

AGENDA ITEM #3

MEETING: Community Health, Environment, & Culture Committee

DATE: September 23, 2021

DEPARTMENT: Government & Public Affairs

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Jeff Coyle

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: Citywide

SUBJECT:

City of San Antonio Public Participation & Engagement Plan

SUMMARY:

The Government and Public Affairs Department (GPA) will provide the Community Health, Environmental & Culture Committee with a briefing on process and timeline for the development of a City-wide Participation and Engagement Plan.

BACKGROUND:

Public participation policies foster meaningful civic engagement with residents. These policies further establish trust with residents, provides effective public education and gathers residents feedback for use in strengthening City program, polices and initiatives.

The City of San Antonio implemented minimum standards for public participation efforts in 2018. Following that, City Council adopted a set of Guiding Principles to guide the City's approach to engagement. With those principles in mind, City Manager Erik Walsh issued Administrative Directive 10.1 in 2019, which operationalizes the guiding principles and provides requirements for community engagement. Over the last couple of years, the City of San Antonio has made improvements to public participation which include:

- Establishing a Citywide standard for surveying via SASpeakUp efforts that include both digital and in-person data collection, as well as a targeted effort in outreach to ensure inclusive data collection especially in historically low responding/participating areas.
- Implementing a new virtual comment on agendas, which allows residents to leave written comments on agenda items or register to speak.
- Developing the new SASpeakUp portal, which will serve as the one-stop engagement hub for all City public participation efforts.

In an effort to continue enhancing the City's public participation, Mayor Nirenberg and Councilwoman Sandoval distributed a memo intended to serve as an addendum to the Advancing City Public Participation CCR which asked the City to hire a facilitator to manage a process to secure feedback from residents and stakeholders. The Fiscal Year 2020 budget included \$25,000 for the facilitator contract, and in July of 2020, City staff selected SA202 as the facilitator.

From September to October 2020, SA2020 conducted an internal assessment of COSA policies, strategies, job descriptions, surveys, reports, virtual platforms, presentations

to City Council, and department-led engagement efforts. Informed by the assessment, SA2020 worked with GPA to administer an internal, digital survey to assess the experiences and perceptions of City employees and City Council staff in relation to public engagement.

In March 2021, SA2020 led focus group discussions with 39 community members, with expertise in public engagement and experience engaging with the City and were asked to prioritize strategies to strengthen meaningful public engagement. The key findings from each component of this work—Assessment, Survey, and Focus Groups—are detailed in the *Strengthening the City of San Antonio's Public Engagement Efforts Report & Recommendations* report.

As part of the City's ongoing efforts to implement improvements and create meaningful public engagement opportunities, GPA convened a Public Engagement Working Group representing 11 departments at various levels of leadership, which met for the first time on Sept 15, 2021. The overall charge of the working group will be to develop a comprehensive strategic public participation and engagement plan.

ISSUE:

The Community Health, Equity and Culture Committee has requested periodic updates from staff regarding the ongoing review and continuous improvements of public participation with City of San Antonio policies, programs, and initiatives. Staff will provide updates on several new initiatives:

- Formally launching the SASpeakUp portal
- Strengthening Administrative Directive 10.1
- Building organization capacity for public participation efforts
- Removing barriers to public participation
- Centralizing the development, scheduling and issuance of surveys
- Staff realignments to better capitalize on existing community networks

ALTERNATIVES:

This item is for briefing purposes only.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This item is for briefing purposes only.

RECOMMENDATION:

This item is for briefing purposes only.