

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



**Meeting Minutes
City Council Budget Work Session**

Council Briefing Room
City Hall
100 Military Plaza San
Antonio, Texas 78205

2023 – 2025 Council Members

Mayor Ron Nirenberg
Dr. Sukh Kaur, 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
Marina Alderete Gavito, Dist. 7 | Manny Pelaez, Dist. 8
John Courage, Dist. 9 | Marc Whyte, Dist. 10

Tuesday, September 5, 2023

2:00 PM

Council Briefing Room

The City Council convened a Budget Work Session in the Council Briefing Room 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, Kaur, McKee-Rodriguez, Viagran, Rocha Garcia, Castillo, Cabello Havrda, Alderete Gavito, Pelaez, Courage, Whyte

ABSENT: None

ITEMS

1. Staff presentation on the FY 2024 Proposed Budget focusing on, but not limited to, the following City Departments or Initiatives: [Erik Walsh, City Manager; Justina Tate, Director, Management & Budget]

A. Library
B. Planning

City Manager Erik Walsh introduced the Items and stated that both departments would be presented

sequentially with discussion to occur afterward for all topics simultaneously.

Ramiro Salazar, Director of the San Antonio Public Library (SAPL) Department, introduced Library Board Chair Paul Stahl, and members of his team. Salazar provided an overview of the department's mission, performance measures and 2023 accomplishments. He reported that the \$56.3 million FY2024 Proposed Budget was 8.3% greater than FY2023 with no new staff and included funding to expand the enhanced library card initiative that could serve as a photo identification in certain cases.

Salazar listed the renovations of Las Palmas Branch Library included in the 2017 and 2022 General Obligation Bond Programs which would be completed next summer. Salazar stated that \$1 million was included to replace 424 computers, and \$5.7 million in 2022 Bond funds were included in the Proposed Budget to renovate and improve eight library branch locations.

Salazar reported that SAPL had been a part of an Interlocal Agreement with Bexar County to serve its residents since 1936; with the contract being extended for one year for \$3 million which was an increase of \$415,971 for 14,000 new books increasing the total Proposed Budget for these collection materials to \$7.1 million. Stahl mentioned that the Library Board was established by the City Charter and thanked library staff for their work and noted the critical role played by public libraries in the community.

Rudy Nino, Interim Director of the Planning Department (Planning), provided an overview of the department's mission, performance measures and 2023 accomplishments. He stated that the \$5.9 million FY2024 Proposed Budget was 35.4% greater than FY2023 Adopted Budget with no change in staffing levels as funding was for consulting services and staff raises. Nino mentioned that the SA Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2016 to help guide growth in ways that aligned with citywide quality of life, land use, environmental and transportation goals. He noted that 30 sub-area plans were being developed through a community process that began in 2017 and was expected to be completed in 2028.

Mayor Nirenberg thanked staff for their work and opened the discussion by noting the overall timeline for community planning which began in 2016 which included nine regional growth centers and suggested that some of those areas that were designated "emerging" at that time, were experienced significant growth since then. Mayor Nirenberg reminded everyone that the Plan was a roadmap created by the community to include land use, sustainability and multi-modal transportation. Nino committed to adopting the plans delayed due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Mayor Nirenberg requested a report on how residents used the computers and Wi-Fi at SAPL including whether there were tools being provided. Salazar stated that use continued to grow but noted that the visitor count was not back to pre-pandemic levels and computer use was 1.2 million users. Mayor Nirenberg suggested that SAPL was a forward-looking place and commented that it was important for San Antonio and Bexar County residents to have access to high-quality library offerings and supported the continued discussions and collaboration with Bexar County.

Councilmember Viagran asked Nino if the war in Ukraine or supply chain issues might impact the Comprehensive Plan. Nino stated that the department was having ongoing conversations with the community to ensure flexibility and responsiveness. Councilmember Viagran expressed concern with

the lack of infrastructure including utilities and Wi-Fi in Council District 3. Nino stated that notices were mailed to every address to help with outreach to those lacking digital access.

Councilmember Viagran suggested that Salazar use the enhanced library card which was a crucial service to provide additional services to our community and for Bexar County residents. She suggested development of a task force to work with Bexar County to promote the Interlocal Agreement (ILA) and offered to serve on that task force. Councilmember Viagran clarified that the library did not charge fines but recommended a reminder program and promotion of the services provided by the library to residents and Bexar County. She asked how facility needs were determined. Salazar stated there was a survey and data tracking system in place to plan for improvements.

Councilmember Viagran requested historical information on the donations by “Friends of the Library” and other fundraising.

Councilmember Castillo commended the library team for receiving a 94% approval rating and noted that libraries were an indicator of the health of our city as some cities had cut their library services in favor of behavioral centers. She supported the Enhanced Library Card Program and replenishing the book supply at Las Palmas library. Councilmember Castillo asked Salazar to speculate on the reduced number of personal visits which was down since the pandemic and had not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels. Salazar stated that the demand for digital collections were up and balanced out the in-person visits.

Councilmember Castillo thanked Planning Department staff for the work on the Westside Area Plans and for facilitating the large area re-zoning.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito recommended tracking the use of the Library application and use of the digital collection and asked how the library helped advance digital inclusion. Salazar stated that the library provided access to Wi-Fi signals inside and outside the facility for two hours at a time, physical computers in the library with training and guidance to users, and checkout of iPads. Councilmember Alderete Gavito recommended promoting digital access assistance through the Council District offices.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito commented that Bandera Road was a critical corridor and recommended more outreach on that sub-area plan.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda requested data on digital visits to SAPL to compare with the number of in-person visits. She commented that the Great Northwest Library was highly utilized by children in-person and those who might use the facility’s resources but did not check out a book. Salazar predicted an increase in use and all visitors were counted even if they were only there as a cooling center.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda asked if the recent banning of books had impacted SAPL. Salazar stated that the Resolution in support of books was helpful. Councilmember Cabello Havrda requested a timeline for implementation of the enhanced library cards at all 28 branches. Salazar stated that the cards would be implemented by the end of the calendar year.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda requested a timeline for the completion of the SA Tomorrow Plan. Nino stated that it was important to stagger the timeline as to not overwhelm the community, however, the final phase would begin in 2026.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez commented that libraries were a resource for the entire community that was often taken for granted as they made resources available to all residents regardless of income or background. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez acknowledged the effort to support the “Right to Read” Campaign and the Resolution by former Councilmember Sandoval. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez supported the enhanced library cards and thanked community organizers for their work and suggested discussions with other City departments to expand the acceptance of the cards as identification including possibly for solid waste brush drop off.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez suggested that zoning was a challenging aspect of planning for the future and recommended communication of the goals of planning efforts. Nino explained that the Planning Department developed the acceptable uses but when an owner requested another use, they applied through the Development Services Department (DSD). He added that the Planning Department handled large area re-zoning but coordinated with DSD on individual cases.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia noted that the use of technology at the library had increased and asked if regular users of the library could be tracked. Salazar stated that individual usage was not tracked but SAPL could map usage based on locations. Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked what happened to the old computers and suggested that these could be recycled, updated and used in the community through programs like Compu Dot. Deputy City Manager Maria Villagomez stated that there was a five year replacement cycle for disposition of old computers handled by the Information Technology Services Department (ITSD).

Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked how SAPL determined which library received upgrades. Salazar stated that buildings were ranked based on age, usage and condition. Councilmember Rocha Garcia supported the educational campaigns around the solar eclipse and partnerships with other organizations such as the Holocaust Museum. She suggested expansion of collections in various languages including braille. Salazar stated that SAPL had a collection development strategy to include most books in Spanish but he would look into being more intentional with inclusion of other languages.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked how older community plans such as Kelly or Southside Area Community Puebla Plans completed in 2010 were considered as the planning effort continued. Nino stated that part of the process was to bring the older plans and make recommendations for those neighborhood associations or areas to update their local plans and put them in the new SA Tomorrow Plan. She recommended a dashboard or page including all plans.

Councilmember Courage asked if all libraries were open the same days and same hours. Salazar confirmed that there were consistent days and hours for the libraries. Councilmember Courage asked whether we had data on city resident usage of the Counties’ digital libraries or “Bibliotecas.” Salazar noted that all residents of San Antonio were also Bexar County residents and taxpayers so were entitled to Bexar County services. Councilmember Courage suggested that digital billboards/signage provided excellent communication to residents and offered to use Council District 9 infrastructure funding to install them at libraries in Council District 9. City Manager Walsh stated

that he would get the cost.

Councilmember Courage commented that by the time the SA Tomorrow planning effort was complete, the first plans would be 10 years old. He recommended publishing and promoting the Plan to the community and more outreach and education as to the goal of the planning process.

Councilmember Courage noted that developers came to the Planning Commission with land uses that were different from what was included in the Comprehensive Plan and recommended educating the development community on the limitations. Nino stated that his office met with the Real Estate Board regularly and explained the steps needed to propose a zoning change or land use update as it was a right of property owners in Texas to petition for a zoning change to their own property. Councilmember Courage suggested that the Planning Commission did not represent the community's interest as it was outlined to focus on the requests of property owners rather than the desires of the community reflected in the land use plans. Nino stated that large area re-zoning should positively impact this situation.

Councilmember Whyte commented that he had been on the Zoning Commission and suggested that because land use plans were so outdated there might be issues and inexperienced developers might not look at land use plans before they bought a piece of property. Councilmember Whyte asked what the \$1.4 million in consulting fees were for that were included in the Proposed Budget. Tate stated that the Proposed Budget included costs to hire consultants to complete the plans.

Councilmember Whyte asked if there were any other public locations that recognized the enhanced library cards. City Manager Walsh stated that so far only the San Antonio Police Department (SAPD) was accepting the cards and Salazar stated that the user could opt-in to getting this card versus the old one and some populations benefitted from having this type of identification. City Manager Walsh explained that the library was updating their own systems which allowed for the creation of the enhanced cards.

Councilmember Whyte requested clarification on the Bexar County ILA. Salazar stated that the City had been providing services and Bexar County had been paying the City for 90 years. City Manager Walsh explained that the plan was to continue negotiations. Councilmember Whyte asked who determined what items would be purchased to enhance the collections. Salazar stated that SAPL had a collections division that evaluated use and community demand to recommend particular acquisitions.

Councilmember Kaur asked how SAPL tracked data related to the "Freedom to Read" Proclamation. Salazar stated that there had been very few individual objections to the collections and request for reconsideration including an assessment of appropriateness. Councilmember Kaur recommended creation of a list of books banned by the State that our library could offer and make available to teachers who no longer had access.

Councilmember Kaur recommended a review of hours, access and barriers such as transportation services by branch. Salazar stated that SAPL was developing a strategic planning effort to include these issues. Councilmember Kaur suggested exploring giving out mobile hot spots and how to create lanes of purchasing for books. Salazar stated that the evaluation of mobile hot spots and other ideas could be included in the strategic plan.

Councilmember Kaur commented that the Planning Department Website was very difficult to navigate because there was so much content and recommended having each plan open in new online tabs. She asked why San Pedro Springs Park was not included in the Mid-Town Plan. Nino stated that the park was included in the North Central Plan because a guideline was to not bisect a neighborhood association.

Councilmember Kaur suggested more connection with the council districts when an individual zoning change was requested so the City Council could make better informed decisions. Councilmember Kaur also recommended overlay of other plans such as Centro and their Art Plan.

Councilmember Pelaez commended the Library for being a peaceful place for people to relax and was even welcoming to the houseless.

Councilmember Pelaez suggested a Six Sigma review of the comprehensive planning efforts using a “Plan, Do, Check, Act” method noting that some of the Plan components did not align with the current concerns of community members as they were constantly changing; for example, in 2016, transportation was the biggest priority, but today, the priority might be homelessness largely as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic. City Manager Walsh commented that the SA Tomorrow Plan was initiated to engage the community in the regional centers that would be used to focus investment on infrastructure through the bond programs but noted that it was important to educate the community about the different plans and how the plans fit together and were used to guide the work of the City. Nino stated that the plans were supposed to be evaluated every five years, however, the pandemic put the planning process on hold.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked if there was a way to indicate if someone was a City of San Antonio resident on the library card or how it was determined using a driver’s license. City Manager Walsh committed to review of the potential uses for the enhanced library cards.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Executive Session was not held.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:04 p.m.

Approved

**Ron Nirenberg
Mayor**

Debbie Racca-Sittre City

Clerk

DRAFT