

**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, March 19, 2025

2:00 PM

Council Briefing Room

The City Council convened a B Session meeting in the Council Briefing Room beginning at 2:10 p.m. 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, Alderete Gavito, Pelaez, Courage

ABSENT: 1 - Whyte

BRIEFING ONLY

- 1. Follow up to FY 2026 - FY 2027 Human Services Consolidated Funding Process** [Lori Houston, Assistant City Manager; Melody Woosley, Director, Human Services]

City Manager Erik Walsh introduced the Item noting that a follow-up memorandum had been sent to City Council following the last B Session presentation related to Delegate Agencies on February 19, 2025, which included short-, medium-, and long-term plans for the program. He

commented that the process for Delegate Agency funding had traditionally been wrapped into the annual Budget process, however, staff was recommending a new process that offered more certainty for services to the community.

Director of the Department of Human Services (DHS), Melody Woosley, explained that the department historically issued a Consolidated Request for Proposal (RFP) for social service investments based on: City Council policy direction; City priorities such as Domestic Violence Prevention, Ready to Work; and Human Services key priorities. Woosley stated that on February 19, 2025, DHS provided a briefing to City Council on the process for Fiscal Year 2026 and Fiscal Year 2027. She added that based on City Council discussion, DHS recommended extending contracts for currently funded programs partially, through Fiscal Year 2026.

Woosley recommended that Designated and Competitive Funding Processes be separated. She recommended aligning Designated Funding with the Fiscal Year Adopted Budget and moving Competitive Funding to an off-cycle process for a four-year term based on funding availability and performance. Woosley noted that this process would enhance opportunities for City Council input, provide additional opportunity for City Council to re-examine the process, and gathering feedback on: areas of focus, service priorities, and funding requirements.

Woosley proposed that the City Council authorize the extension of current competitive contract awards through May 2026 to allow additional City Council input prior to issuing the next RFP in December 2025. She indicated that the current Designated programs would be funded through the Adopted Budget process for 2026 as follows: \$2.3 million for five independent school districts to operate the After School Challenge Program, \$5.14 million for Haven for Hope, \$1.95 million for the Center for Health Care Services, and \$278,000 for the UP Partnership. Woosley recommended extending the FY 2025 competitively awarded contracts through May 31, 2026, and setting aside the remaining funding from the pool for future solicitations and awards.

Woosley reported that the Proposed FY 2026 total investment by category was: \$7.61 million for Children and Youth Success, \$2.27 million for Strengthening Families, \$2.48 million for Senior Independence, and \$12.45 million for Ending Homelessness. Woosley recommended that the department return to a B Session in the fall to provide City Council an opportunity to re-examine the process and gather feedback on the areas of focus, service priorities, and funding requirements. She noted that a RFP would be released following the B Session.

DISCUSSION:

Mayor Nirenberg noted that reductions through the Department of Government Efficiency and Executive Orders at the Federal level were negatively impacting San Antonio's social safety net and asked for key social service agencies to convene and the City to remain flexible in our response.

Councilmember Courage expressed concern with impacts to nonprofit partners and asked Woosley to provide a timeline of funding. He asked why contracts were not extended for an entire fiscal year. Woosley stated that funding would continue through May 2026 but funding for the entire fiscal year would be allocated to add more certainty; the eight months would provide time for the department to issue an RFP. City Manager Walsh clarified that there was concern at the last B Session about having the agencies rolled into the Budget process so that City Council could

focus on outcomes.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito supported staff's recommendation and wanted to ensure that services were not duplicated. She recommended alignment with the Nonprofit Council. Councilmember Alderete Gavito asked what happened if an agency did not meet their performance targets. Woosley stated that progress was tracked monthly and if the goals were not met at the quarter, a performance success plan would be developed. If the nonperformance continued, they would not be recommended for future funding, according to Woosley.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez noted that there were other resources for senior centers and homelessness, not only through Delegate Agencies. He recommended that agencies be given several months warning if their funding was going to be cut or contracts not renewed and asked about the benefits of removing the Delegate Agency process from the Budget process. City Manager Walsh recommended separating the delegate agency funding process from the annual Budget process to allow better continuity of services and tighten up the process to ensure that services were provided and to offer flexibility. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez expressed concern that large nonprofits could successfully lobby City Council to request more funds during the Budget process even though they went through the consolidated funding process on a different timeline. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez recommended a discussion on setting term limits and different tiers of funds.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked about the Designated Agencies. Woosley noted that these were one-of-a-kind services that only the agencies could perform. City Manager Walsh suggested that it was misleading to include the designated agency funding in the pool for the RFP because it really was not part of the solicitation. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez suggested that the allocations be discussed during the Budget process.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia requested a breakdown of funding amounts by each type of service. She requested clarification on agencies providing support services for caregivers and homebound seniors and specifically wanted to know the wage scales for the agencies. Woosley stated that the contracts were with Meals on Wheels and WellMed and she offered to look at wages being paid. Councilmember Rocha Garcia wanted to know how the independent caregivers were being compensated, what kind of services they were offering, and how they were trained. She suggested a partnership with the Ready to Work Program to ensure that independent caregivers were properly trained.

Councilmember Kaur supported the staff's recommended extension and requested performance measures noting that staff had recommended streamlining reporting and metrics. She recommended activating the Mayor's Task Force on Youth. Councilmember Kaur asked if the City of San Antonio Commission on Education had provided input on funding for youth. Woosley indicated that the Youth, Higher Ed and Education Commissions participated in the proposal review process and made recommendations on funding. Councilmember Kaur recommended tracking outcomes over a long time and supported investment in proactive prevention activities.

Councilmember Pelaez commented that 2025 was a challenging time due to budget cuts at the Federal level. He noted that our populations were aging, and services would need to be adjusted accordingly.

Councilmember Castillo commented that the City often commissioned studies when we already had data from our own services and our delegate agencies and emphasized spending money on direct services instead. She recommended a hybrid approach to helping unhoused individuals that included not only food and shelter, but jobs, and other support. She noted the earmark for Haven for Hope and asked about Bexar County's contract with them to provide outreach in smaller incorporated cities such as Leon Valley and Balcones Heights and transport them to Haven for Hope. City Manager Walsh spoke of more collaboration with Bexar County. Councilmember Castillo stated that individuals were being turned away from Haven for Hope because it was full and this was her concern.

Councilmember Castillo supported the staff's recommendation to separate Designated and Competitive funding and enhancing opportunities for City Council to provide input.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda noted that the Bexar County Guardianship Program helped people with dementia or Alzheimer's and suggested that there was an opportunity to have trained guardians help with seniors and individuals with special needs. Woosley noted that Bexar County provided this service across the community.

Councilmember Viagran requested a list of community programs that were providing assistance including community cleanup, senior help, and income tax assistance.

2. Proposed Construction Mitigation Grant Program. [Alejandra Lopez, Assistant City Manager; Brenda Hicks-Sorensen, Director, Economic Development]

City Manager Walsh introduced the Item and the Director of Economic Development, Brenda Hicks-Sorensen, who provided background on prior construction grant programs in FY 2023 and FY 2024 using American Rescue Plan Act Funding and assistance during FY 2022 for COVID-19 Impact Grants.

Hicks-Sorensen stated that the department surveyed the 2023 program participants, which revealed a need for preconstruction services through the Construction Mitigation Program to help the businesses ramp up and access programs. She recommended a preconstruction pilot that would address decreased access resulting in decreased revenue and provide an opportunity to "ramp up" before construction as well as pursue customer engagement strategies.

Surveyed businesses, according to Hicks-Sorensen, felt that the Construction Mitigation Program should address the following concerns during active construction: decrease in revenue, loss of customer access, staffing issues, communications, construction delays, and customer engagement strategies. Additionally, Hicks-Sorensen noted that post construction services would include strengthened communication on the project timeline, delays, and completion and additional customer engagement strategies.

Hicks-Sorensen clarified that the grants were available for small, for-profit businesses impacted by City-initiated construction projects. She reported that the total budget for the grants was \$1,000,000 and Hicks-Sorensen stated that 40 small businesses could be provided individual grants of up to \$35,000 each. Hicks-Sorensen mentioned that funds could be used for working capital, machinery and equipment, payroll/health care benefits, contract labor, supplier payments,

rent, lease or mortgage payments for the business property, utility payments for the business property, and the cost of critical business operations.

To be eligible for the grants, the businesses were required to be located in identified eligible construction zones and Hicks-Sorensen recommended providing grants in two corridors: Zona Cultural Streets and South Alamo Street. She recommended that the same business criteria to be utilized for the new grants except removal of construction duration points and the income only equity score. She stated that criteria include those businesses that needed to be established in their current location as of January 1, 2023, must have had a minimum \$10,000 gross sales in 2023, and experienced \$5,000 reduction in net revenues in 2024 when compared to 2023. She indicated that businesses must also be a retail or service business that required customer foot traffic for operations, met U.S. Small Business Administration's size standards for small businesses for 6-digit NAICS code, be in operation and not filed for bankruptcy at the time of application, and the grant applicant must be the majority owner of the business.

Hicks-Sorensen stated that the following businesses were excluded from the program: nonprofits, gambling/gaming businesses; franchisors; sexually oriented businesses; payday and auto loan providers; vape shops; liquor stores; and businesses in which a City employee or officer has a financial interest, as defined in Sec. 2-53 of the City's Ethics Code.

Hicks-Sorensen suggested focusing on how long a business was in the corridor, their net revenue loss, and whether they had previously received a grant rather than focusing on the construction duration and the Equity Atlas Score.

Hicks-Sorensen recommended an early-stage grant to help businesses prepare for upcoming construction with enhanced marketing and promotion of their business through an \$80,000 preconstruction pilot program to assist 40 businesses and focus on the Marbach Road area and include social media marketing, signage, marketing services, marketing consultants, marketing products, and online delivery service.

Hicks-Sorensen reported that the \$120,000 postconstruction pilot program would assist up to 25 local small businesses that had recently been impacted by City construction to improve the exterior or interior of their business establishment. Hicks-Sorensen recommended the following corridors for the grant: Bynum Ave Phase 2, Bulverde Road Phase 1, and the Broadway Street Corridor. She mentioned that the eligibility criteria would be the same as the other grants. Hicks-Sorensen stated that \$15,000 was budgeted for outreach.

Hicks-Sorensen noted that on March 27, 2025, City Council would consider an agreement with LiftFund for program administration with a total administration fee of 13%, which was \$185,000.

DISCUSSION:

Mayor Nirenberg expressed frustration with continuing to provide construction mitigation grants and wondered whether these grants were really making an impact. Hicks-Sorensen stated that the survivability rate was 13% greater than non-recipient businesses and even higher for restaurants, which were at 25% greater and overall, recipients were positive about the program. Mayor Nirenberg noted that funds would be helpful but asked if it was a game-changer. He noted that

businesses could not simply cease to make improvements and allow infrastructure to decay. He thought that the City's efforts would be better spent trying to have projects finished faster and recommended development of an incentive program. City Manager Walsh agreed that we needed to have projects completed faster and more efficiently, which might involve limiting scope and design.

Councilmember Castillo supported the program noting that Council District 5 businesses impacted by the Zona Cultural Program would be eligible. Councilmember Castillo supported the Mayor's position on trying to make projects move faster.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez noted that he had submitted a Council Consideration Request (CCR 2023-0008) to make this program permanent and while he wished we did not need this program, it was an important tool. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez supported holding contractors accountable and expediting projects but, in the meantime, these grants were necessary. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez requested that North New Braunfels Phase 2 be considered for inclusion in the postconstruction program.

Councilmember Courage suggested that the City needed better communication, a comprehensive growth plan, and a downtown redevelopment plan. He commented that it was not only the City's projects but private developers and utility companies that received permits from the Development Services Department (DSD), suggesting that better coordination was needed because those other entities impacted small business as much as the City of San Antonio, yet the grants were only related to City projects.

Councilmember Kaur stated that small businesses did not think that the City supported them and there was a problem with not being nimble. She agreed that it was important to improve communication and to simply get projects completed faster so she supported the incentives. Councilmember Kaur noted that the Façade Program was a reimbursement-based program and businesses had to max out their credit cards, so she recommended larger awards that were provided up front. She requested that staff double check the analysis of impacted businesses before projects began and supported inclusion of North New Braunfels Phase 2.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia supported adding more funding to the program. She asked if there was a dedicated staff member to oversee the timely completion of bond projects. Director of Public Works, Razi Hosseini, stated that project managers oversaw projects and they typically managed up to 10 projects. Councilmember Rocha Garcia requested information on the status of any outstanding 2017 Bond Projects and asked if any projects had been completed ahead of schedule.. Hosseini reported that the majority of the projects were completed on time or early. Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked if we had a legally binding timeline to complete a project. City Manager Walsh stated that the City had a moral obligation to substantially complete the bond program before asking voters to approve a new bond program. Hosseini explained that each project had a timeline set, based on the scope of the work and the contract gave the construction company a set number of days to complete the work.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia commented that projects and subsequent contract amendments impacted the City's annual debt plan. She noted that the dashboard demonstrated that only 7% of the 2022 Bond Projects were complete. Councilmember Rocha Garcia suggested delaying the

next bond until more projects were complete. City Manager Walsh agreed that it was important to ensure that staff could keep up with the work. Councilmember Rocha Garcia requested the number of amendments and a list of shovel-ready projects.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito suggested that there should be more accountability for staff managing the projects. Hosseini mentioned that the City Council had passed a Responsible Bidder's Program. Interim Assistant City Manager, John Peterek, stated that staff would look at an internal scorecard. Councilmember Alderete Gavito noted that this put the City Council in a difficult position as they were at meetings with angry residents. City Manager Walsh asked the City Council to notify him when they heard these comments and staff would address them.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito expressed concern with Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Projects like Bandera Road that might impact local small businesses. Hicks-Sorensen stated that the department would focus on outreach and offer other resources. Councilmember Alderete Gavito suggested that marketing might be needed postconstruction. Hicks-Sorensen noted that the physical improvements were requested by the businesses themselves but there were other resources they could access related to marketing.

Mayor Nirenberg asked why the news was reporting that the City was going to temporarily pave the sidewalk at South Alamo for the Final Four only to rip it up later, all at taxpayer expense. City Manager Walsh reported that the economic benefit of the Final Four was \$40 to \$50 million over a four-day period and he recommended minor improvements to facilitate safe passage of pedestrians during the event, but the project was not complete and would need to be finished afterward.

Councilmember Viagran requested clarification on the businesses on Bynum Avenue, Bulverde Road, and Broadway. Hicks-Sorensen stated that these businesses would be eligible for the postconstruction grant program. Councilmember Viagran supported adding North New Braunfels Phase 2, Moursund, Roosevelt, Gevers, and Goliad Road. She suggested including consideration of where the businesses employees lived and stressed that they should be City of San Antonio residents. Councilmember Viagran supported the preconstruction pilot corridors.

Councilmember Viagran noted the turnover of Public Works Project Managers, particularly in Council District 3 and suggested providing competitive salaries as staff often went to work for construction firms. Councilmember Viagran recommended improved communication with TxDOT.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda suggested that much of the data was collected within the Responsible Bidder Ordinance. She recommended that the Public Works Department have liaisons that communicated with businesses and neighborhoods about upcoming projects. Hosseini noted that staff met with the residents at least four times before the project began and constant coordination was in place during construction. Councilmember Cabello Havrda recommended fine tuning of communication to ensure that the message went to the targeted business owner or resident.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda asked how projects could be completed more quickly and noted that San Antonio was a 300-year-old city and there would always be unknowns. Hosseini also suggested that better design would help and the MOU with SAWS was an improvement. City

Manager Walsh explained that under the MOU, the utilities were co-signers of the construction contracts.

Councilmember Pelaez suggested that the City ensure, when we were giving residents better streets and sidewalks, that we did not harm them in the process. He noted that the construction mitigation grants were new and were a better approach than in the past, which was just to do nothing. Councilmember Pelaez expressed concern regarding the Golden Star Restaurant on West Commerce that had challenges related to construction and other issues.

Councilmember Kaur recommended that staff collect phone numbers from businesses and not just rely on handing out flyers or community meetings; this way updates could be texted to them. Councilmember Kaur requested that staff provide timely information about projects and issues in her council district so she could talk to stakeholders. She requested data on staff turnover related to project management. City Manager Walsh did not agree that the City was covering up issues but there were rumors, however, it was our obligation to not point fingers at each other or our partners.

3. Update on City of San Antonio training to recognize and report elder abuse. [Lori Houston, Assistant City Manager; Melody Woosley, Director, Human Services]

Assistant Director of the Department of Human Services (DHS), Jessica Dovalina, provided background on elder abuse in Bexar County over the last ten years stating that the number of allegations reported to Adult Protective Services (APS) had increased by 41% from 4,064 to 5,719. In Fiscal Year 2024, Bexar County had the highest rate of APS investigations per 1,000 older adults compared to other large Texas counties.

Dovalina stated that Councilmember Cabello Havrda filed a Council Consideration Request (CCR 2023-0027) on elder abuse and neglect reporting in December 2023. She reported that the Item was presented to the Governance Committee on April 17, 2024, and was referred to the Public Safety Committee. On August 20, 2024, the Public Safety Committee directed DHS to collaborate with APS to develop and implement curriculum to provide training to 10 forward facing departments.

According to Dovalina, DHS currently collaborated with APS to provide annual training to Senior Services Staff of older adult financial fraud, exploitation and abuse to older adults and caregivers, and the DHS Senior Services Division provided education to stakeholders and older adults on mandatory reporting requirements. She added that DHS closely coordinated with APS to provide reports and referrals.

Dovalina stated that San Antonio Police Department (SAPD) officers were trained as cadets on factors that constituted elder abuse, patrol officers closely coordinated with APS to provide reports and referrals, and the SAPD Investigation Division investigated and reported criminal elder abuse cases ranging from misdemeanors to felonies, while the SAPD Financial Crimes Unit investigated elder fraud and conducted training sessions.

Dovalina reported that in February 2025, DHS and APS launched online training for City employees targeting the following ten City Departments: DHS, San Antonio Metropolitan Health

District, SAPD, San Antonio Fire Department (SAFD), the Neighborhood and Housing Services Department (NHSD), Parks and Recreation, the Code Enforcement Division of Development Services, City Attorney's Office, 3-1-1, and Animal Care Services. According to Dovalina, the training provided guidance on recognizing and reporting physical abuse, verbal/emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect (self and caregiver) and financial exploitation. She reported that the current completion rate for those ten City Departments was 25% with a goal for training to be completed by May 2, 2025. She added that following completion, DHS would promote the training to all City Employees. Dovalina recommended that refresher training be completed annually.

Dovalina stated that the Elder Abuse and Exploitation Taskforce, co-founded by Texas Senator Jose Menendez and Bexar County Judge Veronica Vasquez, was comprised of City of San Antonio, Bexar County, APS, and community stakeholders. She noted that current Primary Taskforce initiatives included coordination on legislative efforts to establish Senior Justice Assistance Centers in large Texas counties, filing of proposed legislation to make it mandatory for Texas Judges to receive elder abuse and exploitation training, and Bexar County had submitted a grant application for Victims of Crime Act funding, on behalf of the Taskforce and anticipated that awards would be issued in September 2025.

DISCUSSION:

Councilmember Cabello Havrda was pleased that the training was already being rolled out with the departments as it was a critical initiative. She thanked Judge Veronica Vasquez for co-founding the task force. Judge Vasquez stated that the big step was moving from a Task Force to a Senior Justice Assessment Center. Ana Cortez, District Director for the Texas Department of Adult Protective Services, congratulated the City Council for being a leader in taking on this effort and stated that her agency was pleased to be providing the training. Judge Vasquez noted that SAPD and SAFD had been great partners as well.

Councilmember Courage mentioned that he was a volunteer with Meals on Wheels and they were trained to ensure seniors received healthy food and were well cared for. Councilmember Courage asked who watched for concerns at the Senior Centers. Dovalina replied that all staff of the senior centers were trained and had older adult benefit navigators that identified situations where the seniors were being taken advantage of. Councilmember Courage suggested that DHS provide presentations to the seniors at the Senior Centers about this issue.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia requested that the City Council Local Government Corporation (LGC) Staff be trained. Dovalina mentioned that there was an online platform that any staff could access, and DHS could offer more trainings if requested. Councilmember Rocha Garcia suggested hosting a townhall to prepare individuals to become caregivers and including the training in the interfaith community. She expressed concern regarding Federal cuts to programs, particularly Meals on Wheels.

Councilmember Aldrete Gavito supported training of LGC staff and the creation of a center. She asked how the City Council could help. Judge Vasquez stated that there were community resources like the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) and the Texas Diaper Bank and offered City Council to tour the Harris County Justice Center that hired social workers to assist. Councilmember Aldrete Gavito expressed concern about cybercriminals focusing on

attacking seniors.

Councilmember Castillo noted that many seniors had been victimized and exploited; it was difficult to hold people accountable. She recommended strengthening punishment for persons found guilty of elder fraud or abuse. Councilmember Castillo noted that it was difficult to get APS on the phone and there would be value in creating a liaison to facilitate case reporting facilitated by LGC Staff.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Executive Session was not held.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 4:47 p.m.

Approved

**Ron Nirenberg
Mayor**

**Debbie Racca-Sittre
City Clerk**