

# City of San Antonio



## Minutes Economic and Workforce Development Committee

### 2023 – 2025 Council Members

Chair: Manny Pelaez, Dist. 8  
Phyllis Viagran, Dist. 3 | Dr. Adriana Rocha Garcia, Dist. 4 Teri  
Castillo, Dist. 5

**Tuesday, January 30, 2024**

**10:00 AM**

**City Hall Complex**

The Economic and Workforce Development Committee convened a regular meeting in the City Hall Council Briefing Room beginning at 10:09 AM. Deputy City Clerk Aurora Perkins took the Roll Call noting a quorum with the following Committee Members present:

**Members Present:** Manny Pelaez, *Chair*  
Phyllis Viagran, *Member*  
Dr. Adriana Rocha Garcia, *Member*  
Teri Castillo, *Member*

**Members Absent:** None

### Approval of Minutes

1. **Approval of the minutes from the Economic and Workforce Development Committee meeting on November 28, 2023.**

Councilmember Castillo moved to Approve the minutes of the November 28, 2023 Economic and Workforce Development Committee meeting. Councilmember Viagran seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye:** Pelaez, Viagran, Castillo  
**Absent:** Rocha Garcia

### Public Comments

None.

### Briefing and Possible Action on the following items

**2. Consideration of (4) At-large appointments to the Small Business Advisory Commission.** [Debbie Racca-Sittre, City Clerk]

Caitlin Cowart, Economic Development Manager, Economic Development Department, provided an overview of the Small Business Advisory Committee applicants. She noted that a subcommittee was created to short list the group of applicants and that the Committee would be considering eight applicants for four At-Large positions.

Individuals considered for the At-Large vacancies were as follows:

Small Business Owner with 10< Employees

- Ruben Arciniega
- Kaitlin “Katie” Sirakos (Written Statement Submitted)

Small Business Owner with 10-50 Employees

- Juan Carlos Merlo (Written Statement Submitted)

Small Business Professional/Trade Organization

- Martin Gutierrez
- Yan”Yen” Yen (Written Statement Submitted)

Non-Profit Small Business Service Provider Organization

- Lindsey Logan (Written Statement Submitted)
- Jason Meza

Chair Pelaez recessed the meeting into Executive Session at 11:31 a.m. to discuss the application recommendations.

Chair Pelaez reconvened the meeting in Open Session at 11:48 a.m. and announced that no official action had been taken in Executive Session.

Councilmember Viagran moved to recommend and forward the following applicants to the Small Business Advisory Commission to the full City Council for consideration:

Ruben Arciniega (Small Business Owner with (10< Employees)

Martin Gutierrez (Small Business Professional/Trade Organization)

Yan “Yen” Yan (Target Industry)

Lindsey Logan (Non-Profit Small Business Service Provider Organization).

Councilmember Castillo seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye:** Pelaez, Viagran, Rocha Garcia, Castillo

**3. Briefing and possible action on greater:SATX Services Agreement and 2024 Operations Plan and Foreign Direct Investment Attraction Plan.** [Alejandra Lopez, Assistant City Manager; Brenda Hicks-Sorensen, Director, Economic Development]

Brenda Hicks-Sorenson, Director of the Economic Development Department, introduced the Item and Sara Carabias Rush, Chief Economic Development Officer for greater:SATX (gSATX). Rush provided an overview of the strategic framework for gSATX. She noted that 2023 was the mid-point of the Five-Year Plan which had a \$55 billion economic impact for the region.

Rush reviewed the progress of the Five-Year Plan and noted that over 11,800 new jobs were brought to the region and 28,800 students were engaged in work-based learning opportunities. She added that there were 18 initiatives that were gained by their efforts that lead to the new jobs and \$4.8 billion in capital investment.

Rush spoke to the 2024 operation plan and noted that there were currently 73 projects that gSATX was reviewing to include projects in air service management and marketing the San Antonio region. She stated that gSATX had a global concentration in their marketing and economic efforts which included economic missions to many countries and large US cities. She noted that these efforts were in the categories of cybersecurity, bio-tech, manufacturing and other technologies.

Rush noted that efforts would also focus on business expansion of current businesses within the region in the areas of workforce, air service connectivity, advocacy and other operational support functions.

Rush spoke to gSATX efforts for the development, recruitment and retainment of a talented workforce for potential companies looking to come to the San Antonio region. She stated that marketing and branding of San Antonio would include enhanced national public relations, regional industry awareness and air service development of domestic and international routes.

Rush provided an overview of 2023 gSATX Agreement Plan and the results which fell slightly short of projections but did gain great strides in the positive direction. Rush mentioned that an increase in leads did provide “wins” in bringing quality projects to the San Antonio region.

Hicks-Sorenson reviewed the proposed 2024 Agreement which stated that the City and gSATX would continue partnering with San Antonio and would focus on lead generation and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) attraction which was a new tool in 2024. She added that total available funds were \$829,250 for both domestic and international opportunities and that contracts had specific contract goals in place.

## DISCUSSION

Councilmember Castillo commented that goals should work closely with Ready to Work Programs that the City had developed. Councilmember Castillo asked for clarification on FDI efforts. Rush acknowledged that job creation goals did fall slightly short and staff would be planning to work in parallel with Ready to Work Programs and noted that there were also other workforce programs that were utilized. Rush also noted that FDI efforts were performed hand in hand with community stakeholders to gain support and leverage with companies seeking opportunities in the San Antonio region.

Councilmember Castillo asked for clarification on the project lead generation process. Rush stated that great strides were being taken to generate leads for San Antonio and she reiterated conversations with potential companies seeking to expand into San Antonio would be in conjunction with partner stakeholders and the City.

Councilmember Viagran agreed with Councilmember Castillo that Ready to Work Programs were to be further utilized and that the San Antonio workforce was one of the City’s greatest assets. She requested a meeting to discuss Council District 3 specific goals for workforce and business

development/location.

Councilmember Viagran noted the work conducted with gSATX and Visit San Antonio to expand global business expansion. She asked if projects had a scorecard to review efforts and opportunities of leads. Assistant City Manager Alex Lopez stated that a scorecard could be developed but noted that post mission briefings were conducted to review challenges, opportunities and further needed actions.

Chair Pelaez asked if surrounding counties were paying into the efforts of gSATX. Rush confirmed that they did pay into the initiatives. Chair Pelaez requested data on contributing funds from the other Cities. Rush noted that regional economic development was crucial for the entire region and workforce.

Chair Pelaez requested additional information on Mexican based companies looking to bring business to the region. Rush noted that not much activity was seen of Mexican cities entering the region but that supply chain growth to Mexican companies had grown.

Chair Pelaez noted that he recently visited South America and asked of the efforts to expand relations with Mexican companies and bring operations to the region. Rush stated that outreach and marketing was focused on Mexico but statistics showed that Mexican companies did not normally expand into the United States but many times their supplier companies did and gSATX extended efforts to those companies.

Chair Pelaez noted that San Antonio had a large population of students from India and noted the growing economic impact of those students and the efforts of other cities to bring students to their cities. Assistant City Manager Lopez noted the collaboration with gSATX and the Global Engagement Team with higher education institutions to ensure that marketable degrees and training were offered in San Antonio in order to bring students, families and businesses to the region. Chair Pelaez asked if international efforts had been set to expand international attraction of students. Jenna Saucedo-Herrera, gSATX Chief Executive Officer and President, stated that gSATX did market and engage with the local universities to market programs and ensure desirable workforce candidates were being produced for companies to hire if expanding into the region.

Chair Pelaez expressed his concern of the utilization of the Ready to Work Program and an evaluation of the program was needed to review expectations. Assistant City Manager Lopez noted that the upcoming budget could be used to discuss the Ready to Work Program and analyze any future funding and charge of the program.

Councilmember Viagran moved to Approve. Councilmember Castillo seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye:** Pelaez, Viagran, Castillo

**Absent:** Rocha Garcia

**4. A briefing and possible action on recommended applicants for approval of Second Stage Grant Program awards.** [Alejandra Lopez, Assistant City Manager; Brenda Hicks -Sorensen, Director, Economic Development]

Sarch Woeppel, Senior Economic Development Specialist with the Economic Development Department, provided an overview of the Second Stage Grant Program which awarded grants to

second stage companies that intended to make investments to expand locally and regionally applying for grant awards up to \$50,000. She reviewed the proposed awards, characteristics of the program and eligibility criteria of grant applicants. She stated that applicants were required to submit a written Growth Plan to discuss their efforts along with meeting program criteria.

Woeppel reviewed the two applicants staff recommended for approval of grants which were Laredo Technical Services, Inc. and Optimized Technical Services, Inc. She stated that staff recommended \$50,000 grant awards for each applicant. Woeppel noted that there were nine applicants for grants to include the two proposed awardees. She stated that continued marketing, recruitment and outreach to other Second Stage companies for the remaining \$400,000 in available funds would continue and she reviewed the next steps for approvals to include full City Council consideration.

## **DISCUSSION**

Councilmember Viagran requested data on the nine applicants and the reasoning for non-awards.

Councilmember Castillo asked for clarification on why businesses were required to be in existence for a minimum of two years. Woeppel stated that data showed that two years was an industry standard for stability for companies of this size and growth potential.

Councilmember Castillo asked for clarification on the use of growth funds by Optimized Technical Services, Inc. to support product development for a Federal contract pertaining to talent and workforce training. Woeppel confirmed that Optimized Technical Services, Inc. had submitted a proposal to the Federal government which were being considered but she would provide additional information to the Committee once obtained.

Councilmember Castillo moved to Approve. Councilmember Viagran seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye:** Pelaez, Viagran, Rocha Garcia, Castillo

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:49 a.m.

**Approved**

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***Manny Pelaez, Chair***

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***Debbie Racca-Sittre***  
***City Clerk***