

City of San Antonio



Minutes Municipal Utilities Committee

Tuesday, February 22, 2022

10:00 AM

Municipal Plaza Building

Members Present: John Courage, *Chair*
Mario Bravo, *Member*
Melissa Cabello Havrda, *Member*
Ana Sandoval *Member*

Members Absent: Dr. Adriana Rocha Garcia *Voting Member*

Approval of Minutes

1. Approval of minutes from the Municipal Utilities Committee on January 25, 2022.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda moved to approve the minutes of the January 25, 2022 Municipal Utilities Committee meeting. Councilmember Sandoval seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Sandoval, Courage, Bravo, Cabello Havrda

Absent: Rocha Garcia

Public Comment

Briefing and Possible Action on

2. **Briefing by CPS Energy and San Antonio Water System (SAWS) on customer accounts at risk of disconnection and use of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding.** [Ben Gorzell Jr., Chief Financial Officer; Troy Elliott, Deputy Chief Financial Officer]

DeAnna Hardwick, Executive Vice President of Customer Strategy, provided an update on CPS Energy's customer accounts at risk of disconnection of service. Hardwick reviewed the current and past due accounts for both residential and commercial customers, and data on those that were disconnected and later reconnected for services. Hardwick provided an overview of customer outreach provided, the impact of COVID to customer accounts, and payment/discount

programs available through American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding. Hardwick also discussed collaboration with City, San Antonio Housing Authority (SAHA), SAWS and CPS Energy staff to assure ARPA applications were reviewed and approved and discussed possible extension of periods for application review and approval. Hardwick reiterated CPS Energy's commitment to serve residents needing assistance.

Chair Courage asked for a disconnection summary by council district. Hardwick stated that the data was available by zip code and would be provided to the Committee. Chair Courage asked about the success rate of individuals who entered into payment plans, whether they continued to pay or stopped paying. Hardwick stated that approximately 50% of customers continued to pay after entering into a payment plan..

Councilmember Cabello Havrda requested a one-page summary of available assistance programs to be provided to residents seeking assistance and information on how many customers contacted have been enrolled in some form of assistance. Hardwick stated that the assistance document would be provided and approximately 75% of customers contacted have been enrolled in some form of assistance.

Mary Bailey, Vice President of Customer Experience and Strategic Initiatives, provided an update of customer delinquency statuses for SAWS customers and reviewed the assistance programs available to SAWS customers and utilization of those programs. Gavino Ramos, VP of Communications, provided an overview of SAWS efforts related to ARPA outreach and assistance program awareness. Ramos reviewed the efforts associated with residents with digital divide challenges and noted outreach coordination with various community partner organizations.

Chair Courage asked if SAWS sponsored meeting with the general public and if SAWS collaborated with CPS Energy on those meetings. Ramos stated that attendance at utility-only meetings was poor and staff would continue to attend joint meetings with other entities to increase attendance.

Bailey reviewed qualified census tract data in relation to customer delinquency statuses and noted that the data was being reviewed for outreach efforts and enrollment into assistance programs. Bailey discussed the impact of extending the cutoff dates for ARPA assistance. Chair Courage recommended SAWS propose an extension for Council consideration.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda asked about collaboration between SAWS and CPS Energy in generating applications for ARPA assistance.

Councilmember Bravo requested clarification on available ARPA assistance outside qualified census tract areas. Deputy City Manager Maria Villagomez noted that City programs, like the Emergency Housing Assistance Program (EHAP), focused on qualifying citizens impacted by COVID and needing assistance the most. Some individual in the qualified census tracts are not under the poverty line and could afford to pay for their services.

No action was required for Item 2.

3. **Briefing by CPS Energy and San Antonio Water System (SAWS) on the after action report from the 2022 February cold weather to include guidance from the utilities to City Council staff on navigating outage reporting systems and communication strategies for addressing resident concerns during emergencies.** [Ben Gorzell Jr., Chief Financial Officer; Troy Elliott, Deputy Chief Financial Officer]

Richard Medina, Interim EVP of Energy Delivery Services, provided an overview of CPS Energy service outages and the impact to customers related to the February 2022 weather event. Medina reviewed CPS Energy's focus on reliability to include budget improvements, technology and communications, and opportunities for improvements.

DeAnna Hardwick reviewed the communication provided to customers as a result of service outages to include residential messaging, commercial messaging, neighborhood communications, and calls received by customers. Hardwick provided an overview of outage support to include online services, phone calls, critical care customer and community partnerships that could assist in providing outreach and communications.

Melissa Sorola, Vice President of Corporate Communications and Marketing, provided an overview of communications provided to customers in preparing for possible outages, social media engagement, and other on-going collaborations with community partners, both in English and Spanish.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda stated that she was able to utilize outage communications and that she appreciated the communication efforts conducted by CPS Energy. Councilmember Cabello Havrda provided some feedback on some of the communication timelines and asked how information was provided when outages would be for extended periods of time. Hardwick provided an overview of communication delivery and stated that communication efforts were continuously being refined to improve services.

Councilmember Sandoval asked about the long-term maintenance plan for trees along service lines and the cost/benefit of undergrounding lines. Medina stated that there was continuous review of lines for potential issues and that CPS Energy had developed a plan for tree maintenance and targeted underground line installation. Councilmember Sandoval noted that CPS Energy had improved responsiveness to service outages and requested that focus groups be developed to address service delivery. CPS Energy CEO Rudy Garza stated that the utility company was committed to conduct focus groups.

Councilmember Bravo asked if tree maintenance was solely the responsibility of CPS Energy or if maintenance was shared by telephone or cable service providers. Medina stated that CPS Energy had set up cost sharing for maintenance through fees charged to the other providers. Councilmember Bravo asked for information on service response protocols and how issues were

prioritized. Medina stated that he would provide protocol information to the Councilmembers. Bravo asked when and where it made sense to bury power lines underground. Medina stated that CPS Energy relied on their Strategic Underground Plan and reliability to prioritize placement of power lines underground.

SAWS President Robert Puente provided an overview of activity during the February 2022 cold weather event. Puente noted that the weather event did not have a significant impact on the utility.

Chair Courage requested a status report on SAWS' recommendation from the Committee on Emergency Preparedness and FEMA reimbursement for Uri storm costs. Puente stated that the information would be provided.

Chair Courage asked how often outage maps were being updated during service outages. Rudy Garza stated that the maps were continuously updated and he reviewed improvements that were currently being implemented in information sharing efforts and would then provide improvements to service communications.

No action was required for Item 3.

4. Briefing by CPS Energy on the timeline and deliverables regarding the request for proposal (RFP) for an independent study of CPS Energy's operations, management, and finances.
[Ben Gorzell Jr., Chief Financial Officer; Troy Elliott, Deputy Chief Financial Officer]

Janie Gonzalez, CPS Energy Board Vice-Chair, provided an overview of the timeline and deliverables regarding the Request for Proposal (RFP) for an independent study of CPS Energy. Gonzalez reviewed the scope of services and solicitation timeline in the RFP.

Chair Courage asked the Committee Members for input on the solicitation.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda thanked CPS Energy for their cooperation and commitment to conducting the study and asked for more information on the criteria used to evaluate the vendors to conduct the study. Gonzalez reviewed the general criteria for evaluating potential vendors. Gonzalez noted that different vendors could be awarded for each of the specific area of the RFP. Councilmember Cabello Havrda applauded CPS Energy on their diligence and cooperation in conducting the study.

Councilmember Bravo noted his appreciation for the commitment of CPS Energy to conduct the study, the timeline in which they have agreed to have it completed, and the structure to have more than one vendor potentially provide services for the individual areas. Councilmember Bravo outlined his expectations for the RFP.

Chair Courage noted that it was important to explore the value of CPS Energy to the community and the impact of implementing any recommendations.

No action was required for Item 4

5. Briefing by the CPS Energy Rate Advisory Committee Liaison. [Ben Gorzell Jr., Chief Financial Officer; Troy Elliott, Deputy Chief Financial Officer]

Councilmember Sandoval, Council Liaison to the CPS Energy Rate Advisory (RAC), provided an update on input on RAC themes and provided an overview of the RAC structure and charge to provide advisory services to the CPS Energy Board and the City. Sandoval thanked Janie Gonzalez for her commitment and development as CPS Board Liaison and that CPS Board Member Romero would take over the Board Liaison role.

Councilmember Sandoval reviewed comments on operational themes as collected by the City Council. She stated that the City Council input included the need for community voices to be heard, regular updates to MUC and City Council, clarification on committee scope, support member requests for information and need for time to have good discussions by Councilmembers. Councilmember Sandoval stressed the need for and the importance of generation planning by CPS Energy and reviewed comment themes of City Councilmembers. Councilmember Sandoval noted that comments included timeline, plan and cost associated with generation planning, need for outside experts to provide input on plan, and the need for RAC to be up to date on generation planning available technology.

Chair Courage noted that the Liaison's report provided great information on the requests of City Council and what the RAC was charged to review and provide advisory comments and recommendations. Chair Courage commented that similar themes were relevant to the SAWS RAC. Chair Courage requested that reports be provided to the MUC 72 hours in advance of the meeting so Members would be able to prepare for meeting discussions.

Chair Courage called upon individuals registered to speak on Item 5.

Dr. Meredith McGuire spoke on her concerns of the utility company rate increases and usage of cost analysis to be used for rate structure.

No action was required for item 5.

6. Briefing on the Committee on Emergency Preparedness (CEP) recommendations tracking dashboard. [Ben Gorzell Jr., Chief Financial Officer; Troy Elliott, Deputy Chief Financial Officer]

Kevin Orton, CoSA Executive Management Assistant, provided an overview of the MUC website and noted that staff was working closely with the Information Technology Services Department to develop the website. Orton stated that the Committee on Emergency Preparedness (CEP) Dashboard continued to be developed and updated and provided an overview of the dashboard to the MUC.

Chair Courage noted that the dashboard and website would continuously be expanded with relevant data and asked if minutes and other presentations would be available on the website.

Orton confirmed that the data would be available on the website.

No action was required for item 6.

7. **Briefing by CPS Energy and San Antonio Water System (SAWS) on future committee meeting topics and schedule.** [Ben Gorzell Jr., Chief Financial Officer; Troy Elliott, Deputy Chief Financial Officer]

Chair Courage stated that the MUC was asking that the utility companies provide topics to be covered at future meetings. Robert Puente noted that SAWS had provided a listing of topics for the MUC's review.

Executive Session

No Executive Session was held.

Consideration of items for future meetings

The next Municipal Utilities Committee is tentatively scheduled for March 22, 2022.

Adjournment

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 11:49 AM.

Approved

John Courage, Chair

Respectfully Submitted

Debbie Racca-Sittre, Interim City Clerk