

City of San Antonio



Minutes

Community Health, Environment and Culture Committee

2021 – 2023 Council Members

Ana Sandoval, Dist. 7

Mario Bravo, Dist. 1 | Jalen McKee-Rodriguez, Dist. 2

Phyllis Viagran, Dist. 3 | Teri Castillo, Dist. 5

Tuesday, April 12, 2022

9:30 AM

City Hall

Members Present: Ana Sandoval, *Chair*
Mario Bravo, *Member*
Jalen McKee-Rodriguez, *Member*
Phyllis Viagran, *Member*
Teri Castillo, *Member*

Members Absent: None

Approval of Minutes

1. Approval of minutes for the March 25, 2022, Community Health, Environment, and Culture Committee meeting.

Councilmember Viagran moved to Approve the minutes for the March 25, 2022 Community Health, Environment and Culture Committee meeting. Councilmember Castillo seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Sandoval, Viagran, Castillo

Absent: Bravo, McKee-Rodriguez

Public Comments

Written testimony was received from Mary Ellen Goree in support of ARPA funding for the San Antonio Symphony.

Briefing and Possible Action on

2. Committee policy discussion and possible action on the State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

(“SLFRF”) Spending Framework adopted by City Council under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to include the categories of Non-Profits, Seniors and the Arts.

Maria Villagomez, Deputy City Manager, provided an overview of the City Council approved spending categories and Federal rules governing funding under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Deputy City Manager Villagomez stated that funding for Arts, Non-Profits and Seniors aligned with the ARPA Category of: Negative Economic Impact Expenditure. Deputy City Manager Villagomez stated that the Committee was expected to develop a plan that defined a COVID impact, including community benefit strategies with measurable metrics and equitable outcomes. Deputy City Manager Villagomez outlined a timeline for development, approval, and implementation of the Plans as well as the deadline for spending of funds.

DISCUSSION:

Chair Sandoval asked for more details and clarification regarding the City Council approval process. Deputy City Manager Villagomez replied that the plan was for all Plans to be approved by the fall of 2022, but stated that if the Committee completed its work sooner, it could be approved earlier.

Councilmember Viagran suggested that returning to City Council provided greater opportunities for input by the Public in addition to the Committee and requested survey responses received on a regular basis.

Chair Sandoval requested clarification on the equity outcomes. Deputy City Manager Villagomez explained that there needed to be a COVID impact with policy direction from the Committee.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked for a definition of “equitable.” Deputy City Manager Villagomez stated that funding should be aligned with ARPA priorities of disproportionately impacted communities and programs were expected to utilize the Equity Atlas.

Councilmember Castillo requested that the Committee have an opportunity to review the Request for Proposal (RFP) questionnaire before it was released. Councilmember Castillo recommended that the RFP ask about other funding received.

3. The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds for Arts. [Lori Houston, Assistant City Manager; Krystal Jones, Interim Director, Department of Arts & Culture]

Krystal Jones, Interim Director of Arts & Culture, provided an overview of the impact of COVID-19 on the Arts, an overview of the previous SA CARES 4 ART Program, FY2022 City investments in arts/ artists, and council/community input. Jones stated that after the Committee provided its priorities for ARPA, the Department would develop a plan, get input and approval from the San Antonio Arts Commission, and bring the draft back to the Committee for review and approval.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mary Ellen Goree, musician with the San Antonio Symphony, spoke in support of ARPA funding to help the Symphony musicians with funding for lost wages and benefits.

Jon Hinojosa, President and Chief Innovation Officer for Say Si arts non-profit and representative of an interest group named Cultural Arts United for San Antonio (CAUSA), spoke in support of ARPA funding for the Arts and requested acceleration of the funding.

DISCUSSION:

Councilmember Viagran asked about metrics collected for SA CARES 4 ART and recommended collecting information about returning staff to work and the level of wages to ensure equity standards are set for the Arts. Councilmember Viagran requested a report on the wages supported by the SA CARES 4 ART funding.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez suggested that the recommended \$5,000 grants for individual artists should be reviewed to see if it was enough and suggested that funding based upon the size of the budget might not be equitable for new organizations and recommended one-time investments to help build their capacity and to prioritize organizations that supported and promoted artists of color.

Councilmember Castillo expressed support of the artists and symphony musicians and wanted the Department to develop metrics to ensure that the arts organizations that received support would compensate their staff and musicians fairly.

Councilmember Bravo requested more information on the timeline and process but recommended that the process be accelerated.

Chair Sandoval recommended a one on one briefing with Councilmember Bravo and recommended that the item be taken to the San Antonio Arts Commission prior to the next meeting of the Committee. Councilmembers McKee-Rodriguez and Viagran requested information on funding for the San Antonio Symphony from Bexar County.

4. The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds for Seniors [Lori Houston, Assistant City Manager; Melody Woosley, Director, Human Services]

Melody Woosley, Director of the Department of Human Services, provided background and overview of the ARPA spending framework for seniors, FY2022 City investments in services targeting seniors, the 2019 Senior Services Strategic Plan and impacts of COVID-19 on the population as well as proposed mitigation strategies. Woosley provided a timeline for the process which included review and approval of the draft play by the Joint Commission on Elderly Affairs.

DISCUSSION:

Councilmember Viagran supported prioritizing seniors as they were heavily impacted by the social isolation of COVID-19, recommended outreach to the 50% of the seniors which had not returned to the Senior Centers and suggested more action to bridge the digital divide for seniors. Councilmember Viagran was also concerned with transportation for seniors, recommended more assistance from the benefit navigators and suggested that some seniors may need jobs.

Councilmember Castillo recommended an extended contract with the San Antonio Food Bank to assist seniors and an increase of physical activity classes at the Senior Centers. Councilmember Castillo recommended using benefit navigators to help get seniors signed up for the Homestead Tax Exemption and suggested more work on housing security.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez requested a new Senior Center in Council District 2 and recommended leveraging Mental Health funding for seniors and affordable housing. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez stated that transportation to the Senior Centers was a challenge for many Council District 2 residents.

Councilmember Bravo recognized that there was a large need for the senior population but did not support utilizing Mental Health funding for seniors.

Councilmember Viagran recommended that all Councilmembers tune into the Public Safety Committee's discussion on mental health to see how services and programs could overlap. Councilmember Viagran suggested that there should be a comprehensive survey of seniors.

Chair Sandoval closed the discussion by suggesting that there should be a consideration of how to serve seniors that might be fearful of being indoors at a Senior Center post-COVID and recommended surveys and discussions with seniors impacted. Chair Sandoval suggested that the Department should consider outdoor physical activity to help alleviate those fears. Chair Sandoval supported getting feedback from the Joint Commission on Elderly Affairs and recommended leveraging funding from Bexar Count

5. The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds for Nonprofits and Social Services. [Lori Houston, Assistant City Manager; Melody Woosley, Director, Human Services]

Melody Woosley, Director of the Department of Human Services, provided an overview of the ARPA spending framework for social service nonprofits, and FY2022 City investments. Woosley provided a timeline for the process which included coordination with the San Antonio Nonprofit Council, other funders and Faith-based organizations. Woosley explained that this funding would target social service nonprofit organizations not eligible in other categories.

DISCUSSION:

Chair Sandoval requested clarification on the membership of the Nonprofit Council as an outreach partner and recommended a focus on smaller nonprofit agencies and immigration service providers that might be more disproportionately impacted by COVID. Chair Sandoval recommended \$1.5 million to be set aside for immigration service providers. Deputy City Manager Villagomez explained that the Committee could develop a soft set of the non-profit allocation and have a policy discussion, in your case, for immigration services to our immigrant community.

Councilmember Castillo expressed support of accelerating funding for immigration service providers. Deputy City Manager Villagomez explained that staff would create the RFPs with the feedback from the Committee and implement an RFP process, and score and recommend those applications for funding. Councilmember Castillo wanted to ensure that the Committee received all applications, not just those recommended by staff.

Chair Sandoval asked if these applications were going to be declared High Profile and was concerned that the applicants would not have the opportunity to talk to City Council that other organizations have had. Shreya Shah, City Attorney, noted that the City Council could make the determination on the restrictions on communication.

Councilmember Viagran expressed concern that there were not limits on the funding for nonprofits like there was with arts. Councilmember Viagran wanted to ensure that the nonprofits provided equitable compensation and that these should be a consideration for a nonprofit to receive operational funding through the RFP.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez expressed concern that there would be too much individual lobbying. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez recommended a more collaborative structure to the Committee meetings. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez noted that smaller organizations might be at a disadvantage in responding to an RFP. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez recommended a focus on access to food and healthcare as a priority.

Chair Sandoval recommended that staff provide technical assistance for those applying to assist smaller organizations with their applications, recommended the living wage being added to the requirements, COVID precautions, and quantifying funding from other sources such as Bexar

County. Deputy City Manager Villagomez said staff would provide technical assistance and noted that the RFP must comply with Federal Guidelines.

Councilmember Viagran wanted more clarification and public input on the guidelines for immigration service providers. Councilmember Viagran suggested there could be another group of agencies that help with victims of crimes or other violence. Deputy City Manager Villagomez stated that staff would develop a preliminary plan to be brought back at the next Committee meeting for review by the Committee and public input.

Chair Sandoval closed the discussion by noting that the Committee would be heard at the May 10, 2022 Committee meeting and the next meeting of the Committee would be April 28, 2022 at 2:00 PM.

Chair Sandoval announced the Earth Day celebration to be held on April 23, 2022 at 10:00 AM at Woodlawn Lake Park and that the Climate Change Subcommittee meeting on benchmarking would be held later today.

Adjournment

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 11:26 AM.

Approved

Ana Sandoval, Chair

Respectfully Submitted

Debbie Racca-Sittre, Interim City Clerk