

# City of San Antonio



## Minutes

### Community Health, Environment and Culture Committee

Wednesday, January 19, 2022

2:00 PM

Municipal Plaza Building

**Members Present:** Ana Sandoval *Chair*, Mario Bravo *Member*, Phyllis Viagran *Member*, Teri Castillo *Voting Member*

**Members Absent:** Jalen McKee-Rodriguez *Member*

#### Approval of Minutes

**1. Approval of minutes for the December 14, 2021, Community Health, Environment, and Culture Committee meeting.**

Councilmember Viagran moved to Approve the meeting minutes for the December 14, 2021 Community Health, Environment, and Culture Committee. Councilmember Castillo seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye:** Sandoval, Bravo, Viagran, Castillo

**Absent:** McKee-Rodriguez

#### Public Comments

There were no public comments.

#### Briefing and Possible Action on

**2. The City's COVID19 response and preparedness updates by Metro Health staff.** [Erik Walsh, City Manager; Claude Jacob, Director, Metro Health]

Metro Health Director Claude Jacob provided an update on COVID-19. Jacob opened the presentation by showing an example of a mural developed to promote vaccines. Jacob reported that the COVID-19 Risk Level was currently at "Severe" with a 38.3% positivity rate including

6,140 average daily positive cases over the past 7 days. Jacob provided various statistics such as patient demographics, number of hospitalizations, persons in the Intensive Care Unit and those on ventilators noting that 67% of the 1,197 hospitalized patients were unvaccinated. Jacob stated that 65% of the eligible population (age 5 and up) was currently vaccinated. Jacob reported on vaccination incentives which included issuance of 7,053 grocery store gift cards in the value of \$100 each. Jacob provided a map of COVID-19 testing sites as well as updates on the availability of personal protective equipment such as face masks.

#### DISCUSSION:

Chair Sandoval opened the discussion by stating that home testing kits were available from the Federal Government and asked about delays in receiving results from the Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) Tests for COVID-19. Jacob elaborated on the process and timing to obtain the home test kits and challenges in getting PCR Test results. Chair Sandoval suggested utilization of online cueing systems to help people find test sites that had availability or to plan their trip. Chair Sandoval requested metrics on contact tracing for COVID-19 positive cases to be reported in future meetings.

Councilmember Viagran asked if Metro Health was tracking nonvalid testing sites and suggested outreach on social media so that residents were educated on how to find legitimate testing sites and what to do if they tested positive using a home test. Jacob responded that MetroHealth had developed communication packages and would continue to educate the public through advertising as well as at the testing sites. Councilmember Viagran announced that the Council District 3 field office would be providing testing starting next week.

Councilmember Castillo noted that there were various locations supporting the testing efforts in Council District 5 and offered to set up a pop-up vaccination clinic. Councilmember Castillo added that the murals provided positive outreach and she felt they would be well received in Council District 5.

Councilmember Castillo asked if warming centers would be opened tonight considering the weather was expected to dip below freezing. Assistant City Manager David McCary responded that a memo from the City Manager about the warming centers was forthcoming.

Councilmember Bravo questioned whether the latest spike in positive cases could be due to more testing. Jacob replied that the Omicron variant of COVID-19 was 8-9 times more transmissible and felt that was the main factor, but that testing could account for an increase as well.

Councilmember Bravo expressed concern that a mobile testing site in a Council District 1 neighborhood was causing considerable noise and traffic. Councilmember Bravo expressed concern regarding the risk of COVID-19 transmission at warming centers.

3. **The City of San Antonio's Municipal Facilities Energy Policy Administrative Directive.**  
[Roderick Sanchez, Assistant City Manager; Jorge A. Perez, Director, Building and Equipment Services]

Chief Sustainability Officer, Doug Melnick opened the presentation by providing background on the Energy Policy which had a goal to reduce consumption of energy at City-owned buildings and facilities. Melnick provided results of an employee survey, training, and department meetings and stated that the purpose of the Administrative Directive (AD) was to provide operational energy conservation guidelines to City Departments. Jorge Perez, Director of Building and Equipment Services, described the elements of the Administrative Directive on how employees should operate HVAC equipment, appropriate temperature settings, lighting, CPS Demand Response Program Participation and Requirements, as well as water consumption. Perez explained that as new equipment was purchased, buildings were modified/improved or leased, or as new energy emergency protocols were issued from Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) or CPS Energy, the Administrative Directive would be followed to help maintain the consumption of electricity at the lowest possible level.

#### DISCUSSION:

Chair Sandoval opened the discussion by recognizing the collaboration required across departments and asked for a timeline as to when the Administrative Directive would be signed by the City Manager. Assistant City Manager David McCary replied that the AD was in its final form but not yet signed. Perez explained that the temperature range in a room should be 68 to 72 degrees when occupied and it could be lowered but cautioned that heat should not be shut off when overnight temperatures drop below freezing with a minimum temperature of 50 degrees to prevent freezing of the pipes. Summer temperatures ranges were different.

Councilmember Viagran suggested that employee training be held again and with onboarding. Melnick confirmed annual training as well as new employee training. Councilmember Viagran asked how the thermostat temperatures would be enforced. Perez stated that the responsibility would lie with the Department Directors and that employees should dress appropriately for the weather. Councilmember Viagran recommended continued review of large facilities such as the Convention Center and the Alamodome to ensure good conservation. Perez explained that those facilities have automatic systems and protocols in place.

Councilmember Castillo expressed support for the protocols explained by Perez for the large facilities.

Councilmember Bravo asked if smart thermostats could be employed and monitored centrally. Perez explained that some of the City's newer facilities had the capability to be controlled remotely, however, Department Heads should remind staff to turn off the lights, and other equipment when they leave.

Chair Sandoval was concerned that the exceptions to the policy included some facilities with large footprints and would prefer a more controlled approach. Chair Sandoval asked about exemptions in the Fire Stations which Perez responded that some areas of Fire Stations would be monitored separately from the living quarters but that the exception was that the occupants could control the conditions in the living quarters based upon the needs that could change based upon their activities.

Melnick added that the departments would be required to justify deviations, they would not receive automatic exceptions.

Chair Sandoval clarified that Green Leases meant that as the City leased out its own buildings, that the Administrative Directive would still apply.

**4. The Parking and Transit Public Comment Pilot Program.** [Jeff Coyle, Assistant City Manager; Laura Mayes, Assistant Director, Government, and Public Affairs]

Jeff Coyle, Assistant City Manager opened the presentation with a recap of the pilot program designed to eliminate parking and transportation as a barrier to participation in City government. Coyle outlined outreach and explained the sign-up process as well as the method for obtaining an all-day parking validation for use at City Tower during City Council Meetings. Coyle reported that last week, 10 people used the parking validation. Coyle stated that VIA had originally planned to utilize a digital app but has transitioned to an email/printable document that the resident would present to the driver for a free ride, with the VIA pilot expected to start later this month. Coyle reported that both pilots would continue through April 2022.

**DISCUSSION:**

Chair Sandoval expressed support of the program and suggested using the terminology “Financial Assistance for Parking” rather than “Parking Assistance” so people didn’t expect valet.

Councilmember Viagran suggested using radio advertising to get the word out especially for Spanish channels in addition to the TVSA channel. Coyle explained that there was not a budget for advertising, but news releases would be performed, and City channels were being used. Coyle mentioned that a community survey would be launched.

Councilmember Castillo suggested that the City Council Field Offices could help distribute the VIA information / vouchers and hang posters regarding the program.

Chair Sandoval recognized Councilmember Bravo for bringing this idea forward. Councilmember Bravo expressed that he was pleased to see the parking program last week and was glad that some residents took advantage. Councilmember Bravo suggested that staff review the use of dockless scooters as well to participate.

**5. The Brownfields Redevelopment Program.** [Lori Houston, Assistant City Manager; Verónica R. Soto, Director, Neighborhood and Housing Services]

Erica Ragsdale, Redevelopment Officer with the Neighborhood & Housing Services Department, provided the Environmental Policy Administration’s (EPA) definition of a Brownfield Site and explained that the sites, which could include vacant or abandoned: gas stations, dry cleaning facilities, junkyards, old car dealerships and abandoned factories, created unique development challenges. Ragsdale provided a timeline history of the Brownfields Program from its inception in 2011 to today. The Brownfields Program was design to offer eligible development projects (within

the City limits) with technical and regulatory assistance, and financial assistance for Environmental Site Assessments, clean-up plans and site remediation, according to Ragsdale. Ragsdale provided statistics on accomplishments of the program to date which included EPA grant funding for 41 different Brownfield Sites.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

Councilmember Castillo requested a list of all the Brownfield Sites in the City limits. Ragsdale stated that while an inventory could be performed but staff did not recommend a full inventory as it could adversely impact the property owners without their consent. Councilmember Castillo requested review of a superfund site in Council District 5 to determine if it was eligible for Brownfields funds, which Ragsdale said they would check. Councilmember Castillo noted that the inner urban core had traditionally housed the types of industries that might be labeled as Brownfields and was there a potential for a new funding grant for additional sites. Veronica Garcia, Deputy Director of the Neighborhood & Housing Services Department, explained that \$100,000 per year was set aside for the assessments and the City could layer other incentives to assist certain sites in targeted areas.

Councilmember Viagran recommended keeping areas within SA Tomorrow or the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) in mind for potential Brownfields' funding. Assistant City Manager McCary stated that he would work directly with Council Districts on the overlay of the plans. Councilmember Viagran recommended including this program in the City's next Federal Legislative Agenda.

Chair Sandoval asked if additional EPA funding was being pursued for Brownfields Program. Ragsdale stated that there was not a current grant application, but staff could look at opportunities. Chair Sandoval stated that she thought that Assistant City Manager Lori Houston already had an inventory of Brownfields and that the City of Dallas was working on one. Ragsdale indicated that staff would review Brownfield Programs in other cities.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 3:32 PM.

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*Ana Sandoval, Chair*

**Respectfully Submitted**

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*Debbie Racca-Sittre, Interim City Clerk*