

City of San Antonio



Minutes Planning and Community Development Committee

2021 – 2023 Council Members

Dr. Adriana Rocha Garcia, Dist. 4
Phyllis Viagran, Dist. 3 | Teri Castillo, Dist. 5
Ana Sandoval, Dist. 7 | John Courage, Dist. 9

Thursday, January 19, 2023

10:00 AM

Council Briefing Room

The City Council convened a regular meeting in City Hall beginning at 10:01 AM. City Clerk Debbie Racca-Sittre took the Roll Call noting a quorum with the following Council Members present:

Members Present: Dr. Adriana Rocha Garcia, *Chair*
Phyllis Viagran, *Member*
Teri Castillo, *Member*
Ana Sandoval, *Member*
John Courage, *Member*

Members Absent: None

Approval of Minutes

1. Approval of minutes from December 12, 2022 Planning and Community Development Committee Meeting

Councilmember Castillo moved to Approve the minutes from the December 12, 2022 Planning and Community Development Committee meeting. Councilmember Viagran seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Rocha Garcia, Viagran, Castillo
Absent: Sandoval, Courage

Consent Agenda

2. Resolution of No Objection for Lincoln Avenue Capital's application to the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs' Non-Competitive 4% Housing Tax Credits program for the construction of Ellison Apartments, a 308-unit affordable

multi-family rental housing development, located at the Northwest Corner of Ellison Boulevard Holm Road and Old Pearsall Road, in Council District 4. [Lori Houston, Assistant City Manager; Veronica Garcia, Director, Neighborhood and Housing Services]

Councilmember Courage moved to Approve on the Consent Agenda. Councilmember Castillo seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Rocha Garcia, Viagran, Castillo, Sandoval, Courage

- 3. Resolution of No Objection for Pedcor Investments, LLC's application to the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs' Non-Competitive 4% Housing Tax Credits program for the construction of Creek Bend Apartment Homes, a 288 unit affordable multi-family rental housing development, located at the Northwest Quadrant of Highway 281 & Borgfeld Drive in Council District 9.** [Lori Houston, Assistant City Manager; Veronica Garcia, Director, Neighborhood and Housing Services]

Councilmember Courage moved to Approve on the Consent Agenda. Councilmember Castillo seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Rocha Garcia, Viagran, Castillo, Sandoval, Courage

- 4. Resolutions of Support for multifamily rental housing developments seeking 2023 Competitive 9% Housing Tax Credits from the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs.** [Lori Houston, Assistant City Manager; Veronica Garcia, Director, Neighborhood and Housing Services]

Avis Chaisson with Palladium USA spoke in support of the Item.

Councilmember Courage moved to Approve on the Consent Agenda. Councilmember Castillo seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Rocha Garcia, Viagran, Castillo, Sandoval, Courage

Briefing and Possible Action on

- 5. Briefing and possible action on Code Enforcement teams and units as well as data and performance metrics.** [Roderick Sanchez, Assistant City Manager; Michael Shannon, Director, Development Services]

Michael Shannon, Director of the Development Services Department (DSD), provided background and an update on Code Enforcement teams and units. Shannon outlined the structure of the 499 member Code Enforcement team and described their work and various areas of coordination. He listed top violations as: overgrown grass, junk vehicles, items stored outside, front yard parking, and outside trash, brush and debris.

Shannon listed the work provided by the various Special Units that included licensing and special permits for boarding homes, mobile living parks, short term rentals, metal recyclers, used

automotive parts recyclers, donation containers, scrap tire inspections, zoning and the Neighborhood Enhancement Team. Shannon provided data and performance metrics used for Code Enforcement. Shannon ended his presentation with an overview and metrics related to the Affordable Housing team and proactive apartment inspections.

Chair Rocha Garcia opened the discussion and commented that residents needed to know more about the Code Enforcement Unit. She asked of a potential fund which could be utilized to help residents in vulnerable situations. Shannon spoke of the Code Enforcement Fund which was created for use by residents who were financially or physically challenged. He added that \$15,000 was allocated to the fund annually.

Chair Rocha Garcia asked of efforts to retain employees. Shannon stated that efforts to retain employees included competitive wages and growth opportunities.

Councilmember Viagran asked if there was a way that residents could get information on violations. Shannon stated that Code cases could be accessed online and at neighborhood meetings. Councilmember Viagran stated that she would like to see a focus on enforcement for cars parked in yards.

Councilmember Castillo asked for the percentage of resident initiated calls for violations and those which were Code Officer driven. Shannon stated that in the first quarter, 34% were resident initiated calls and 66% were Code Officer driven. Councilmember Castillo requested clarification on the work that Code Officers were performing in the different units and the coordination between the specialty units including whether there was a central database where they could all share information particularly when they visited the neighborhoods. She supported increasing the Code Violation Fund and potential new software to track.

Councilmember Sandoval asked if certain violations were prioritized. Shannon stated that the department was charged to be more proactive than reactive. Councilmember Sandoval stated that a strategic or comprehensive approach was needed.

Veronica Garcia, Director of the Neighborhood and Housing Services Department (NHSD), stated that the owner-occupied and minor repair programs were allocated \$23 million this year and NHSD worked closely with DSD to refer clients to their programs.

Councilmember Courage asked for details on the number of vacancies in the department.

Councilmember Castillo asked of communication within each special unit. Shannon stated that there was continual communication between special units. She noted that discussions should be held about increasing the amount of funding in the Code Enforcement Fund.

Councilmember Courage asked who was working on noise complaints. Shannon stated that noise complaints were addressed by the San Antonio Police Department (SAPD) in a pilot project that was not yet completed. Councilmember Courage requested a separate briefing on the noise complaint pilot.

Councilmember Sandoval asked about the weekend hours worked by code enforcement staff.

Shannon stated that 15 code officers worked on Saturdays but the rest of the weekend was emergency/on-call type cases and generally were related to work without permits, garage sales and front yard parking.

Councilmember Courage requested clarification on the boarding home unit and their role in group homes for persons dealing with drug/alcohol addiction. Shannon stated that boarding homes were considered medical facilities for three or more elderly or disabled individuals, but sober homes had no additional regulation.

No action was required for Item 5.

6. Briefing and possible action on the City's Housing Assistance Program [Lori Houston, Assistant City Manager; Veronica Garcia, Director, Neighborhood & Housing Services Department]

Assistant Director of the Neighborhood and Housing Services Department (NHSD), Veronica Gonzales, provided an overview of the Housing Assistance Program (HAP) which was comprised of rental, utility, and homeless assistance. Gonzales outlined the program's budget noting that the City had recently received additional Federal funding that was expected to be accepted by City Council in March 2023. Gonzales showed a chart of the number of applicants by council district and recommended reopening the application period on February 1, 2023 to assist more families with a focus on families that faced eviction. Gonzales stated that the Relocation Assistance Program portal was still open and had a goal of processing applications within 48 hours noting that approximately 25 applications were received daily. Gonzales also described the Department of Human Services Rapid Rehousing Program which supported households with 12-24 months of rental assistance.

Chair Rocha Garcia thanked the department for helping so many residents and was supportive of the additional funding and extension of the application period. She asked how many people were trying to get assistance more than once per year. Gonzales stated that the HAP was less than one year old but the program only allows applications once every 12 months. Gonzales credited Councilmember Courage with recommending a partnership with Workforce Solutions Alamo.

Councilmember Courage asked what percent of applications were assisted. Gonzales stated that during the period of May through June 2022 the approval rate was over 50% but the approval rate went down the next time because the rule of assistance only every 12 months went into effect. Councilmember Courage recommended following up with those who did not receive assistance to see what happened to them. Gonzales stated that the department would conduct a survey and also invite them to reapply once they were eligible again. Councilmember Courage requested data on the number of landlords who worked with the department and recommended collaboration with the San Antonio Apartment Association.

Councilmember Castillo provided an example of a program to assist unhoused students and youth noting that there was a spike in these cases reported by Harlandale and San Antonio Independent School Districts. She expressed concern that too many families were turned away because many of the partner agencies had run out of funding. Assistant City Manager Lori Houston clarified that 600 individuals had requested assistance but could not be helped due to

lack of funding and now that there was more money becoming available, they would be called back to see if they can get help. Councilmember Castillo stated that many families were having trouble putting down a deposit and getting a lease so that they would qualify for relocation assistance. Assistant City Manager Houston added that there needed to be more affordable and public housing.

Chair Rocha Garcia commented that the Planning & Community Development Committee (PCDC) would oversee the Housing Bond. Assistant City Manager Houston clarified that the Housing Commission was the citizen's advisory board that would report to the PCDC. Chair Rocha Garcia stated that she was hosting a homeless prevention roundtable and added that the non-profit Communities in Schools was focusing on youth and student housing issues.

Councilmember Sandoval congratulated the department on completing the application reviews in 48 hours and asked if all the funding was related to COVID. Gonzales clarified that some of the Federal funds were tied to COVID but not the other funding. Councilmember Sandoval recommended commissioning a study of availability of affordable housing and an analysis of preservation versus new construction. Assistant City Manager Houston stated that there was information available that would be provided. Ian Benavidez, Deputy Director of NHSD, stated that \$40 million was available in the 2022 Bond Program for the rehabilitation of existing units.

Councilmember Viagran requested information on outreach efforts and recommended prioritizing individuals that were trying to move somewhere because they were facing violence. Gonzales noted various partners that were working with NHSD on these efforts. Councilmember Viagran requested data on evictions occurring due to rental cost increases.

Councilmember Sandoval requested information on evictions in the City versus Bexar County, report on results, and how many applicants dropped out of the program due to eviction. Councilmember Sandoval asked whether there was sufficient staffing at the Justice of the Peace Courts for right to counsel. Gonzales stated that more staff were needed but there was additional funding and staffing would be added through partners. Gonzales stated that right to counsel proactively reached out to families who were going through the eviction process, however, the "Notice to Vacate" was not filed with the court so the filings could not be tracked. Assistant City Manager Houston recommended providing information to the PCDC on how they were proactive.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia noted that the City Attorney's Office was working on a Tenant's Bill of Rights.

Councilmember Courage asked if there was a roundtable to regularly share information or a database that provided availability of affordable housing units, emergency or rehabilitation housing. Gonzales stated that the department was planning to launch a toolkit later this year. Benavidez stated that the department regularly reached out to partners to help families find available housing and would work with affordable housing providers and associations to provide the information.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia reported that the Federal Government was developing some requirements for technology and databases on housing but there was no funding allocated, so she

recommended that the City's Legislative Agenda advocate for this program.

Councilmember Castillo requested a report on the number of families per council district that applied and were assisted. She also recommended more hands-on case management with the families to help them access other services such as applying for Medicaid. Gonzales stated that Senior Support Workers and Benefit Navigators provided this assistance.

Chair Rocha Garcia spoke in support the need to help families access services and benefits and recommended a pilot program to help improve outcomes.

No action was required for Item 6.

7. Briefing and possible action related to the 2023 Property Tax Help Campaign [Lori Houston, Assistant City Manager; Veronica Garcia, Director, Neighborhood & Housing Services Department]

Veronica Garcia, Director of Neighborhood and Housing Services Department (NHSD), provided an overview of the educational campaign to help empower residents with resources and information to combat rising property taxes through a new initiative funded at \$250,000 in the City's FY 2023 Budget. Garcia stated that the program was expected to host 18 city-wide clinics that would provide information and assistance to homeowners in applying for the various exemptions such as homestead, over age 65 or disabled. She added that services were targeted to low income homeowners and individuals age 64 and older.

Garcia noted that information would also be provided on how to protest taxes with the Bexar County Appraisal District (BCAD) in attendance at the clinics to provide information as well as the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program. Garcia provided an overview of the marketing and outreach that was planned and provided the criteria for clinic locations and noted that there would be at least one session in Spanish.

Chair Rocha Garcia recommended partnerships with local Spanish television or other media on the Spanish sessions. Chair Rocha Garcia, who sits on the BCAD Board, noted that the Chief Appraiser was retiring and a new one would be selected but recommended that the Chief Appraiser and the Tax Assessor Collector attend the sessions. Chair Rocha Garcia recommended listing not only free services but paid services as well so residents could access assistance.

Councilmember Sandoval spoke in support of the all Spanish session.

Councilmember Courage recommended coordination with the participating organizations in advance of the sessions so that information was presented in a clear and consistent manner.

Councilmember Viagran suggested that the staff develop a frequently asked questions since there were several people who attended the Council District 3 sessions who were investors.

Councilmember Castillo recommended targeting the door hangers to certain areas of higher need and to host an event in an area with low levels of homestead exemptions.

No action was required for Item 7.

Adjournment

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

Approved

Adriana Rocha Garcia, Chair

Debbie Racca-Sittre, City Clerk