

**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 | Marc Whyte, Dist. 10

**Wednesday, June 7, 2023**

**2:00 PM**

**Municipal Plaza Building**

The City Council convened a regular meeting in the Council Briefing Room at City Hall beginning at 2:01 PM. City Clerk Debbie Racca-Sittre took the Roll Call noting a quorum with the following Council Members present:

**PRESENT: 10** – Nirenberg, Bravo, McKee-Rodriguez, Viagran, Rocha Garcia, Castillo, Cabello Havrda, Castro, Pelaez, Courage, Whyte

**ABSENT:** None

**ITEMS**

1. Briefing on sustainability and climate initiatives, the Resiliency, Energy Efficiency, and Sustainability Fund (REES), Solar Request for Proposal, and federal funded sustainability programs and opportunities. [David McCary, Assistant City Manager, Douglas Melnick, Office of Sustainability]

City Manager Erik Walsh introduced the Item and presenters David McCary, Assistant City Manager, Jeff Coyle, Assistant City Manager and Jonathan Tijerina, Vice President of CPS Energy.

Assistant City Manager McCary provided an overview of the presentation and stated that the

Resiliency, Energy Efficiency, & Sustainability (REES) Fund was created in fiscal year 2023 and funded with a portion of the City's payment from CPS Energy on Save for Tomorrow Energy Plan (STEP) Recovery. Assistant City Manager McCary reported that 146 individual projects had been approved and \$1 million awarded through the Eco Scholars School Grant Program to schools located across all council districts. Projects included: recycling and composting programs; solar energy projects; pollinator, vegetable, hydroponic and aquaponic gardens; water reduction and reclamation systems; trees programs; promoting biodiversity and healthy ecosystems; resource reduction through upcycling programs; and community education & empowerment on the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP).

Under the REES Fund, Assistant City Manager McCary reported that 10 Cool Pavement Pilot Projects had been initiated by the Public Works Department and the results would be studied by UTSA to determine the effect on heat island. Assistant City Manager McCary stated that the REES Program would continue to fund additional grants, move into the second phase of the urban health island mitigation including cool roofs and parking lots as well as education and support for the CAAP and potential partnerships with Our Lady of the Lake University (OLLU).

Assistant City Manager McCary provided an update on the City's Solar Request for Proposals which was intended to provide a pathway to 100% renewable electricity for municipal operations through private partnerships and collaboration with CPS Energy.

Assistant City Manager Coyle provided an overview of the Federal Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) which included \$369 billion in climate initiatives, tax credits, grant funding, loans, and rebates. Assistant City Manager Coyle reported that Federal agencies continued to release more programs such as the Environmental and Climate Justice Program and Neighborhood Access and Equity; and funding such as the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant which would allow the City to refresh and expand its CAAP beyond San Antonio's City Limits. Assistant City Manager Coyle stated that the City was receiving \$1,220,460 in Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Funding (EECBG) which would be used to fund an airport energy master plan, provide incentives for apartment complexes to install EV charging stations and an E- bike rebate pilot program for low-income individuals.

Assistant City Manager Coyle stated that the Parks Department was leveraging the \$20 million Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Grant to design and construct a complete street corridor between Malone and Culbertson in Normoyle Park. He noted that two other grant programs: the Environmental and Climate Justice Program and the Neighborhood Access and Equity Program was expected to be available in summer 2023.

Tijerina provided an overview of the Federal opportunities that were in alignment with the community's goals identified by CPS Energy: new technology, climate transformation, grid transformation and ownership of less-emitting energy sources. Tijerina reported that CPS Energy had applied for the Grid Resilience and Innovation Partnership (GRIP) Grant that would allow CPS Energy to improve its grid through the management and optimization of Distributed Energy Resources (DER) and Smart Grid Technologies, particularly in underserved areas. Tijerina stated that CPS Energy was planning to submit a \$15 million grant application under the Charging and Fueling Infrastructure (CFI) Program.

Assistant City Manager McCary transitioned the presentation by providing an overview of the Urban Forestry Development Program which included a partnership with Texas A&M Forest Service to inventory and analyze our city's tree assets. He noted that short term strategic approaches to the program would focus on trees in the Howard Peak Greenway Trail System as well as throughout the city in Public Works projects. He added that the long-term approach was a pivot from a quantitative to a qualitative approach with a priority on residential tree plantings, particularly in areas with a high score on the Equity Atlas as well as commercial development and a partnership with the Arboretum (a USDA Forestry Grant).

#### DISCUSSION:

Mayor Nirenberg requested an evaluation of, and update on the CAAP, multi-modal transportation and the Comprehensive Plan. Mayor Nirenberg commented that one of the most successful efforts had been the Howard W. Peak Greenway Trail System and the Edwards Aquifer Protection Program (EAPP)

City Manager Walsh noted that City Council approved the purchase of some land through the EAPP and there was about \$800,000 left, after which, the City would transition from the sales tax toward tax notes and other debt financing.

Mayor Nirenberg recommended a continued focus on protecting the Edwards Aquifer and our water sources. Mayor Nirenberg thanked OLLU President Abe Chavez for the collaboration. Mayor Nirenberg suggested that the IRA was still being developed and commented that the funding was there to help our communities recover and rebuild in a resilient manner. Mayor Nirenberg requested tracking the use of IRA rebates. Chief Sustainability Officer, Doug Melnick, stated that there were numerous locations where residents could connect and find the information which ran through the City's landing page, so there were analytical reports. Mayor Nirenberg requested an update on the report at a later date.

Mayor Nirenberg noted that there was historic level of funding coming from the Federal Government and recommended that the City apply for as many opportunities as possible. Melnick stated that his office tracked opportunities for not only the City but for non-profits as well. Mayor Nirenberg requested the number of the Federal Notice of Funding Opportunities (NOFO) grants that the City had applied for as compared with what was available to the City and stressed that he did not want to leave money on the table.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda spoke in support of the Eco Scholars and cool pavement programs and requested more information regarding the location of the sites for City solar. Melnick stated that every council district would have a site. Councilmember Cabello Havrda recommended including solar at the airport as a part of the long-term plan. Councilmember Cabello Havrda recommended collaboration with businesses, funding for infrastructure such as sidewalks, and enhancing the tree canopy and the partnership with the Arboretum. Councilmember Cabello Havrda requested clarification on the partnership with OLLU. Melnick stated that the university would train students and provide ongoing technical expertise.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez noted that the Alamodome was on the former Alamo

Ironworks Site and suggested that the grant might be a possibility for cleanup of the nearby soil. Assistant City Manager Coyle mentioned the highly competitive Brownfields Grant Program and stated he would check on the IRA. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez noted that the city was awarded a matching grant to eliminate railroad crossings through the Neighborhood Access and Equity and suggested this might open up additional grant opportunities. Director of Public Works Razi Hosseini stated that they had applied for \$53 million for the Rittiman Road Project, however, the Federal Government recommended a planning grant instead.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez requested the tree canopy levels in each park and asked who was responsible for tree maintenance as he had noted there was some poor care resulting in disease. Homer Garcia stated that the Parks Department was responsible for the care of the trees in parks and the Public Works Department was responsible in most other city owned rights of way. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez suggested incorporating more options into the cool pavement program, noting that tree canopy could impact the pavement temperature.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez expressed concern that Council District 2 did not have a resiliency center but noted that the Southwest Workers Union was going to open a warming center and recommended support of their program.

Councilmember Courage stated that he was encouraged by the REES Plan and supported EAPP, heat island mitigation, and urban forestry but asked how much money was in the Tree Canopy Fund. City Manager Walsh stated that there was \$10.5 million in the Tree Canopy Fund. Councilmember Courage asked how the REES Program would be funded. City Manager Walsh noted that the cost recovery portion of the Save for Tomorrow Energy Plan (STEP) would be used to support the REES Program which was anticipated to be approximately \$9.6 million per year at a constant level. Councilmember Courage asked about business incentives and the Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) Program and recommended more community education. City Manager Walsh stated that a pause was placed on business incentives in December 2022. Melnick stated that his office was investigating the opportunities under the PACE Program. Councilmember Courage recommended more community outreach regarding the continued support of EAPP and the Howard W. Peak Greenway Trail System.

Councilmember Castillo supported the expansion of Normoyle Park and commented that it was important because there was a high concentration of metal and battery plants on Zarzamora so this was a perfect opportunity for this community to acquire green space. Councilmember Castillo recommended exploring use of the REES Fund to create green alleyways. City Manager Walsh stated that capital funding was not an original use anticipated for the REES Fund but Federal grants might be available and the REES Fund could help support it with matching funds. Councilmember Castillo expressed concern with flooding and suggested that San Antonio River Authority projects consider drainage outside their project. City Manager Walsh stated there was a request with Bexar County to collaborate on drainage in the Westside Creeks Project.

Councilmember Castillo supported increasing tree canopy, green space and cool pavement, particularly in Council District 5. She recommended scaling up the support for CPS Energy's Casa Verde Program. Tijerina commented that CPS Energy had reconfigured its RFP so that more small businesses could participate in the Casa Verde Program which was expected to result

in more projects. Councilmember Castillo recommended working with school districts on solar beyond providing grants. Tijerina noted that although the solar rebate for residential would sunset in August 2023, it was still in effect for commercial customers and schools.

Councilmember Castillo asked how many E-Bike rebates could be provided with the funding available. Melnick stated that the department was still exploring the amounts that might be available. Councilmember Castillo commented that many Council District 5 residents were using e-bikes and scooters as last mile transportation to get to the bus stop or to work.

Councilmember Castro asked whether the Casa Verde Weatherization Program had difficulty meeting their goals because so many homes did not meet the requirements due to the need for minor repair particularly on the South and West sides of town. Councilmember Castro recommended sending a portion of the REES funds to CPS Energy's Residential Energy Assistance Program (REAP) to help with this effort. Councilmember Castro added that those low-income residents often ended up with homes that had to be demolished.

Councilmember Castro recommended that many of the new trees included under the Urban Forestry Program should be fruit trees to provide food sources for the community. Councilmember Castro requested that staff provide a report to the City Council as well as debrief schools that were unsuccessful in their grant applications. Councilmember Castro lauded the partnership with OLLU.

Mayor Nirenberg commented that REAP was funded by fundraising as a member of the REAP Board and would welcome more funding for REAP.

Councilmember Bravo noted that the Solid Waste Fund provided for the staffing at the Office of Sustainability and did not recommend funding the operation with REES funds just to save money. City Manager Walsh stated that the plan was to reduce costs in the Solid Waste Fund in order to keep from raising Solid Waste fees, but this would be discussed later in the summer during budget discussions. Councilmember Bravo requested an outcome plan for the CAAP and recommended hiring a resiliency officer to help build the plan, seek Federal funding and advise the City Council. City Manager Walsh stated that an Executive Recruiting Officer was working to find a Chief Resiliency Officer.

Councilmember Bravo recommended that the City apply for greenhouse gas reduction funding through the Environmental Protection Agency. Melnick stated that the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) was not out yet but there was expectation that there would only be one grant in each state, so he was looking to partner with other regions. Councilmember Bravo suggested that trees provided a stacked benefit to help with drainage, water management, temperature and other climate change mitigation in addition to the cool pavement. Councilmember Bravo noted that cool roofs with high slopes performed better than flat roofs that got dirty and lost their reflectivity.

Councilmember Bravo supported Councilmember Castro's proposal to use more funding to help with minor home repairs so that weatherization could occur but recommended funding come from the Neighborhood and Housing Services Department (NHSD) and home repair programs rather

than Casa Verde or REES.

Councilmember Viagran recognized the residents that attended the session and thanked them for their work. Councilmember Viagran agreed with the Mayor's request to track NOFOs and seek as much grant funding as possible. Councilmember Viagran noted that the drainage flowed to the south and requested an update from Bexar County and SARA on their flood control projects. Councilmember Viagran stated that in 2022, she had participated in a workshop on sustainable development and planning and recommended that a sustainability summit be held in the southern sector of our City in 2024.

Councilmember Viagran recommended bringing NHSD into the discussion as many homes needed minor repairs in order to qualify for weatherization. Councilmember Viagran suggested including the residents serving on the RAC for plan outreach, development and updates. She requested information on possible grants.

Councilmember Viagran recommended addressing walkability and education including how to take care of their yard and trees or assistance for elderly and disabled with yard maintenance. Councilmember Viagran supported the Arboretum but wanted more information on the long-term plan for sustainability of the pilot project. Councilmember Viagran suggested older homes were challenged in efficiency and were more costly to weatherize.

Councilmember Bravo noted that many older homes used significant energy during extreme weather and put a strain on the electric grid, therefore, he supported funding for minor home repairs specifically for older homes so that they could be weatherized. He questioned using climate funds for home repairs and suggested using other funding.

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Executive Session was not held.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

**Approved**

**Ron Nirenberg  
Mayor**

**Debbie Racca-Sittre  
City Clerk**