

**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, August 14, 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, Pelaez, Courage, Whyte

**ABSENT: 1** - Alderete Gavito

**ITEMS**

1. Briefing on a proposed new downtown minor league baseball stadium and surrounding private development project. [Erik Walsh, City Manager; Ben Gorzell Jr., Chief Financial Officer]

City Manager Erik Walsh introduced the Item stating that the San Antonio Missions were a AA minor league professional baseball club and had been playing at the Nelson Wolff Stadium since

1994. He noted that in 2022, the team was acquired by new local owners called Designated Bidders comprised of Bruce Hill, Randy Smith, Graham Weston, Peter Holt, David Robinson, Manu Ginobili, Reid Ryan, Don Sanders, Henry Cisneros, Hope Andrade, Berto Guerra, Max Navarro, Bob Cohen, and Pete Cortez.

City Manager Walsh stated that Major League Baseball (MLB) notified the owner that Nelson Wolff Stadium did not meet the minimum requirements to keep the team in the league and the City had been in discussion with the owners for the past several months regarding building a new stadium downtown. City Manager Walsh reported that in July 2024, the Mayor and the County Judge signed a non-binding letter of intent to build the new stadium. He added that after discussion with the ownership group, the proposed concept met the requirements of the MLB.

Bruce Hill, SA Missions representative, stated that the vision was to build a best-in-class Ballpark that paid for itself and did not require any new or increased City or County taxes. He stated that the Missions had a 136-year legacy.

Randy Smith, of Weston Urban Development Group, stated that the vision was far greater than weekly Missions games suggesting that the Ballpark would be an asset for the entire community. He reiterated that no General Funds would be used to pay for the Ballpark and Weston Urban committed to \$300 million of additional surrounding development to enhance the area and provide housing, retail, and other opportunities.

Reed Ryan provided his biography as a baseball expert, board member, owner, manager, player, and son of famed Major League Baseball player Nolan Ryan. Ryan explained the difference between AA and AAA.

Hope Andrade, former Texas Secretary of State, stated that the plan had been carefully crafted by the owners and City management including Erik Walsh, City Manager, and Ben Gorzell, Chief Financial Officer. Andrade noted that the team was managed by absentee ownership and the stadium had the lowest rating in the league when the new owners took over. The world-class stadium would allow the Missions Team to remain in San Antonio and be an asset and community venue for residents in the northwest portion of downtown.

Gorzell provided the framework for the proposed Ballpark downtown. He stated that the Team was proposing to construct a new downtown minor league Ballpark with approximately 4,500 fixed seats with a total capacity of approximately 7,500 people. Gorzell noted that the estimated cost was approximately \$160 Million inclusive of land. Payments would primarily be paid for from Team equity, Team revenue, and tax assessment revenues from new taxable development. He indicated that new private development (hospitality and multi-family) was anticipated to be constructed in four phases through 2031 and had a projected taxable value of approximately \$1 billion. The Ballpark completion was expected in time for opening day in April 2028, according to Gorzell.

Gorzell stated that the City and County would create the San Pedro Creek Development Authority to own the Ballpark. He noted that the proposed Ballpark would be located in the Houston Street Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ). Gorzell reported that funding of approximately \$160 million for the Ballpark was expected to include: Team Equity Contribution of

\$34 Million, Bonds to be issued by the Authority with a pledge of revenue from the Houston Street TIRZ that generated proceeds of approximately \$126 Million for the Project. He added that the Team was responsible for construction overruns or costs that exceeded the Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP).

Bond Financing would include Tax-Exempt and Taxable Bonds to be issued by the Authority with a pledge of Houston Street TIRZ Bonds which would be repaid by: Team revenue, \$1 million Annual Lease Payment, and a \$2 Ticket Fee, according to Gorzell. He stated that the guaranteed City and County property tax increment from Phase 1 and 2 of new development included a guaranteed assessment from the Municipal Management Districts (MMD) created to capture New Development, and existing City and County Houston Street TIRZ capacity.

Gorzell stated that the preliminary Ballpark funding breakout included approximately 86% of funding from: Team Equity Contribution, Team Revenues, guaranteed City and County property tax increment from Phase 1 and 2 of new development, and guaranteed MMD Assessment from Phases 1 and 2 of the new development. He noted that approximately 14% of funding from existing City and County Houston Street TIRZ increment shared equally between the City and the County and assumed Phase 1 and 2 values did not exceed projections and no additional new development would be constructed (i.e. Phase 3 and 4). Gorzell added that there would be a revenue guarantee for Phase 1 and 2 that covered the projected property tax increment and assessment revenues to be generated from Phases 1 & 2 of new development.

Additionally, the Team would provide a Two-Year Rolling Line of Credit valued based on projected risk over the upcoming two-year period and a subset of team owners would provide an additional line of credit, according to Gorzell. The Modified Force Majeure Provision would allow for guaranteed payments (for payments caused by events out of a developer's control) to be repaid if revenues from new development exceeded net debt service requirements.

Gorzell proposed that the Team would contribute \$250,000 annually and the City would contribute \$500,000 annually (funded from the Houston Street TIRZ) for the Ballpark Maintenance & Capital Improvement Fund. He noted that the Traffic, Security, and Cleanliness Plan would be a collaboration between the City and the Team for the areas around the Ballpark for game and event days.

Gorzell explained that the City Council created Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones (TIRZ) for base tax values within a designated geographic boundary. He indicated that only incremental increases in tax revenue from the taxable properties within the designated boundary were captured for that specific TIRZ. Gorzell stated that these funds must be used for projects within the designated boundary. He noted that the Houston Street TIRZ was comprised of primarily hotel, commercial office, and residential properties. Gorzell added that the majority of property tax increment to support the Ballpark Project was guaranteed and generated from new development resulting from the Ballpark.

Gorzell stated that the proposed MMD and its boundary was planned to be created through the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality with consent by City Council. He noted that property owners within the designated boundary would pay an assessment in addition to their property taxes and assessment funds would be used to support services or projects within the

boundary. Gorzell stated that the proposed MMD for the Ballpark Project geographic boundary was limited to the Ballpark and development Phases 1-4 and the MMD assessment was expected to support the debt for the Ballpark Project. He provided a map of the Houston Street TIRZ which would be modified to transfer some parcels from Westside TIRZ into Houston Street TIRZ for this project.

Gorzell stated that Weston Urban Development currently owned the Soap Factory Apartments and had developed a Resident Displacement Plan. He reported that within the plan, tenants impacted by Phase I will be offered the opportunity to relocate to other Soap Factory Units. Gorzell indicated that tenants impacted by Phase II would be offered the opportunity to relocate to other Soap Factory Units or the Continental Block Development on West Commerce which had 145 units reserved for residents at 60% to 80% Area Median Income (AMI) subject to availability. He noted that for those tenants that did not wish to move to the Continental Block or tenants that were below 60% AMI, housing navigation would be provided to help the individual identify housing that would be affordable for their income level and accommodated their needs.

Gorzell stated that Community Benefits proposed by the Team included public green space near the Ballpark, the development of a youth program to include the number of free tickets to disadvantaged youth and youth groups, teams, etc. He noted that the City and County would have access to the facility for five days per year so long as those did not conflict with other events. Gorzell stated that the City, County and Team were exploring electronic advertising opportunities (public service announcements) and other opportunities for Team announcements. He added that the Team had created the 1888 Baseball Foundation which would contribute at least \$200,000 annually to support local initiatives regarding children and homeless Veterans.

Gorzell stated that the Team also proposed a program for the San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD) which could include internships, access to the facility, and stakeholder days. The Team would ensure that all full-time and part-time positions would be paid at the City's minimum entry wage (\$18 per hour) and they would make an effort to hire Veterans for game day operations. He noted that Local Participation and the Small Business Economic Development Advocacy (SBEDA) Plan for the project required primary vendors, if not located in Bexar County, for design/engineering and construction to be encouraged to joint venture with a local partner and primary vendors would also provide outreach plans for identifying local, small, minority, Veteran, and women-owned subcontractors. Gorzell mentioned that construction packages would be assigned goals for the SBEDA subcontractors.

Gorzell suggested that the existing Nelson Wolff Stadium site was an excellent opportunity for redevelopment and the City planned to develop a concept plan for the redevelopment of the site based upon the needs of the surrounding community. Currently, the City-owned the Ballpark site plus the majority of property around the Ballpark to include the park, open space, and the recreation center reflected in a map shown by Gorzell.

Gorzell reported that the Mayor and County Judge executed a Letter of Intent to MLB on July 26, 2024. He noted that a Term Sheet approval was tentatively scheduled for City Council consideration on August 29, 2024. Upon approval, the next steps, according to Gorzell, would be to create a San Pedro Creek Development Authority, adjust the boundary of the Houston Street TIRZ for new development parcels currently in the Westside TIRZ and extend the term of the Houston

Street TIRZ. Additionally, the City would need to increase the City participation rate from 90% to 100% and extend the term for the Westside TIRZ, according to Gorzell.

Additionally, Gorzell noted the need to create the MMD and recommended expansion of the Downtown Public Improvement District (PID). He added that the City would need to negotiate and develop other Development Agreements such as the Team Lease, Economic Development Agreement, Developer Agreement, Bond Indenture, other financing documents, and the TIRZ Funding Agreement.

Mayor Nirenberg thanked staff and the Designated Bidders Team for creating this vision and making this come to fruition for our community. He noted that the local ownership was a significant step in the creation of a great public gathering point downtown. Mayor Nirenberg stated that the framework of the deal met the needs of the community as it did not cost taxpayer money but included a large investment for the future of our residents.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia compared this opportunity to the El Paso Chihuahuas Baseball Team and recommended re-branding to get more residents to attend Missions games. She questioned whether tickets and concessions would be affordable to residents. Ryan noted that the Missions team was the oldest in Texas and had been around since 1888 which was only possible by making the games and amenities affordable to families, both residents and visitors. Councilmember Rocha Garcia recommended that the stadium include environmentally sustainable features, as well as shade.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia commented that downtown Tuesday free parking was suspended on Majestic Theater show nights and requested a review of that practice for affordability, however, she was pleased that Bexar County was planning to create more downtown parking. Randy Smith stated that there were already garages nearby in addition to the new garage so there would be ample parking. Councilmember Rocha Garcia recognized that VIA Metropolitan Transit had proposed a link and recommended a local electric vehicle runner. She requested a traffic safety plan.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked what would happen to the Ballpark after its useful life which was generally about 20 years and expressed concern that we would have another old facility in disrepair that could not be used for its intended purpose. Smith stated that it was important to invest in the maintenance fund to keep it best in class for a longer period.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda supported the plan as it was good for downtown and the City as a whole with the thoughtful financing plan that did not impact taxation of residents. She noted that Wolff stadium was not up to date for minor league baseball but mentioned that there had been promises of economic development, jobs, and prosperity and that never happened for Wolff Stadium or the Edgewood neighborhood when it was built in 1994. She mentioned that this project was laying the foundation for economic development and not just empty promises and looked forward to not only the new development for downtown, but also for the redevelopment of Wolff Stadium.

Councilmember Viagran commented that baseball was the sport of the Native American culture and was a part of the identity of San Antonio. She was happy that the new owners were local

and included baseball industry experts. Councilmember Viagran expressed concern with parking logistics and increased traffic, especially for days when there were events at the ballfield, Alamodome, Lila Cockrell Theater, and other downtown facilities all at the same time. Councilmember Viagran wanted to ensure that the facility included public art, promoted other components of the City and supported the 1888 Society and other community investment.

Councilmember Whyte commented that stadiums could do much for a community if they were done the right way, adding that this was a sound plan, and the Team was comprised for excellent partners. He reported that residents were consistently asking who would pay for a new baseball stadium noting the high cost of groceries and fuel, therefore, he supported the financing plan since the money would come from the Team and tax revenues only from businesses surrounding the stadium.

Councilmember Whyte stated that affordable family entertainment was one of the greatest benefits of the project but added that the City needed to invest in streets and other basic services. He commented that San Antonio youth often left our community for more exciting communities, suggesting that these were the types of amenities that could keep our talent here.

Councilmember Courage hoped the project would be a great success since he was a lover of baseball. Generally, he expected that the owners of the Team should build their stadium and was skeptical with the plan initially, however, this proposal included growth paying for the Ballpark and everything else with no increase in taxes to our residents. Councilmember Courage was pleased that individual owners were backing the financing plan in case future growth did not come to fruition. He was worried about the arrangement with the SAISD since they were going through financial difficulties. He expressed concern with the loss of property to the Westside TIRZ, parking, infrastructure, and traffic plans. He asked if any existing property owners outside of the Ballpark would have to pay more taxes as a result of the MMD. Gorzell confirmed that the MMD would only include development properties.

Councilmember Courage requested the anticipated average attendance at the planned 70 games per year, the average cost to each attendee, the annual amounts for other revenue generating activities, and the Return on Investment (ROI) investors expected. Gorzell clarified that the only thing they were counting on to repay the bonds was lease payments and the extra \$2 ticket fee; the Team retained all the rest of the income.

Councilmember Pelaez commented that City Council frequently focused on helping San Antonians live and work, but this was an effort to help improve how San Antonians could play and enjoy leisure activities. He stated that the plan would bring the northwest side of downtown out of blight, provide activities for families, and honor the history and traditions of our community.

Councilmember Kaur imagined that families from the Ridgeview/Shearer Hills neighborhood could walk down to the VIA Green Line and take a direct bus downtown to see a baseball game, experience local food, beverage, and other family-friendly activities all for under \$100. She noted that downtown had changed since the COVID-19 Pandemic which affected how many people came downtown, therefore, revitalization was needed. Councilmember Kaur mentioned this was an opportunity to do things differently, not just make promises, but to ensure that housing was included. She explained that in order to bond the project, the housing needed to be market rate,

however, she requested additional housing for working families like hospitality workers so they could live near their jobs. She also recommended more community engagement related to the project and housing displacement.

Councilmember Kaur suggested partnering with other community organizations and universities to make sure the stadium was used the rest of the days. She wanted to ensure that the Houston Street TIRZ would still fund current activities such as “Holidays on Houston”. Councilmember Kaur recommended further expansion of the Houston Street TIRZ perhaps up to five points so that there could be more amenities there and a connection to Transit Oriented Development. She was grateful the Team was planning to work with SAISD but wanted them to expand to surrounding urban school districts for internships.

Councilmember Castillo stated that mitigating community displacement was of utmost importance to her and she was pleased to see the relocation plan for Soap Works, however, she recommended that the developers connect with the San Antonio Apartment Association to help relocate the families to other properties for a longer term if they did not want to be shuffled around. Smith confirmed that they would offer housing navigation services and his company would waive application fees and deposits for residents relocating to Weston Urban properties but stated that relocations were limited to their currently affordable property. Smith committed that if Weston Urban acquired more downtown properties with an affordability component, those would also be considered.

Councilmember Castillo stated that the residents did not want “peanuts” but needed deeply affordable housing over the long term since Soap Works was known as a place hospitality workers could afford and live near their jobs.

Councilmember Castillo mentioned that TIRZ could fund parks, infrastructure, public spaces, and other public amenities not just stadiums. She understood that there was shared risk but wanted to ensure that community needs identified for the future would not get bumped by this downtown infrastructure. Gorzell stated that there was no plan to use future General Obligation Bond funds in this project area.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez was cautiously optimistic noting that the community had mixed responses since there had been promises of benefits to them when Wolff Stadium and the Frost Bank Center were built. He commented that the average person wanted public safety, housing, traffic improvements, sidewalks, and parks.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez commented that TIRZ was not free money and if a property was not in a TIRZ, the tax revenue would go to the General Fund. He wanted a clear explanation of a TIRZ that a high schooler could understand. City Manager Walsh stated that the State allowed a TIRZ to be created to use the growth of the area for investments in public infrastructure, economic development, and housing. He noted that if there was no increase in tax growth in that zone, there would be no money in the TIRZ which meant that the value of the stadium’s improvements would pay for itself.

Councilmember Viagran recommended adding a Public Comment Session next week or a Public Hearing and suggested that it not interfere with the Budget Town Halls and work

sessions.

Mayor Nirenberg concluded that there was confidence in our City and in downtown beginning with the community and including the investors who developed this plan.

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Mayor Nirenberg recessed the meeting into Executive Session at 4:15 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 5:21 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 5:21 p.m.

**Approved**

**Ron Nirenberg**  
**Mayor**

**Debbie Racca-Sittre**  
**City Clerk**