

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS
COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, AUGUST 16, 2021
2:00 PM**

Members Present:	Councilmember Manny Pelaez, <i>Co-Chair, District 8</i> Commissioner Justin Rodriguez, <i>Co-Chair, Bexar County Commissioner’s Court, Precinct 2</i> Councilmember Jalen McKee-Rodriguez, <i>District 2</i> Councilmember Adriana Rocha Garcia, <i>District 4</i> Councilmember Clayton Perry, <i>District 10</i> Commissioner Trish DeBerry, <i>Bexar County Commissioner’s Court, Precinct 3</i>
Staff Present:	Jeff Coyle, <i>Assistant City Manager</i> ; Camila Kunau, <i>Assistant City Attorney</i> ; Tina J. Flores, <i>City Clerk</i> ; Aurora Perkins, <i>Deputy City Clerk</i> ; Sally Basurto, <i>Assistant Director, Government & Public Affairs</i> ; Christine Wright, <i>State Relations Manager, Government & Public Affairs</i>
Others Present:	Melissa Shannon, <i>Director, Governmental Affairs, Bexar County</i> ; Baltazar R. (“Walter”) Serna, Jr., <i>Serna and Serna, Federal Legislative Consulting Firm</i> ; Naomi Miller, <i>Director, Governmental Affairs, Northside ISD</i> ; Hillary Lilly, <i>Director, Legislative Affairs, San Antonio ISD</i> ; Thomas Marks, <i>Chief of Staff, County Commissioner DeBerry</i>

Call to Order

Co-Chairman Pelaez called the meeting to order.

1. Approval of the minutes from the May 12, 2021 meeting of the Intergovernmental Relations Committee.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia moved to approve the minutes from the May 12, 2021 meeting of the Intergovernmental Relations Committee. Councilmember Perry seconded the motion. The motion prevailed unanimously by those present. Absent: Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez.

2. Recap of the July 19-21 Washington, D.C. Advocacy Visit

Sally Basurto stated that while in Washington D.C., City and County leaders held meetings with representatives from the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), U.S. Department of Labor, (DOL) and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security – Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), as well as local Congressional Delegates and other key Members of Congress. Regional priorities discussed included:

- RAISE (Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Stainability and Equity) Grant Funding
- Workforce Initiatives
- Infrastructure Funding
- UASI Funding and Ranking (Urban Areas Security Initiative)
- Congressional Funding Requests

Ms. Basurto reported that the City and County partnered to submit the \$25 million RAISE Grant application to the DOT and funds would be used for improvements to the Zarzamora Creek trail portion of the Howard Peak Greenway Trail System. She indicated that local Congressional Delegation Members would send the DOT a Joint Congressional Letter; meet with Transportation Secretary Buttigieg at the U.S. Conference of Mayors; and would call DOT representatives to advocate on behalf of the City and County in support of our Grant funding request.

Ms. Basurto stated that discussions were held with DOL Secretary Marty Walsh and the White House on important local issues such as the SA Ready to Work Program. She noted that the City would continue to address Workforce Opportunities and Technical Assistance with Secretary Walsh and his team, especially during their scheduled visit to San Antonio.

Ms. Basurto reported that the City met annually with representatives from Homeland Security – FEMA to advocate for continued UASI Program Funding and funds supported the City’s response in protecting the community from security threats and vulnerabilities. She stated that the City also submitted several Congressional funding requests and that “earmarks” had not been issued in 10 years.

Ms. Basurto highlighted that Representatives from the National League of Cities (NLC) and the U.S. Conference of Mayors coordinated a press event on July 30, 2021 in which Mayor Nirenberg and several key City Mayors addressed Infrastructure needs; and on August 11, 2021, Mayor Nirenberg attended the Mayor’s Press Event, a nationally recognized event coordinated by the White House.

Ms. Basurto reported that the City met virtually with USAI representatives on August 11, 2021 to voice concerns several threats and vulnerabilities were not measured. Staff from the Office of Emergency Management participated in the meeting and requested the inclusion of additional threats and vulnerabilities in the risk assessment. She added that data in support of the City’s position would be submitted to UASI and noted that a better risk assessment ranking could result in the City receiving additional funding.

Ms. Basurto noted that discussions regarding Congressional Funding Requests would continue and local Congressional Delegation Members would advocate on behalf of the City. She stated that on July 28, 2021, staff from the Metro Health Department met virtually with representatives from the White House COVID-19 Response Team to discuss local vaccine efforts and requested that future discussions address equity. She reported that the City hosted Dr. Bechara Choucair, White House Vaccination Coordinator, on August 6, 2021 and that he met with Mayor Nirenberg, Bexar County Judge Nelson Wolff, and City Manager Erik Walsh to discuss local vaccination efforts and partnerships. Ms. Basurto noted that the meeting concluded with a round-table Discussion attended by Hospital CEOs and other Community Health Partners and that Dr. Choucair led a needs assessment.

Ms. Basurto reported that advocacy efforts in Washington D.C. resulted in the U.S. Trade Representative’s Office requesting a meeting with City Officials to discuss the City’s Trade Policies and Initiatives. She stated that future meetings between the staff of the Economic Development Department (EDD) and Federal Trade Representatives would include local Trade Stakeholders. Ms. Basurto added that the City requested a follow-up meeting with Ambassador Tai, U.S. Trade Representative.

3. Federal Update on Appropriations and Infrastructure Legislation

Ms. Basurto highlighted the 5-year Federal Investment Plan as part of the \$550 billion Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act passed on August 10, 2021, by the Senate. She provided an overview of the following funding allocations:

Mayor Funding Investments:

- Transportation – \$284 billion
- Water – \$55 billion
- Broadband – \$65 billion
- Energy & Power – \$73 billion
- Resiliency – \$46 billion
- Environmental Remediation – \$21 billion
- Water Storage – \$8 billion

Transportation Investment Projects:

- Roads & Bridges – \$110 billion
- Transit – \$39 billion
- Safety – \$11 billion
- Airports – \$25 billion
- Electric Vehicle Chargers – \$7.5 billion
- Electric Buses – \$7.5 billion
- Reconnecting Communities – \$1 billion

Key Funding Opportunities for Cities:

- Safe Streets for Vision Zero – \$5 billion
- Large Bridge Repairs – \$20 billion
- National Infrastructure Grants – \$5 billion
- RAISE Grants – \$7.5 billion
- Airport Improvements Grants – \$25 billion
- Reconnecting Communities – \$1 billion
- Accessibility Program – \$1.7 billion

Ms. Basurto highlighted next steps and stated that the House would convene on August 23, 2021, to consider Bills approved and forwarded by the Senate. She stated that the start of the Congressional appropriations process coincided with the release of the President's FY 2022 Proposed Budget which was on May 28, 2021, with a total of 12 Appropriation Bills approved by the House and three by the Senate. She stated that the City would monitor the progress of funding requests due to the number of Legislative Bills pending Senate consideration.

Ms. Basurto reported on two Community Projects submitted on behalf of the City. She stated that Congressman Joaquin Castro requested funding totaling \$2 million for the City's Equity Based Home Expansion & Rental Preservation Program and Congressman Tony Gonzales requested \$1 million for the expansion of the City's Mental Health Unit.

Ms. Basurto stated that on July 1, 2021, the House passed the Invest in America Act and Congressman Castro submitted a transportation funding request totaling \$15.6 million on behalf of the City. She noted that the project would provide for a four-lane grade separation at the Union Pacific Railroad and Frio City Road intersection.

Ms. Basurto highlighted the SA to DC trip scheduled for October 19-22, 2021 and reported that the City would discuss: Infrastructure; Public and higher education; Access and affordability of healthcare; and Sustaining and growing our local military missions.

Co-Chair Justin Rodriguez highlighted that the united efforts between the City and the County had been noticed while in D.C. and would make a difference, especially with RAISE Grant funding. He stated that during discussions with Federal Representatives, he pointed out that neither the City nor County had not received transportation grant funding since 2011 as part of the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) Grant and funds were only provided to VIA for a Transit Center. Co-Chair Rodriguez stated that the RAISE Grant Project met many of the Program's criteria and would make a very compelling case for award.

Co-Chair Rodriguez stated that follow-up was vital and that the County would assist by writing a letter of support or by participating in the SA to DC trip with City representatives. He noted that continued collaboration was crucial and requested that Bexar County Commissioners be provided with progress reports. Ms. Basurto reported that the City would reach out to the DOT and the White House to demonstrate continued support of regional funding priorities, educate federal representatives on projects, and provide additional details on funding requests.

Co-Chair Rodriguez requested details on how the Federal Legislative Consulting Firm of Serna and Serna would identify available regional funding opportunities. He stated that he preferred to utilize other funding sources instead of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds and recommended that funding topics be discussed by the two entities to coordinate the receipt of funds from either the Stimulus Package or grant opportunities. Ms. Basurto reported that Serna and Serna would review the Infrastructure Bill and the Surface Transportation Bill to identify funding opportunities that aligned with the City's and County's priorities and would provide a list to the Committee.

Co-Chair Pelaez noted that in the past, the City, County, and Brooks Development Authority competed for the same funding and now worked together. He stated that the collaboration should make the award process easier as the area would be viewed as a Metropolitan Region.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia requested information regarding the involvement of Brenda Hicks-Sorenson, EDD Director, in the lobbying process with DOL Secretary Walsh on the SA Ready to Work Program. Ms. Basurto reported that Ms. Hicks-Sorenson and EDD staff had been involved in discussions from the beginning and would continue while he and his team visited San Antonio in late August. She noted that Federal Officials recognized the collaborative efforts between the entities, stakeholders, and the public and that the City planned on highlighting the importance of including stakeholders in the process when making follow-up calls.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia highlighted the work history of DOL Secretary Walsh and his support of women and COVID-19 recovery efforts. She requested a status of the funding allocations for resiliency

and accessibility efforts. Ms. Basurto reported that the Committee would be provided with a report listing regional funding opportunities identified by Serna and Serna and the organizers of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, NLC, and the National Association of Counties (NACo). She stated that funding would be issued using a formula and a competitive grant process and that the funding mechanism by funding opportunity would be included in the report.

Co-Chair Pelaez requested information regarding the debt ceiling and the status of Congressional discussions on the topic. Ms. Basurto reported that negotiations would continue for the Infrastructure and Federal Reconciliation Bills as well as the Budget Resolution. She stated that negotiations had not started as the Legislature would not reconvene until after the Labor Day weekend.

Co-Chair Pelaez asked about Legislative support from Congressmen Doggett, Roy, Cornyn, and Cruz on Community Funding Projects. Ms. Basurto noted that the City contacted them for support, but the Congressman supported requests submitted by other entities or did not participate in the funding request process.

Co-Chair Pelaez highlighted the work of Texas Municipal League (TML) and NLC and recommended that all Committee Members attend the conferences to network and advocate for regional projects. He reported that representatives from the San Antonio Greater Chamber of Commerce requested each Committee Member to serve as a liaison to a Legislative advocacy group.

Co-Chair Pelaez highlighted the Puppies Assisting Wounded Servicemembers Act of 2021 (PAWS Act of 2021) and reported that the Act allocated grant funding to Animal Rights groups that trained animals to assist Veterans with physical and mental health challenges.

4. 87th Legislature Update

- **Special Session**
- **State Elections Legislation**

Christine Wright reported that the Second Special Texas Legislative Session started on August 7, 2021 and could convene up to 30 days. She stated that Governor Abbott placed 17 items on this Agenda with 300 Bills filed for consideration but discussions would be limited to the 17 items placed on the Agenda or “Call” unless Governor Abbott added items to the Call. Ms. Wright highlighted the Items on Call for the Second Special Legislative Session.

Ms. Wright stated that August 16, 2021, would mark 35 days that the House had not convened to take any action and highlighted the progress made by the Senate. She reported that warrants had been issued for the 52 Democrats and that the state representatives would not face criminal charges or fines but would be escorted to House Chambers upon arrest.

She reported that SB 1 had passed even though Senator Carol Alvarado filibustered for over 15 hours and that the Bill would prohibit specific election activities as well as mandate new requirements with the intent of increasing voter integrity. She stated that Senator Paul Bettencourt introduced SB 6 which proposed a property tax exemption for homeowners upon the purchase of the home rather than the following year. She noted that the State would hold a Constitutional Amendment Election on this topic.

Ms. Wright reported that the City supported SB 9 (Family Violence Prevention Bill) which would require schools to educate middle and high school students on domestic violence, family violence, and child abuse and that the version of the Bill to be considered in Second Special Legislative Session included an opt-out clause. She highlighted the Redistricting process and reported that delays in the completion and approval of redrawn Legislative maps would impact the Primary Election.

Ms. Wright highlighted SB 14 (Sick Leave Bill) and noted that the Bill as written would prevent the City from establishing employment policies. She stated that Senator Creighton, the Bill's sponsor, planned on amending the Bill to allow entities to negotiate terms of employment. Ms. Wright reported that the City would continue discussions to clarify amended language and the negotiation process for local entities. She continued by highlighting SB 15 (Virtual Learning) and stated that the Bill would allow school districts and charter schools to receive their equivalent funding regardless of the method of instruction.

Ms. Wright stated that Governor Abbott coordinated with the Texas Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to deploy more than 2,500 medical personnel to assist hospitals with caring for the increased number of COVID-19 patients. She stated that Governor Abbott mandated DHHS to secure the services of staffing agencies to mitigate the surge in COVID-19 cases and that Program funding would end on September 30, 2021.

Ms. Wright indicated that Redistricting and Census Data would be the priority for the Fall Special Legislative Session.

Melissa Shannon reported that seven Election Bills had been approved by the Senate. She noted that the County would monitor SB 1 as it prohibited election activities used by Harris County in the November 2020 Election and required voting systems to include equipment features currently not available by Vendors. Ms. Shannon stated that State and Federal election law required voting systems to be certified prior to use.

Councilman Perry requested that presentations be provided to Committee Members prior to meetings.

Adjournment

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 3:02 PM.

*Councilmember Manny Pelaez,
Co-Chair*

*County Commissioner Justin Rodriguez,
Co-Chair*

Respectfully Submitted,

*Melinda L. Uriegas, TRMC
Assistant City Clerk,
Office of the City Clerk*