

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



**Meeting Minutes
City Council B Session**

City Hall Complex
San Antonio, Texas 78205

2021 – 2023 Council Members

Mayor Ron Nirenberg

Mario Bravo, 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
Rosie Castro, Dist. 7 | Manny Pelaez, Dist. 8
John Courage, Dist. 9 | Clayton Perry, Dist. 10

Wednesday, April 19, 2023

2:00 PM

City Hall Complex

The City Council convened a regular meeting in the Norma S. Rodriguez Council Chamber in the Municipal Plaza Building 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, Bravo, McKee-Rodriguez, Viagran, Rocha Garcia, Castillo, Cabello Havrda, Castro, Pelaez, Courage, Perry

ABSENT: None

ITEMS

1. Pre-K 4 SA program overview and briefing on the Pre-K 4 SA FY 2024 Annual Operating Budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2023. [Alejandra Lopez, Assistant City Manager; Sarah Baray, Ph.D., CEO, Pre-K 4 SA]

City Manager Erik Walsh introduced the Item and Dr. Sarah Baray, Pre-K 4 SA Chief Executive Officer. City Manager Walsh provided background on the Pre-K 4 SA Program and noted that the proposed budget had already been approved by the Pre-K 4 SA Board and noted that the Program was reauthorized by voters in the May 2020 election.

Baray listed five strategic goals for the program including: 1) Access to high quality pre-kindergarten education for 3 and 4 year old's, 2) Strengthen early learning infrastructure, 3) Elevate and support families as educational partners, leaders and advocates, 4) Attract, develop and retain top talent, and 5) Leverage Pre-K 4 SA's position as a national leader and expert in high quality early learning and care to advance early childhood policy, research and innovation.

Baray reported that a new building had been developed on the South side under a public/private partnership on donated land. Baray provided a chart projecting a seven-year financial forecast beginning with the 2023 re-estimate which included sales tax revenues, grants and tuition. Baray outlined the Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) proposed Budget, personnel complement with 18 new positions including 4 unfunded positions within the proposed 485 positions. She added that the unfunded positions would be available to help fill vacancies quickly and ensure coverage.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia spoke in support of Pre-K 4 SA's model of including special needs programs. Baray stated that the Pre-K 4 SA teachers did not provide direct special education but could access speech therapy and other services. Councilmember Rocha Garcia supported continuing and/or higher education for teachers as well as parents. Baray stated that through the partnership with Ready to Work and other childcare providers needs could be met.

Councilmember Castillo mentioned that Pre-K 4 SA staff had circulated a petition seeking more Teacher's Assistant positions and planning time for the teachers. Baray stated that about 30% of the students were three years old and required more staffing and teachers were planning during nap time and after school. City Manager Walsh requested a copy of the petition.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda noted that sometimes children did not take a nap and other duties such as supervising pickup at the end of day, so a backup Teacher's Assistant should be available. Councilmember Cabello Havrda supported the fully inclusive program with teachers that were training and asked about turnover and loss of staff. Baray responded that the program was also educational for staff to help them move on to become teachers in other schools as a training pipeline.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez supported services to three year old's but recognized that they required more oversight, so he supported the new positions and the request from the teachers for more staff. Baray replied that there had been training provided to help the teachers work with younger children or a mixed age group. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez listed the requests included on the petition that had been facilitated by AFSCME but since the leadership had not seen it, City Manager Walsh requested to provide a response by memo and further discussion.

Councilmember Viagran supported the recommendation to add positions and suggested adding more staff through a pilot program in order to provide special training such as financial literacy and focus on education of black and brown girls. Councilmember Viagran requested clarification on grant funding which appeared to be in decline. Baray explained that grant funding was steady, it was simply being reclassified and shifted to focus more on child development. Councilmember Viagran spoke in support of the new facility on the south side.

Councilmember Castro recommended exit interviews or surveys when a participant dropped out.

Ramsey stated that these were performed on the 3% that dropped but most did not respond as it was likely they were experiencing other life challenges or even moved away. Councilmember Castro recommended developing financial incentives or stipends for participants and suggested adding points on our contracting solicitations to those who hired RtW participants. City Attorney Andy Segovia noted that there were legal limits related to contract points that might require an Ordinance to implement or may not be allowed. City Manager Walsh noted that the disparity study was underway and he would look at contracting opportunities.

Councilmember Courage expressed concern that there were too few enrollees that completed the program and got jobs and requested a review of the potential barriers. Councilmember Courage suggested that the time commitment to the training program might be a barrier for a low-income individual because they could not support their families and attend training at the same time. Ramsey stated that there was not a living stipend attached to the program so they would have to keep working as the only help was more emergency or one-time based. Councilmember Courage supported a stipend or incentive for participants recommended by Councilmember Castro.

Councilmember Bravo sympathized with the request from the teachers through the AFSCME petition and noted that he had visited one of the sites and was very impressed with the professionalism and quality.

Councilmember Perry expressed concern that residents were being double taxed because the State paid for full day public school prekindergarten services suggesting that the Pre-K 4 SA program was duplicative. Baray clarified that public school pre K was income based and three year old programs were only half day. Councilmember Perry requested comparison of the cost of Pre-K 4 SA versus the public school. Baray stated Pre-K 4 SA's cost was \$12,070 per child and included not only full day but after school care. Councilmember Perry looked forward to outcomes when the kids got to high school.

Councilmember Perry expressed concern with the Pre-K 4 SA grants to public schools and requested a return on investment. Baray stated that the funding was intended to improve the quality of pre-kindergarten education in the public schools and provide full day programs.

Councilmember Perry inquired how the fund balance would be used. Baray stated that the fund balance allowed the program to be agile and could be used for a wind-down of the program if it was not reauthorized or would continue the program if it was reauthorized.

Councilmember Pelaez commented that Pre-K 4 SA was a starting point to ensure our residents were successful in not only school but also in life and employment.

City Manager Walsh announced that the Item would be included on the May 18, 2023 City Council Agenda.

Mayor Nirenberg noted that the program was intended to change lives and the program was showing progress.

2. Briefing on SA: Ready to Work updated FY 2022 through FY 2028 Financial Forecast, FY 2023

Re-Estimate, and FY 2024 Annual Operating Budget. [Alejandra Lopez, Assistant City Manager; Michael Ramsey, Executive Director, Workforce Development Office]

City Manager Erik Walsh introduced the Item and Mike Ramsey, Director of Ready to Work (RtW). Walsh provided background on the program and noted that the program was authorized by voters in the May 2020 election through 2026, at which time, the sales tax will be redirected to VIA Metropolitan Transit. Walsh thanked Ben Peavy chair of RtW Advisory Board, Jennifer Cantu chair of the Employer Engagement Committee of the RtW Board for their work.

Michael Ramsey, Executive Director, Workforce Development Office, reported that of the 4,867 program applicants interviewed, 2,040 had been enrolled, 278 successfully completed training and 100 were placed in jobs with a median starting hourly wage of \$19. Ramsey stated that RtW was ramping up and he predicted stronger outcomes noting that the re-estimates reflected that residents and employers needed the program and matching the talent supply and demand would be transformational for our community as the labor force remained fragile.

Ramsey listed a number of outreach and engagement methods, designed to be equitable, responsive and flexible. Ramsey provided a breakdown of the \$22.3 million FY23 re-estimated Budget which was reduced from \$46.7 million and the proposed \$35.2 million FY24 Budget. Ramsey stated that the program cost \$6,175 for each of the individuals that had obtained jobs which was less than the projected \$8,169.

Ramsey outlined a \$2 million on-the-job training and incumbent worker training program and a \$1 million paid internship pilot program. Ramsey stated that the program was developing new talent pipeline partnerships which included job databases and matching websites that would connect with employers that pledged to participate in the RtW program. In addition to employer engagement, Ramsey provided an overview of community engagement with various partners, including City departments. Ramsey showcased a digitized dashboard that provided performance measures.

Mayor Nirenberg paralleled Pre-K 4 SA with RtW as it was not a fast start but had taken hold and he expected the RtW program to help break cycles of poverty the way Pre-K 4 SA had.

Mayor Nirenberg commented that there were tens of thousands of families in our city today having to work 2-3 jobs just to put food on the table and this has been a generational poverty issue for San Antonio. He stated that Train for Jobs was a start to help people obtain the education necessary to pull families out of poverty. Mayor Nirenberg stated that the 2020 vote of the residents to create RtW was a commitment by the City to change the future.

Mayor Nirenberg noted that while the program had a slow start, the program was making significant progress as there were 100 people in new jobs that exponentially changed the lives of not only the participants but their children and grandchildren. He explained that not a dollar was spent for a participant unless they were working their way through the pipeline.

Mayor Nirenberg acknowledged that this was not an easy change to make in our community but applauded the commitment and work of the staff, partners, and City Council to solve long term generational poverty. Mayor Nirenberg noted that most cities were experiencing employment

issues, but San Antonio had invested heavily to change the lives of our residents long term.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia suggested block walking and distributing door hangers to help increase outreach and enrollment as well as development of Spanish language advertisements at traditional and non-traditional outlets including hospitals, medical centers, schools, VIA busses, San Antonio Public Library and other methods.

Councilmember Castillo supported the program being nimble and flexible and appreciated the outreach to formerly incarcerated individuals. Councilmember Castillo recommended development of a partnership with high schools to connect youth to jobs and job training/apprenticeships.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda recommended continuous polling of employers to ensure that our training programs were meeting their needs. Councilmember Cabello Havrda asked what would make someone ineligible for the program. Ramsey stated the most common was living outside the City limits, being over income, and being unable to commit to the program.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda recommended a partnership with the Westside Education and Training Center and outreach with agencies to serve youth aging out of foster care. Councilmember Cabello Havrda requested statistics on special needs populations including persons with disabilities to be included on the dashboard. Councilmember Cabello Havrda noted that truck drivers obtaining a Commercial Driver's License had been the most successful training program, but the greatest in demand occupations were in healthcare.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez expressed optimism regarding the program even though it had gotten off to a slow start. He recommended more collaboration and partnerships to ensure that more participants completed the program and got a job. Ramsey stated that there was a 97% retention rate so most participants that had not completed, were still in training. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez requested projections on completions and asked about the goal of participation once the program was completely ramped up. Ramsey replied that participation might not be consistent. City Manager Walsh indicated that multiple opportunities were being reviewed to ensure success.

Councilmember Viagran recommended addressing the gap between the number of persons that were confirmed eligible versus those enrolled and offered to assist through her Council District 3 Office. Councilmember Viagran supported making the program successful.

Councilmember Castro supported the work of Pre-K 4 SA to not only educate young children, but to instill confidence and provide other services such as speech therapy or refer them to other services such as medical or psychological. Councilmember Castro recommended parenting classes and the promotoras to help improve outcomes and provide stress relief.

Councilmember Courage recommended a longitudinal study of the outcomes for children that participated in Pre-K 4 SA and inclusion services. Baray stated that UTSA was performing a study that had already shown participants had higher reading and math scores later. Baray stated that the other services often centered on self regulation and language.

Councilmember Courage asked Baray about their partnership with Texas A&M San Antonio.

Councilmember Courage recommended a larger building on the south side to serve more children. Baray cautioned against having too large of a group which could diminish returns. Councilmember Courage supported the budget and the addition of Teacher Assistants.

Councilmember Bravo recommended serving formerly incarcerated persons to help reduce crime and looked forward to more outcomes. Councilmember Bravo compared the RtW Program to a scholarship that only paid for tuition and fees but not living expenses but noted that apprenticeship programs often paid a wage during training. Ramsey mentioned that the OJT Pilot Program was a paid training program. Councilmember Bravo asked how 250% of poverty level was determined to be the cut off for income qualifications. Ramsey stated that it was originally 200% poverty level but was increased to get more participation.

Councilmember Perry expressed concern that the metrics kept changing and suggested more transparency noting that the cost per participant had increased.

Councilmember Pelaez noted that both Pre-K 4 SA and RtW were interconnected and planned to break the cycle of poverty. He compared the beginning of Pre-K 4 SA with where RtW was now and recommended continuing the effort. Councilmember Pelaez recommended focusing on persons wanting to work such as refugees and suggested outreaching to the Mexican Consulate.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia noted that the original estimate of 40,000 impacted may have also included members of families. Councilmember Rocha Garcia recalled that community-based organizations were planned to be used as ambassadors for the program and suggested outreach during Fiesta. Ramsey stated they had been coordinating with the community-based organizations and passed out Fiesta medals. Councilmember Rocha Garcia requested information about the ineligibility and those leaving the program.

Councilmember Perry requested information as to why 278 had completed the program were not already in jobs. Ramsey stated that it took a minimum of 45 days for those individuals to get jobs after completion with the longest being 6 months. City Manager Walsh agreed that the pipeline of employers needed to be tightened. Councilmember Perry requested data on the wage increases and how much was spent to date compared to the participation rate.

City Manager Walsh announced that the Item would be included on the May 18, 2023 City Council Agenda.

Mayor Nirenberg noted that the program was intended to change lives and lives did not change quickly.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Executive Session was not held.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 4:48 p.m.

Approved

Ron Nirenberg
Mayor

Debbie Racca-Sittre
City Clerk

DRAFT