

# City of San Antonio



## Meeting Minutes

### Planning and Community Development Committee

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Monday, December 13, 2021

10:30 AM

Council Briefing Room

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**Members Present:** Dr. Adriana Rocha Garcia, *Chair, Council District 4*  
Mario Bravo, *Council District 1*  
Phyllis Viagran, *Council District 3*  
Teri Castillo, *Council District 5*  
John Courage, *Council District 9*

**Members Absent:** None

#### Approval of Minutes

1. Approval of minutes from November 8, 2021 Planning and Community Development Meeting.
2. Approval of minutes from November 15, 2021 Planning and Community Development Meeting.

Councilmember Courage moved to approve the Planning and Community Development Committee Meeting Minutes of November 8, 2021 and November 15, 2021. Councilmember Bravo seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously by those present (Councilmember Castillo – Absent).

#### Consent Agenda

##### Briefing and Possible Action on

3. **At-Large Appointments to the Building-Related and Fire Codes Appeals and Advisory Board (BRFCAAB)** [Debbie Racca-Sitre, Interim City Clerk]

Michael Shannon provided an overview of the Building-Related and Fire Codes Appeals and Advisory Board (BRFCAAB) background and charge. Shannon stated that the BRFCAAB was comprised of 17 members and 17 alternates of housing and construction industry professional organizations to address building related appeals and it was important to make appointments due to

upcoming UDC amendments. Shannon stated that the recommended members should be approved by the PCDC in order to proceed to the full City Council for consideration.

Councilmember Courage asked for clarification on the recommendation of members to the BRFCAAB from the professional organizations. Shannon stated that current City Code specified that the members were to be brought forward by the organization and reviewed by the City to assure that no issues were identified with the recommended individuals.

Councilmember Castillo asked if tenants or resident representatives were considered for inclusion in the BRFCAAB. Shannon stated that the City Code did not currently provide for that position but City Council could make that change through a City Council vote.

Councilmember Bravo expressed his concern of the positions which did not have a board member or alternate in certain categories. Shannon stated that he was in discussions with stakeholder organizations to address all the vacancies.

Councilmember Viagran stated that she was in conversations with union organizations to fill vacant positions.

Chair Rocha Garcia noted that there were seven non-resident members and only one woman on the Board. Shannon stressed that it was important to the Department to address diversity needs of the Board which the department was continuously trying to address.

Councilmember Courage moved to approve and forward the recommended slate of board members and alternates of the Building-Related and Fire Codes Appeals and Advisory Board (BRFCAAB) to the City Council for consideration. Councilmember Viagran seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

**4. Response to “Ousted: The City of San Antonio’s Displacement of Residents through Code Enforcement Actions”** [Roderick Sanchez, Assistant City Manager; Michael Shannon, Director, Development Services]

Item 4 was taken first on the agenda.

Chair Rocha Garcia called upon individuals registered to speak on Item 4.

Leticia Sanchez spoke in opposition of Item 4 and spoke of concerns related to the increase in housing demolitions and displacement of residents and provided materials for the Committee to review.

Amy Kastely spoke of concerns of home demolitions and of Code Compliance processes for home demolitions and of keeping individuals in their homes. She asked for a review of current processes

and the need for process transparencies.

Ray Morales spoke of the need for further details in the Development Services Department process in relation to home demolitions and spoke of his concerns related to current process and asked for a moratorium of the current process.

Molly (no last name provided) spoke in opposition of the current demolition approval process and expressed her concerns of displaced homeless individuals.

Michael Shannon stated that the report data was not accurate and reviewed the current process for approved demolition of structures. Shannon reviewed the Dangerous Structures guidelines and processes associated with associated home demolitions.

Shannon reviewed and stated that the data in the Report was fundamentally flawed and not accurate. He reviewed Code Compliance data of demolition processes associated with demolitions and also reviewed the types of cases for notices to vacate and the associated process for Notices to Vacate actions. Shannon reviewed the actions taken by the City of San Antonio in aiding individuals at risk of displacement due to home demolitions or unsafe conditions. Shannon reiterated that the City was committed to provide housing assistance along with utility and home repair assistance to residents to avoid housing displacement/demolition. He finished by saying that the City's primary objective and concern was that of safety and well-being of homes which residents resided in.

Chair Rocha Garcia stated that this was a very important topic and provided an opportunity for Graciela Sanchez with the Esperanza Center to speak on the Item. Sanchez spoke of her concerns with the process and review of the home demolition policy along with that of supportive housing in the City. Sanchez noted the need for further assistance for senior residents to stay in their homes and noted that a report was conducted by Esperanza where UTSA students provided data and a report on the processes.

Chair Rocha Garcia stated that she appreciated the work of the community associated with home demolitions. Chair Rocha Garcia asked for clarification in the difference between the Notice to Vacate process and Dangerous Structure process. Shannon reviewed the process and guidelines for the processes. Chair Rocha Garcia asked the reasons why property owners were often not present at Development Services Department Building Standard Hearings. Shannon reviewed the reasons why individuals did not attend meetings but noted that staff worked closely with homeowners to get to the hearing and stated that he would provide the data of meetings and contact efforts with residents associated with the hearings. He reiterated that City staff worked with residents and area non-profits to provide assistance to residents in these situations.

Chair Rocha Garcia asked that a checklist be provided to assure that residents were provided information on housing assistance resources communicated by NHSD housing navigator staff. She asked for additional information on the 331 structures that were demolished due to dangerous structures. Shannon provided an overview of the process and assistance provided to residents and stated that the requested information would be provided.

Councilmember Viagran stated that she was pleased that the City was conducting a study on the housing demolition process and asked to be included in the development of certain topics for the study to be taken into consideration. The issues were associated with owner-occupied issues, housing assistance, renter vs homeowner occupied demolition, geographical data by districts and areas of the City (by homeowners' association). Councilmember Viagran stated that it was important to assume when notices to vacate or demolitions were being conducted that additional services were needed to include social services assistance.

Councilmember Viagran asked how environmental issues associated with health standards were being addressed. Shannon stated that DSD worked closely with Metro Health to address all health and environmental issues. Councilmember Viagran asked when the City's report would be conducted. Shannon stated that it was important to begin the report and anticipated which would begin in the upcoming months.

Councilmember Courage asked for clarification on the number of buildings that received vacate notices and the number of cases heard by the Building Standards Board. Shannon provided clarification of the different cases heard and notices to vacate and that in many cases staff would provide cases to be reviewed. Shannon stated that in many instances, structures were vacant and not did not require a notice to vacate. Councilmember Courage asked for clarification on how a homeowner could request to demolish their own property. Shannon reviewed the process and stated that an individual could request a demolition based on the established process.

Councilmember Bravo asked for clarification on the data provided by the University of Texas. Shannon provided clarification on the University of Texas Law School data and other data not provided by the entity. Councilmember Bravo asked if staff from other Cities contacted City of San Antonio staff to obtain data on processes and policies. Shannon provided clarification on what staff from other cities requested data and what was provided.

Councilmember Bravo asked if City Staff had reached out to the Report authors to better understand their findings. Shannon stated that the City had not reached out to date and that it did review the report to City's actual data and would welcome discussions in the future with report authors and other cities.

Councilmember Castillo stressed that it was important to address the need of residents and Unified Development Code (UDC) updates but was concerned that an additional report would not be timely. Councilmember Castillo submitted for the record a letter provided to City Council by Dr. Heather Way associated with the City's processes for home demolitions, policy and gathered data. Councilmember Castillo reiterated the importance of community discussions and review of practices that promoted the development of redlining activity.

Councilmember Courage asked for data on cases brought forward to the Building Standards Board associated with demolitions and asked how many were ultimately demolished. Shannon stated that staff would provide the data but noted that not all cases brought forward were demolished and staff worked closely to improve properties. Councilmember Courage asked for clarification of the process for reporting violations by Code Officers. Shannon reviewed the process and actions/discussion conducted with the property owners. Councilmember Courage asked what

occurred when residents refused to vacate a home after being provided a notice to vacate. Shannon stated that staff continued to work with residents in identifying alternatives for other housing or housing assistance services.

Councilmember Bravo asked how long residents had to repair a residence when provided notice of violations. Shannon stated that the time varied depending on repairs and the danger factor. Councilmember Bravo asked if Building Standard Board meetings were conducted in person or virtually. Shannon stated that meetings were held in person since August 2021 and that virtual meetings were held during COVID restrictions.

Councilmember Castillo acknowledged the Code Enforcement Officers that volunteered their services to address code violation issues. Councilmember Castillo asked for materials provided to residents when a notice to vacate was issued. Councilmember Castillo asked for the name of staff presenting notices to vacate. Shannon stated that he would provide an organizational chart of staff.

Councilmember Viagran stated that it was important that the University of Texas study be conducted as soon as possible. Councilmember Viagran stated that the report presented did have data that needed to be clarified and asked for data on possible code violations and corrective actions. She stated that she welcomed additional Code Officers to work on concerns associated with code violations.

Chair Rocha Garcia requested that staff reach out to Dr. Way and asked for clarification on some of the issues brought by Dr. Way in order to assure accuracy. Chair Rocha Garcia requested a conversation with report authors to address the accuracy of data in order for staff to clarify report findings and other data. Chair Rocha Garcia requested a more robust process for identifying data and requested a comparison with other cities of the order to vacate data processes. Chair Rocha Garcia stressed the importance of assuring that Code Officers were respectful of residents. Chair Rocha Garcia spoke of the need for customer service training and asked if there were standard operating procedures for code enforcement staff. Shannon stated that there were standard operating procedures for all staff.

City Attorney Andy Segovia addressed the red-lining concerns and stated that current policies did not allow for this practice which was considered illegal.

Chair Rocha Garcia asked when an update would be provided to the Committee and Shannon stated that he schedules an update.

No action was required for Item 4.

**5. Briefing on the use of HOME-American Rescue Plan (ARP) Program funds and next steps to administering the City's grant.** [Lori Houston, Assistant City Manager; Verónica R. Soto, Director, Neighborhood and Housing Services]

Veronica Garcia provided an overview of the HOME-American Rescue Plan (ARP) to include the usage of provided funds, populations served, approved usage of funds, alignment with the

Strategic Housing Implementation Plan (SHIP), and the proposed funding plan and timeline.

Councilmember Viagran asked for additional specifics on the fund usage and was pleased that the permanent supportive housing was included in the Plan.

Chair Rocha Garcia asked who would be operating the permanent supportive homeless housing facility. Melody Woosley, Department of Human Services Director, stated that the City would not be managing the facility and a partner organization would manage the site.

Councilmember Courage asked for clarification on the stakeholder engagement to be conducted and their support to the Plan. Garcia stated that the funding plan had not been officially released but that the stakeholder engagement process did identify the proposed funding. Councilmember Courage stressed that it was important to assure that the stakeholder groups agreed with the proposed funding.

Councilmember Bravo asked what the long term goal was to continue to support permanent supportive housing. Woosley stated that there were several other sources of funding for this housing once the ARP funding was exhausted which included funding from the San Antonio Housing Authority (SAHA), veteran services funding and others. Councilmember Bravo asked what the timeline was for completing the permanent housing facility. Woosley stated it would be dependent on the identified building's condition.

Councilmember Castillo asked if Housing Bond Funding would be included in this program. Garcia stated that Bond Funding could be layered with this funding but was not finalized. Councilmember Castillo asked if hospice services would be included in this funding. Woosley stated that hospice and other medical services were identified as a gap in the funding but that staff were holding conversations with hospitals and other organizations to identify these services. Councilmember Castillo welcomed additional conversations to address SAHA housing needs among homeless individuals. Woosley reviewed the current services that addressed homeless vulnerability assessments.

Chair Rocha Garcia reminded the Committee of a Council Consideration Request (CCR) that addressed hospice needs for homeless individuals. She asked for an update on the CCR status.

Councilmember Viagran exited the meeting at this time.

**6. Emergency Housing Assistance Program (EHAP) and Eviction Prevention Update** [Lori Houston, Assistant City Manager; Verónica R. Soto, Director, Neighborhood and Housing Services]

Veronica Soto provided an update on the Emergency Housing Assistance Program (EHAP) to

include rental assistance, mortgage assistance, utility assistance, and eviction intervention assistance. Soto noted that the EHAP was currently in Phase 4 and funding would not be available until January 2022.

Soto stated that the City did not receive additional funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) but identified additional funding opportunities which staff and partners would address.

Councilmember Courage asked if the Federal Government had provided any communication on possible funding from other Cities that had not utilized their made available funding allotments. Soto stated that an update on the current funding had not been provided but that the City anticipated an update soon.

Councilmember Castillo asked how long the right to counsel services funding would be available. Soto stated that the Right to Counsel Program had funding available for FY 2022 and services were provided by contracted providers. Councilmember Castillo asked if ARPA funding could be used for commissioning individuals to assist applicants with assistance processes and discussed the challenges encountered by residents in completing the application process.

Councilmember Courage moved to forward the grant submission to the full City Council. Councilmember Castillo seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by those present (Absent: Councilmember Viagran).

## **Adjournment**

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 12:48 PM.

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*Dr. Adriana Rocha Garcia, Chairperson*

**Respectfully Submitted**

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*Debbie Racca-Sittre, Interim City Clerk*