

# City of San Antonio



## Minutes Municipal Utilities Committee

2021 – 2023 Council Members

John Courage, Dist. 9 Chair

Jalen McKee-Rodriguez, District 2 | Phyllis Viagran, District 3

Melissa Cabello Havrda, Dist. 6

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**Tuesday, January 24, 2023**

**10:00 AM**

**City Hall Complex**

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The Municipal Utilities Committee convened a regular meeting in the Council Briefing Room in the City Hall Complex beginning at 10:08 AM. Deputy City Clerk Aurora Perkins took the Roll Call noting a quorum with the following Committee Members present:

**Members Present:** John Courage, *Chair*  
Jalen McKee-Rodriguez, *Member*  
Phyllis Viagran, *Member*  
Melissa Cabello Havrda, *Member*  
Ana Sandoval, *Member*

**Members Absent:** None

### Approval of Minutes

#### 1. Approval of minutes from the November 29, 2022 Municipal Utilities Committee meeting.

Councilmember Sandoval moved to Approve the minutes from the November 29, 2022 Municipal Utilities Committee meeting. Councilmember Cabello Havrda seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye:** Courage, McKee-Rodriguez, Cabello Havrda, Sandoval

**Absent:** Viagran

Councilmember Viagran entered the meeting at 10:49 AM.

### Executive Session

Mayor Nirenberg recessed the meeting into Executive Session at 1:02 PM to deliberate and

discuss the following:

- A. Economic development negotiations pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 551.087 (economic development).
- B. The purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 551.072 (real property).
- C. Legal issues related to litigation involving the City pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 551.071 (consultation with attorney).
- D. Legal issues relating to COVID-19 preparedness pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 551.071 (consultation with attorney).

Mayor Nirenberg reconvened the meeting in Open Session at 2:02 PM and announced that no official action had been taken in Executive Session.

#### **Briefing and Possible Action on**

- 2. **Briefing by CPS Energy on the CPS Energy Board of Trustees' generation planning portfolio vote during the January 23, 2023 CPS Energy Board meeting.** [Ben Gorzell Jr., Chief Financial Officer; Troy Elliott, Deputy Chief Financial Officer]

Dr. Willis Mackey, Board Chairperson for the CPS Energy Board, provided a briefing on the Board of Trustees' generation planning portfolio vote on the January 23, 2023 Board meeting associated with the utility company generation plan. He noted that CPS Energy was set to close all coal plants moving to natural gas and alternative renewable energy sources to include solar, battery storage and wind energy sources. He noted that CPS Energy would provide a report to the Committee within the next 30 days on the projected plan for energy generation sources.

Chair Courage thanked Dr. Mackey for his service on the board and stated that he looked forward to reports from CPS Energy associated with energy generation plan.

Councilmembers Sandoval, Cabello Havrda and McKee-Rodriguez thanked Dr. Mackey for his service as Chairman of the Board and efforts on power generation. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked for CPS Energy to perform bi-annual reviews of energy sources. He hoped that CPS Energy would move from natural gas sources sooner than 2065.

Chair Courage asked for clarification on the timing of a report on the plan for the generation energy sources to the Committee. CPS Energy President Rudy Garza stated that a report on the plan would be provided at the next Municipal Utilities Committee meeting in February 2023 and spoke to the steps and timeline related to building the report.

No action was required for Item 2.

- 3. **Briefing by the San Antonio Water System on the advanced meter infrastructure initiative, the**

**ConnectH2O program.** [Ben Gorzell Jr., Chief Financial Officer; Troy Elliott, Deputy Chief Financial Officer]

Meghan Patronella, SAWS Director of Operational Excellence and Customer Service, spoke on a study of advanced water meter infrastructure and the ConnectH2O Program. She noted that the ConnectH2O Program had three phases to include pilot meter installation.

Patronella reviewed the deployment of meters and network performance during the study phase. She stated that the network had proven to be highly reliable and that a large effort communication plan of the Program was deployed to water customers. Patronella reviewed customer feedback and results received from installation surveys. Patronella reviewed the next wave of customer communications to include water usage data and on-line ConnectH2O internet web data. She added that water communications to customers was used to provide customers alerts of water usage or issues.

Patronella reviewed the next steps of usage of Automated Metering Infrastructure (AMI) data across all SAWS operations. Mary Bailey, SAWS Senior Vice President of Customer Experience and Strategic Initiatives, provided an update of upcoming planned ConnectH2O meter installations. She noted that the third party meter installer had not met the required installation projections and that a contract for a new installer was to be deployed for increased installation metrics.

Chair Courage noted that when CPS Energy implemented AMI, many customers were upset by increased bills due to more accurate readings and he assumed that we have similar expectations with the new water meters. He asked how did SAWS plan to address this? Bailey stated that the new meters were more accurate and provided true readings due to faulty or less reliable previously used meters. Bailey stated that communications were provided to customers to address water usage concerns and issues and stated that over time, water usage would decrease overall. Chair Courage reiterated the importance of communications of meter reading accuracy and possible bill increases.

Chair Courage asked for clarification on the troubleshooting responses to customers who used the mobile application for meter readings and reports. Patronella provided clarification on response times and stated that customer responses were completed within 24 hours.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked for clarification on the water meter network deployment and equity installations. Patronella stated that deployment plans were for the entire city and plans to meet all areas of the City. Bailey reiterated that the deployment plan addressed the entire city and did not concentrate on single areas more than others.

Councilmember Viagran stated that the digital divide needed to be continuously considered for customer communications. She asked if there were programs that assisted low income customers to address water leak concerns prior to meter installations. Gavino Ramos, SAWS Vice President of Communications, stated that SAWS had programs currently in place to assist customers with water repair issues such as leaking toilets and showers. Councilmember Viagran asked for a meeting to continue to discuss digital divide concerns and communications.

No action was required for Item 3.

**4. Briefing by the San Antonio Water System on the Sanitary Sewer Overflow Consent Decree.** [Ben Gorzell Jr., Chief Financial Officer; Troy Elliott, Deputy Chief Financial Officer]

Alissa Lockett, SAWS Senior Director of Water Operations, provided an update on SAWS Sanitary Sewer Overflow Consent Decree and reviewed the Consent Decree (CD) timeline. She noted that the CD timeline included an assessment of the water sewer system, reporting to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and an associated plan to address findings. Lockett noted that SAWS had invested over \$1.09 billion to address project work and improvements.

Lockett reviewed the W-6 Lackland Project that was the most complex sewer pipeline project in San Antonio's history at \$168 million and included rerouting pipelines around Lackland Air Force Base. She reviewed that the W-6 Project impacted other water projects and stated that continued EPA reporting was conducted during the installation process. She added that the W-6 Project had greatly improved sewer operations and decreased sewer overflows.

Chair Courage asked what was the greatest cause of sewer overflows. Lockett noted that tree roots and debris were the greatest cause of wastewater pipe issues. Chair Courage asked if the current sewer plants were working efficiently and if any plants were recently closed. Lockett stated that all plants were working efficiently and that there were no plants that were closed in recent years. She added that a sewer plan review was to be conducted to provide more oversight. Chair Courage requested that the topic be addressed in a future meeting to learn more about the plan.

Councilmember Viagran asked if there were education programs at the school level on what should not be put into wastewater pipes to include diapers and wipes. Gavino Ramos, SAWS Vice President of Communications and Government Affairs, stated that communication programs were in place from the elementary level through the college level. Councilmember Viagran also stressed continued communications to senior residents of grease and other debris being disposed through water pipelines.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked if there was a map available for water sewage incidents. Lockhart stated that a map would be provided.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked of communications to residents and businesses associated with construction projects and impact to water services. Ramos stated that prior to construction start, SAWS met with construction companies of project impact and communications were then sent to all resident and commercial water users of upcoming issues.

Robert Puente stated that SAWS looked forward to continued reporting on water sewer operations and pipe installations. He noted that the EPA used SAWS as an example of water sewer operations.

No action was required for Item 4.

**5. Briefing by the San Antonio Water System on Water Supply security.** [Ben Gorzell Jr., Chief Financial Officer; Troy Elliott, Deputy Chief Financial Officer]

Donovan Burton, Senior Vice President of Water Resources and Supply, provided an overview of San Antonio Water System (SAWS) water supply security and spoke to the factors associated with water management and water supply resiliency. He noted that water management planning included addressing extreme climates to include drought conditions and water disruptions such as main breaks.

Burton noted that water demand and conservation were key factors in managing water demand and quality to include promoting water conservation at the legislative level. He added that water conservation was addressed in the water supply and wastewater areas.

Burton spoke on the current water supply portfolio to include the Edwards Aquifer and other sources. He stated that SAWS was focused on resiliency of water supply distribution and preservation of the Edwards Aquifer and spoke to the non-Edwards Aquifer water sources and distribution areas. Burton reviewed water supply contracts and terms which were contracted through 2080. He noted that the agreements were established under the SAWS Water Management Plan.

Chair Courage noted that based on the report, the City of San Antonio did not anticipate a water shortage in the future. Burton stated that a shortage was not anticipated but that continued analysis and calculations were conducted in the Water Management Planning Program and that reports would be provided for review. He also noted that projected population growth was considered in calculations.

Chair Courage asked for clarification on the costs associated with water disruptions on the Vista Ridge supply. Burton clarified that the partner (a private entity) was responsible for repairing water line breaks. Chair Courage asked if associated costs were transferred to water customers. Burton clarified that costs would not be transferred to customers due to contracted rates per year and could not be raised.

Chair Courage asked for clarification of the impact of a recent power loss at the Clouse Water Recycling Plant in November 2022. SAWS Vice-President of Production and Treatment, Jeff Haby, spoke to the incident and stated that the incident impacted wastewater operations and not water sources.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda noted the improvements in water pressure technology. She asked for clarification on the gaps on water demand and water supply. Burton defined the water demand term of GPCD as Gallons per Capita Per Day, and spoke to the impacts of water conservation efforts to include new technology which would improve water conservation. SAWS President Robert Puente noted that SAWS would continue to follow legislation associated with water conservation. Councilmember Cabello Havrda stated that she supported water conservation efforts associated with zero scaping landscaping and water irrigation. Puente noted that zero scaping had little impact on water conservation.

Councilmember Sandoval asked for clarification on GPCD reporting. Burton noted that data provided included all water usage for both commercial and residential usage. Councilmember Sandoval stated that she was also interested in zero scaping efforts and impact to conservation.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked what meetings occurred with the Edwards Aquifer Alliance and other partner organizations associated with land use and impact to water supplies. Burton spoke to conversations associated with land use and water conservation.

Councilmember Viagran asked if there was any legislation in the upcoming legislative session associated with water conservation. Burton noted that there was not any substantial legislation associated with water conservation but that there was some on water supply issues and resiliency. Councilmember Viagran noted that grass fire threats and education were important and asked for continued education on the impact of grass fires.

No action was required for Item 5.

### **Adjournment**

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

**Approved**

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***John Courage, Chair***

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**Debbie Racca-Sittre, City Clerk**