

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



**Meeting Minutes  
City Council Budget Work 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

**Tuesday, September 3, 2024**

**2:00 PM**

**City Hall**

The City Council convened a Budget Work Session in the Council Briefing Room beginning at 2:04 PM. City Clerk Debbie Racca-Sittre took the Roll Call noting a quorum with the following Council Members present:

**PRESENT: 11** – Nirenberg, Kaur, McKee-Rodriguez, Viagran, Rocha Garcia, Castillo, Cabello Havrda, Alderete Gavito, Pelaez, Courage, Whyte

**ABSENT:** None

**ITEMS**

1. Staff presentation on the FY 2025 Proposed Budget focusing on, but not limited to, the following City Departments or Initiatives: [Erik Walsh, City Manager; Justina Tate, Management & Budget]

A. Employee Benefits & Compensation  
B. Economic Development Department  
C. Library

## D. Planning

### A. Human Resources (HR)

Director of HR Renee Frieda presented on employee compensation and benefits. She reported there were 13,839 authorized positions with 4,643 uniform and the rest civilian. Frieda stated that HR conducted employee outreach through listening sessions, employee associations, the Employee Management Committee, and employee roadshows. She reported that the FY 2025 Proposed Budget included \$55.4 million in increased compensation for City employees with a 3% across the board for civilians; 4% for police consistent with their Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), and firefighter increases were proposed at 7% in a tentative agreement with the firefighter CBA. Frieda noted that police and firefighters would also receive 3% longevity pay every five years.

Frieda reported that the average full-time firefighter salary was \$108,900, police officer was \$110,516 and civilian was \$65,125. She listed benefit costs for uniformed and civilian employees annually which was \$256.2 million and \$211.7 million, respectively. Frieda noted that HR was continuing to address compression of salaries for employees earning different wages in different job titles based on experience at a FY 2025 proposed cost of \$2.7 million. She added that beginning in FY 2026, HR would perform a market review for competitiveness for all job titles every three years.

Frieda stated that under new Federal Labor Standards Act rules, starting January 1, 2025, all employees making less than \$1,128 per week, or \$58,656 per year, would be eligible for overtime compensation and considered non-exempt. She reported that the new law would impact 873 full-time positions across the City. Frieda added that cost mitigation strategies included adjustments to pay ranges to maintain exempt status, adjustments to work schedules and work distribution, and an additional \$2.8 million budgeted for overtime.

Frieda anticipated \$182.9 million to be paid for medical and pharmacy benefits in FY 2025 as the City was self-funded. She stated that employees would contribute \$12.1 million in premiums, but individual employees would see no premium increase in FY 2025, however, Frieda anticipated premium increases in FY 2026. She noted that the healthcare trend for FY 2025 was a 6.0% increase for medical and 10.9% increase for pharmacy.

Frieda concluded her presentation by stating that the department was removing barriers to employment through partnering with external agencies to foster inclusive hiring opportunities for individuals with disabilities, creating apprenticeship programs to offer training for individuals entering or transitioning within the workforce, highlighting SA Ready to Work candidates, removing criminal history from the application and only considering it post-offer, and implementing consolidated hiring events to allow applicants to be considered for multiple position vacancies.

### B. Economic Development Department (EDD)

Director of EDD Brenda Hicks-Sorensen provided an overview of the department and its guiding principles to provide economic opportunity, resilience, investment and growth, assets, and equity. Hicks-Sorensen prioritized areas for implementation: strategic account management, small business

support and ecosystem enhancements, systems and processes enhancements, and real estate placemaking.

EDD's FY 2025 Proposed Budget, according to Hicks-Sorensen, was \$18.2 million which was an overall 10.5% decrease as a result of the reallocation of three staff positions to Workforce Development to manage and monitor the Workforce Development Delegate Agency contracts and reduced incentives. Hicks-Sorensen stated that \$517,336 would be reduced from Business Development Organization (BDO) contracts, and the San Antonio Economic Development Corporation (SAEDC) funding and Supply SA Programs would be right-sized through reductions of \$150,000 and \$300,000 respectively.

Hicks-Sorensen stated that the FY 2025 Proposed Budget continued the Construction Mitigation Grants at \$1.4 million for the Program and \$5.2 million of the Economic Development Incentive Fund (EDIF) would be used to support business recruitment and expansion incentives (\$3.6 million), \$200,000 for Supply SA, \$586,888 for Launch SA, and \$828,908 for Workforce Development. Hicks-Sorensen listed performance metric targets.

Hicks-Sorensen stated that the FY 2025 Proposed Budget included \$100,000 for BioMedSA and \$829,350 for the greater: SATX regional economic partnership (\$194,350 was focused on foreign direct investment). She indicated that the FY 2025 target was 6,000 new jobs, \$850,000,000 in Capital Investment, and 430 Business Retention and Expansion visits. She noted that 4,600 new jobs and over \$1.2 billion in Capital Investment was achieved in FY 2024 as well as 355 Business Retention and Expansion visits.

The Zero Percent Interest Loan Program managed by LiftFund assisted small businesses to strengthen financial standing, build credit, and grow their business, according to Hicks-Sorensen. She stated that in FY 2024 the Program leveraged American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds, General Fund, and matching resources resulting in \$2.5 million in capital disbursed through 68 loans with a City investment of only \$1 million. Hicks-Sorensen added that another \$1 million was proposed for FY 2025 targeting 70 loans.

Hicks-Sorensen proposed a \$200,000 investment in SupplySA (the new name for the Southwest Texas Regional Certification Agency) with goals of increasing the number of small local businesses bidding on City contracts, increasing the percent of local small businesses winning contracts and a fair certification process for small businesses that was completed in 30 days or less.

Hicks-Sorensen stated that the small business ecosystem coordinator Launch SA was proposed to receive \$585,888 in FY 2025 to provide 35 workshops, 150 mentorship hours, provide technical assistance to 90 entrepreneurs, and connect 20 businesses to capital.

Hicks-Sorensen proposed a total of \$1.9 million for Construction Mitigation Grants (a \$1.4 million increase over the base budget) to support five activations, deploy 50 signs, engage 50 businesses in the "Buy Local Savings Pass," fund Visit San Antonio memberships for 150 businesses, and create three promotional videos. Hicks-Sorensen spotlighted the Digital Presence Program funded with \$550,000 from ARPA and \$150,000 in General Fund. She reported that in FY 2024, over 380 businesses took the assessment and 60 businesses received free digital work with 55 more in progress.

Hicks-Sorensen closed her presentation by reporting that of a total of \$33.9 million ARPA allocation for small businesses, \$29.7 million had been committed or spent and the remaining \$4.2 million was planned to be spent in FY 2025 and FY 2026.

### C. San Antonio Public Library (SAPL) Department

Interim Director of SAPL Kathy Donnellan stated that the San Antonio Public Library's mission was to change lives through the transformative power of information, imagination, and ideas. She outlined the FY 2025 \$57.8 million Proposed Budget which was a 2.7% increase and included \$88,991 to add one new position for Learn at SAPL allowing the program to serve 600 more individuals. She noted that additionally, \$72,800 was recommended to increase per capita spending per resident to \$4.06. Donnellan recommended \$576,100 for new and replacement furniture and equipment across the library system and \$593,235 for computer and mobile device replacements.

FY 2025 proposed Deferred Maintenance Projects, according to Donnellan, totaled \$488,000 with \$250,000 for the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system at Brook Hollow Branch Library, \$125,000 for the roof at Westfall Branch Library, \$63,100 for HVAC at the Johnston Branch Library, and \$50,000 for HVAC at Cortez Branch Library. Donnellan listed four Capital Projects totaling \$2.7 million including: \$250,000 for the HVAC at Collins Garden Branch Library; \$37,000 for Johnston Branch Library renovations; \$1,046,000 for security, parking lot, and painting of the Cortez Branch Library; and \$977,000 for the freight elevator at the Central Library.

Donnellan reported that digital usage had increased from 23% to 41% since 2019 and there was less use of the computers in the library but more use of the Wi-Fi which Donnellan attributed to the COVID-19 Pandemic. She noted that upon comparison with peer cities, most libraries had similar results including fewer in-person patrons. SAPL's strategic plan, according to Donnellan had four main pillars: staff, spaces, collections, and technology.

Donnellan stated that since 1936, SAPL had an agreement with Bexar County for access to the library by residents of both incorporated cities and unincorporated Bexar County (non-City of San Antonio). According to Donnellan, usage by non-city residents represented 26% of library circulation of books and materials. Donnellan reported that Bexar County's proposed FY 2025 Budget included a \$3.5 million payment to the City for this access, which was up from \$3 million in FY 2024 and \$2.6 million in FY 2023.

Donnellan announced newly designed library cards featuring artwork inspired by love of the library and cultures and traditions of San Antonio and the launch of an awareness campaign designed to engage with non-users with a goal of 15,000 new cardholders in September and October 2024.

SAPL Board of Trustees Chairperson Juspreet Kaur (District 8 appointee) noted that patrons had given SAPL a 96% satisfaction rate and stated that the library provided valuable essential literacy and quality of life services. She correlated Economic Development and Workforce Development initiatives with the services of the library. Chair Kaur urged the City Council to approve the \$1.3 million for new resources in the FY 2025 Proposed Budget.

#### D. Planning Department (Planning)

Director of Planning Bridget White stated that the mission of the department was to work collaboratively to craft plans and policies that guide sustainable growth and development, protect our history and resources, and promote an equitable and accessible city for all San Antonians. She reported that the department had three goals: 1) Be a Planning Department of Excellence. 2) Facilitate Implementation of Adopted Plans, and 3) Continuously Improve our Community Engagement Practices.

The Department's \$4.3 million general fund was reduced by \$26.5 million which was attributed to funding for consultants to develop the comprehensive plan, according to White. She noted that there was no reduction in staff recommended. White stated that the SA Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2016 to help guide growth in ways that aligned with City-wide quality of life, land use, environmental, and transportation goals. She reported that the Plan was created with robust community engagement and represented the City's long-range (to 2040) strategy and policy document that identified key issues, established Citywide goals, and developed policy theme areas. White listed the following framework elements for the SA Tomorrow Sub Area Plans: land use, focus areas, mobility, housing, economic development, amenities, and public space. She stated that of the 18 Sub Area Plans, 11 had been completed.

White stated that the Northeast Corridor Revitalization (NEC) Program, which adopted a regional center plan for the area of NE I-35 and Loop 410, included Design Standards/Supplemental Guidelines, identified improvements such as landscaping and wayfinding, created a Revitalization Plan using the NEC Market Study, and provided a workshop on Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) as well as a NEC Enhancement Grant Program with \$500,000 available in FY 2025 even though \$150,000 was recommended for reduction.

White outlined the department's performance measures and anticipated that City Council would adopt the following plans in FY 2025: Remaining SA Tomorrow Phase 1 Community Area Plan, and SA Tomorrow Phase 3 plans including four regional center plans and two community area plans. She indicated that staff would continue developing SA Tomorrow Phase 4 Plans which included six community plans and would continue planning projects that implemented SA Tomorrow.

#### DISCUSSION:

All Items were discussed simultaneously.

Mayor Nirenberg commented that it was complicated to operate in such a large and diverse area. He asked the Planning Department when the Westside Plan would be complete. White stated that the Westside Plan was a phase 1 Plan that started in 2017 and staff had been continually responsive to the residents anticipating it would be completed in late summer 2025. Mayor Nirenberg recommended a community convening to update the community on the SA Tomorrow Plan (regional, subarea, multi-modal, climate, and other related plans that were aligned with SA Tomorrow). City Manager Erik Walsh stated that this could be a large briefing to the City Council and the community possibly on a Saturday.

Mayor Nirenberg thanked SAPL, the Library Board, and Chair Kaur for their work and he supported developing a sustainable funding path with Bexar County.

Mayor Nirenberg introduced Tim Liston former United State Consul General to Munich, Germany who would be working with the Mayor's Office through the Rita Jo Lewis Diplomat Program. Mayor Nirenberg suggested that huge growth in our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was due to locally owned small businesses that had connections internationally and requested data on the impact of global relations efforts.

Mayor Nirenberg commented that the Construction Mitigation Grants had been funded through American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Federal Funds and was now being funded through the General Fund, however, he recommended using those dollars or other Capital Funds instead to speed up construction through incentives suggesting that getting the street and drainage construction near businesses completed faster would help the businesses more than the grants.

Mayor Nirenberg asked whether the Low-Interest Loan Program with LiftFund would continue. Hicks-Sorensen stated that the Program was originally funded with ARPA Funds and the City was providing \$250,000 in General Fund and LiftFund and used the City's funds to leverage other funding.

Councilmember Pelaez commented that economic development was as much about the quality of life that an employer could offer their employees such as beautiful parks, libraries, and other amenities, not just tax abatements. Councilmember Pelaez commented that the political attacks on the "literati" were still occurring, but libraries and librarians were necessary to educate our community and encourage folks to read ideas that might challenge them or provide freedom of thought.

Councilmember Castillo requested information about how much more it would cost to provide civilian employees with a 4% cost of living adjustment instead of 3% and was pleased that funding was set aside for compression. City Manager Walsh stated that the cost to go to 4% would be \$6.2 million in all funds and \$2.8 million to the General Fund.

Councilmember Castillo recommended early completion incentives not just for street, sidewalk, and drainage projects but for buildings noting that the Las Palmas Library had been under construction and closed for a long time. Councilmember Castillo supported the Zero Percent Interest Loans by LiftFund and the Façade Improvement Program and requested a heat map as to where the grants had been placed. She also supported that Business Development Organizations (BDOs) would be supported with ARPA through LiftFund.

Councilmember Castillo appreciated that the Planning Department had been listening to the community and spending so much time on the West Side. She asked how contractual services funds were utilized. White stated that there was a consultant for each phase of the SA Tomorrow Plan to do 3-dimensional modeling, provide enhanced community engagement, provide translation services and the reduction was due to the completion of the Northeast Corridor; funding for the next planning phase would come in FY 2026.

Councilmember Castillo was happy to see HVAC improvements to the Collins Garden Branch Library and supported the community room at Memorial Branch Library. She asked if there might be an open call for artists to design the library cards and offered using City Council Project Funds (CCPF).

Councilmember Alderete Gavito supported the 3% across-the-board increase for civilian employees and noted the gender breakdown of employees seemed fair but requested a breakdown for management positions. Councilmember Alderete Gavito noted that some small business owners had expressed concern with the long wait times to receive the EDD grant funds through the BDOs. Hicks-Sorensen stated that the construction grants were meeting their timelines, but the outdoor spaces and façade improvement grant timelines were extended to allow more time for businesses to submit information with their applications. Hicks-Sorensen clarified that the outdoor spaces and Façade Improvement Grants were being phased out due to the BDOs not meeting their goals or timelines.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito noted that the Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) goals were not being met in FY 2024. Hicks-Sorensen stated that FY 2024 was the first year EDD took over the BRE program from outside agencies because staff got a late start; the six staff that were pulled in to help with the façade grants were pulled from the BRE Program. Councilmember Alderete Gavito noted that Greater SATX was missing the mark on job targets. Hicks-Sorensen stated that the goal was more quality jobs rather than quantity and these targets might change during negotiation with Greater SATX.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito asked how the Sister Cities Program helped economic development and how much was spent on the Program. Hicks-Sorensen stated that the best example was Toyota Manufacturing and OCI Solar which benefitted from having those sister city relationships.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito requested an update on the Maverick Library HVAC System improvements. Donnellan reported that the design was complete and a contract was coming to City Council in the next couple of months.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda recommended that the Planning Department collaborate with regional partners. White stated that the department's City-wide Division developed subarea plans, and the Regional Division coordinated with CPS Energy, SAWS, Bexar County, and the State and Federal Government legislative issues. Councilmember Cabello Havrda suggested coordinating with the Cities of Austin, Laredo, and Corpus Christi. White noted that she was a member of a national group of 40 cities to discuss planning-related issues.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda commented that having over 13,000 employees made the City of San Antonio one of the area's largest employers. She recommended looking at a 4% across-the-board increase for civilian employees and supported the focus on compression. Councilmember Cabello Havrda requested allowing the union to present at new employee orientation. Frieda stated that there was not enough time within the one-day orientation, but the unions could set up a table outside.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda was supportive of not funding the BDOs and recommended looking at sunseting the delegate agencies. She requested clarification on the women and minority-

owned business goal of 4.9% for City contracts based on the Disparity Study. She asked about the FY 2024 target of 4,600 new jobs and asked how would the new goal be met. Hicks-Sorensen stated that Greater SATX was shifting their efforts toward quality jobs rather than quantity so the reduction in the goal was slight.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda supported the renovations and updates to the library buildings and asked if the enhanced library card could be used for identification. City Manager Walsh stated that the Library Cards could be used by SAPD.

Councilmember Whyte was interested in reviewing increasing the across-the-board civilian wages from 3% to 4% noting that wages had been stagnant, and people needed better wages as they were rising statewide more than in San Antonio. He stated that the 18% poverty rate had not changed in a decade, the economic outlook was not great and there was more work to be accomplished.

Councilmember Whyte noted that the retention visit goals were not met and targeted hours of 1,500 was less than one full-time employee so he recommended more efforts. He mentioned that 880 people had been laid off throughout the City last year and noted the closure of Bimbo Bakery.

Councilmember Whyte recommended engagement with companies before they left to see if we could retain them. Hicks-Sorensen stated that there were indicators and tools that the department used to identify these businesses but sometimes the businesses just did not share the information because it was proprietary.

Councilmember Whyte supported incentivizing early completion of construction projects and providing construction mitigation grants to help our businesses. He noted that the Maestro Center hosted an event where businesses did not feel the City Council was prioritizing small business development and jobs. He supported the work of the library.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia focused on BRE metrics and how our partners were not meeting the mark on those measures. She expressed disappointment because this was not the first time she had asked about this work. Councilmember Rocha Garcia prioritized funding for small businesses and wondered how the development of the economic ecosystem would meet the strategic plan goals without the ARPA funding. Hicks-Sorensen stated that the Plan was used to develop strategies and an implementation plan noting that some programs that were not as effective would not be continued after an assessment of impact. Hicks-Sorensen noted that \$26.6 million in ARPA Funding had been invested in small businesses since 2021.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked when the department notified the BDOs that their funding would be reduced. Hicks-Sorensen stated that the shift began in 2024 and the services BDOs provided were realigned as a part of the FY 2025 Proposed Budget. Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked what factors were considered when rightsizing SAEDC and Supply SA. Hicks-Sorensen stated that they took a hard look at the work plan for SAEDC, and changes were made in FY 2024 to focus on more placemaking in identified corridors. She added that the work plan with the Supply SA partners had been developed with stakeholders.



Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked what would happen to the Workforce Development Grant monitoring staff of EDD once Ready-to-Work Funding was exhausted. Hicks-Sorensen stated that the positions were being moved out of EDD and the General Fund but would continue in Ready to Work and when those funds ran out, they would likely have to move back to the General Fund.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia recommended review by the Office of Innovation for other operational efficiencies and recommended creation of a small business directory and cross-tabulations. Hicks-Sorensen indicated that Launch SA was developing a dashboard and EDD would collaborate with the Office of Innovation. Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked what industry accounted for the majority of the 4,600 new jobs. Hicks-Sorensen reported that advanced manufacturing was the fastest growing industry.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked how EDD measured the impact of its grants on small businesses. Hicks-Sorensen stated that businesses were surveyed at different intervals. Councilmember Rocha Garcia requested a list of businesses assisted by Launch SA including the total number of unique businesses assisted by council district and asked if the agency would continue the Mobile Outreach Program. Hicks-Sorensen noted that Launch SA was currently building staff and she would get a work plan and statistics.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez supported development of a permanent non-grant funding source of funds for Construction Mitigation Grants. He noted that inner-city neighborhoods seemed to experience more issues with poor quality contractors and suggested using different delivery methods instead of low bid and including neighborhood representatives on the evaluation panels. He also requested a briefing at the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez commented that many people relied on libraries to do their homework and apply for jobs. He noted that Bexar County residents who were not within the City limits received a disproportionate amount of City services, particularly through the libraries and \$3.5 million did not cover the true cost and were being subsidized by City taxes. He questioned why the county was not contributing to our City residents as they were also residents of the county, paying Bexar County taxes citing a lack of investment in our community.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez supported the across-the-board pay increases for City employees and was interested in 4%; he also supported assessment of compression. He thanked the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees Union (AFSCME) for their continued advocacy and recommended increasing the City's minimum wage to \$22 hour. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez also recommended improved health benefits such as fertility treatment, more leave for new parents, as well as specialized health treatment for LGBTQIA+ individuals.

Councilmember Viagran noted that 74.4% of our households in poverty were families and 52.7% were single mothers and recommended more services and benefits for single mothers. She recommended an event in each council district for City Employees to talk to their Councilmember and meet with the union. She recommended going to a 4% increase for civilian employees perhaps

next year.

Councilmember Viagran suggested that it took longer to construct in aging areas of town with older infrastructure and supported Construction Mitigation Grants and incentives as well as removing the “Good Night Construction Site” Ordinance so contractors could work later or around the clock.

Councilmember Viagran supported HVAC improvements to the libraries noting that it was very hot and people needed a respite area. She suggested a more frequent maintenance schedule for HVAC equipment in City facilities. She hoped there would be a solution for Bexar County to pay for their use of the libraries and supported more dialogue.

Councilmember Viagran asked how Planning worked with DSD on zoning. White stated that the departments had standard protocols to coordinate on large area rezoning and specific cases within subareas. Councilmember Viagran recommended coordination with developers on the subarea plans and a more direct communication for zoning changes and the need for amenities such as medical facilities, childcare centers, and grocery stores. City Manager Walsh added that infrastructure in the regional centers was something the City Council could consider in the 2027 Bond Program.

Councilmember Kaur recommended increasing EDD’s performance targets when they were regularly being exceeded. She asked why the number of small business engagement target number had been decreased and recommended more definition of what was considered outreach adding that simply handing out flyers should not count as a touchpoint. Hicks-Sorensen stated that the FY 2024 goal assumed there would be some additional partner agencies but the reason the results were higher (9,000) was due to the staff hand-holding the businesses to get those façade grants and adding more staff to the effort.

Councilmember Kaur recommended a City-wide measure of the revenue growth of small businesses and requested a breakdown of the responses from Council District 1 businesses. Hicks-Sorensen stated that the 10% growth was an average and was a contractual requirement for those receiving assistance from the City so it was easy to gather the data but it might not be available City-wide.

Councilmember Kaur supported the Zero Interest Loan Program and asserted that we could provide grants and incentives for construction projects to be completed earlier. Councilmember Kaur requested data on the number of Construction Mitigation Grants and suggested relaxing the eligibility requirement. Hicks-Sorensen noted that 10 construction mitigation applications were still required review and were above the amount of funding available so it was planned to take funding from the outdoor grant. Kaur recommended using ARPA or other funding that LiftFund might have.

Councilmember Kaur asked if the SBEDA goal could be higher than 25%. Hicks-Sorensen stated that the SBEDA goal was based on the disparity study and availability.

Councilmember Kaur recommended inclusion of Local Government Corporation (LGC) employees of the City Council in the market adjustment and compression analysis. Frieda stated that LGC employees received the market adjustments and positions had already been analyzed and would be adjusted for compression. Councilmember Kaur recommended others in the

community access our benefit pool like the Non-profit Council and the San Antonio Area Foundation.

Councilmember Kaur would love to see more funding from Bexar County for libraries. She noted that the community was confused by all the different plans such as SA Tomorrow, Transit Oriented Development (TOD), and others. White noted that the phase 4 SA Tomorrow planning process had been delayed in the areas where TOD was being discussed to help alleviate confusion and agreed that there should be a Planning 101 session for the community to help them understand the different planning processes. Kaur recommended a comprehensive plan for all the plans.

Councilmember Courage noticed on the slides that uniformed employees did not pay into social security. Villagomez stated that they paid the Medicare and not the Social Security tax. City Manager Walsh stated that the Fire and Police Pension Fund was created as a result of the CBA and they opted out of Social Security. Villagomez added that the Pension Fund was richer than civilian retirement as the City paid 24.6% of the uniform employee's salary into the pension and the uniform employee put in 12.5% of their salary; they both had access to 457 contributions. Councilmember Courage asked about the civilian pension. Villagomez stated that civilian employees paid 6% of their salary into the Texas Municipal Retirement System and the City matched 2:1.

Councilmember Courage asked how much we paid the consultant to work on the SA Tomorrow Plan and the final cost and when they would all be complete. White stated that for Phase 4 the consultant cost \$1.3 million and Phase 5 was budgeted at \$1.4 million. Tate stated that the total cost would be about \$6.7 million for 30 plans by FY 2028. Councilmember Courage commented that this planning process took 12 years and things changed a lot in 10 years so it might be obsolete. White responded that plans were driven by community input and took about 24 months each. Councilmember Courage noted that many developers and special interests did not want to follow the plans developed by the community.

Councilmember Courage did not think enough was being done to retain businesses in our community and was concerned that EDD did not know about the Bimbo Bakery closing and he noted that a lot of restaurants had closed recently. He asked how many businesses that had received grants from the City had gone out of business. Councilmember Courage asked what industries EDD was focusing on. Advanced manufacturing was one of the main focuses, according to Hicks-Sorensen and she clarified that EDD did have knowledge of Bimbo Bakery closing but details were not shared.

Councilmember Pelaez expressed concern with treating policy initiatives as sacred cows and suggested setting metrics and goals for the Construction Mitigation Grants that were longer-term indicators of solving a problem. Councilmember Pelaez requested that EDD come to the Economic and Workforce Development Committee. Hicks-Sorensen stated that the department would assess all investments through the ecosystem.

Councilmember Pelaez stated that there was \$34 million in ARPA Funding handed out for business-related programs and suggested that the small snapshot of the metrics provided in the presentation did not provide a full picture as the GDP grew significantly over the past 10 years and the City had one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked how the County's payment to the library was calculated and did it include growth. Donnellan stated that the formula proposed to the County was based on use of the collection based on SAPL's Budget. City Manager Walsh stated that the options were to recover our costs over 5 to 8 years and it was better to start somewhere. Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked if there was a different process for requesting a library card for San Antonio residents versus nonresidents. Donnellan stated that the process was the same for both.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked how it was determined if a department needed a Public Information Officer (PIO). City Manager Walsh stated that he was more inclined to centralize that service with the Communications and Engagement (C&E) Department similar to finance and procurement. White stated that the Planning Department had a Special Project Manager (SPM) who worked with C&E.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia suggested adding a surcharge to City employees who chose to cover their spouse even though the spouse had access to insurance through their own employer. Villagomez stated that this was evaluated in 2014 and was not recommended, however, the City implemented a fee for tobacco use. Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked if market reviews every three years was standard and what factors would be considered. Frieda stated that three years was recommended by the consultant and they considered turnover rate and length of vacancy among other factors.

Councilmember Whyte agreed that the poverty rate had gone down 2% since 2012 correcting his prior statement. He asked when electrical updates to the Semmes Library would be finished. Donnellan stated that it would be completed in 2025. Councilmember Whyte asked when the Rolling Oaks Regional Plan would be completed. White stated that it would be completed in the third quarter of FY 2025 as a part of Phase 3.

Councilmember Whyte recommended prioritizing small businesses and business retention. City Manager Walsh stated that business retention was a new staff effort because we were not satisfied with what we were getting with our partner that we were funding. He suggested that City staff were more inclined to be consistent and stay on top of retention than an outside agency, however, resources were needed.

Mayor Nirenberg commented that business retention and expansion was simply a part of the staff and the City Council's constituent management to ensure that our residents, neighbors, and businesses needed to feel welcome and supported.

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Executive Session was not held.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 4:53 p.m.

**Approved**

**Ron Nirenberg**  
**Mayor**

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

DRAFT