determine funding and recommended that the City Council talk to its legislators. Councilmember Courage noted that during an administration change, the Federal agency leadership might not know what they could do so the elected officials were key. Councilmember Courage recommended ensuring programs that benefitted our community continued to be funded.

Councilmember Pelaez commented that stating that a battered woman should just get along with an abuser was not acceptable and recommended supporting our residents' needs noting that the Trump Administration had threatened to cut off funding for valuable programs such as Rape Crisis and the Food Bank and this was not acceptable. Councilmember Pelaez noted that the Legislative Agenda was not a novel document and, in the past, protecting vulnerable San Antonians was in keeping with past agendas, which all had been documented publicly.

Councilmember Whyte disputed comparing the new administration with domestic abuse when the policies were to spend money more wisely and reduce illegal immigration. He recommended productive discussion, noting that it was unknown who the 11 members would be on City Council in the next four-year term and encouraged everyone to work with the Federal Government.

Mayor Nirenberg suggested that there was a lot of work ahead and recommended looking at actions rather than theatrics, and to support all residents regardless of their status, race, ethnicity,

income, or orientation.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mayor Pro Tem Kaur recessed the meeting into Executive Session at 2:30 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).
- F. Deliberate the 2024 evaluation for the City Clerk and Presiding Municipal Judge and any related legal issues pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 551.074 (personnel matters) and Texas Government Code Section 551.071 (consultation with attorney).

Mayor Nirenberg reconvened the meeting in Open Session at 2:53 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 4:40 p.m.

Approved

**Ron Nirenberg
Mayor**

**Debbie Racca-Sittre
City Clerk**