

**State of Texas  
County of Bexar  
City of San Antonio**



**Meeting Minutes  
City Council Special Meeting**

Municipal Plaza Building  
114 W. Commerce Street  
San Antonio, Texas 78205

**2023 – 2025 Council Members**

Mayor Ron Nirenberg  
Dr. Sukh Kaur, Dist. 1 | Jalen McKee-Rodriguez, Dist. 2  
Phyllis Viagran, Dist. 3 | Dr. Adriana Rocha Garcia, Dist. 4  
Teri Castillo, Dist. 5 | Melissa Cabello Havrda, Dist. 6  
Marina Alderete Gavito, Dist. 7 | Manny Pelaez, Dist. 8  
John Courage, Dist. 9 | Marc Whyte, Dist. 10

**Thursday, April 18, 2024**

**9:00 AM**

**City Council Chambers**

The City Council convened a special meeting in the Norma S. Rodriguez Council Chamber in the Municipal Plaza Building beginning at 9:10 AM. City Clerk Debbie Racca-Sittre took the Roll Call noting a quorum with the following Council Members present:

**PRESENT: 11** – Nirenberg, Kaur, McKee-Rodriguez, Viagran, Rocha Garcia, Castillo, Cabello Havrda, Alderete Gavito, Pelaez, Courage, Whyte

**ABSENT:** None

**ITEMS**

1. City Council Budget Goal Setting Session establishing budget policy goals that will guide the development of service priorities for the FY 2025 Trial Budget and ultimately the FY 2025 Proposed Budget and the FY 2026 Budget Plan. [María Villagomez, Deputy City Manager; Justina Tate, Director, Management and Budget]

Mayor Nirenberg opened the Goal Setting Session by announcing that the meeting was intended to

be an opportunity for the City Council to set high level priorities. He anticipated developing a Budget with equitable outcomes.

## FINANCIAL POLICIES - GENERAL FUND & CPS ENERGY REVENUES

City Manager Erik Walsh opened the presentation by noting that yesterday was the first step in setting priorities and updating financial policies. Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Justina Tate, presented an overview of the financial policies.

Tate began her presentation by stating the purpose of the financial policies which were critical to maintaining a strong financial position for the City but included flexibility to changing economic conditions and helped the City to maintain its AAA Bond Ratings. She noted that the current policy was to maintain a minimum General Fund ending balance of 15%, maintain Public Safety spending below 66% of the General Fund, manage structural fund balance within a two-year budget plan, maintain \$1 million contingency in the General Fund, and \$3 million contingency in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

Tate reported that current financial policies included an annual review of the impact of the State-imposed 3.5% property tax cap on service delivery and she provided a recommendation on whether to adjust the property tax rate, annual review property tax relief, and adjust fees. Additionally, according to Tate, the City's payment from CPS Energy would be assessed to determine the portion that might be deemed unusual or out of the ordinary taking into consideration the impact on service delivery, benefit to the community, and responsible ownership.

Chief Financial Officer Ben Gorzell provided a chart of the actual dollar variance of CPS Energy revenues against the adopted Budget from 2008 through 2023 which was a volatile and unsteady revenue source. Gorzell stated that the Budget had been aligned to smooth out the highs and lows. He stated that the current CPS Energy policy was to take the first 10% of revenues received over Budget which would be spent within existing Budget needs and City Council priorities, and anything over the 10% would be reviewed and considered by City Council. Gorzell reported that last year, staff presented an option to take any funding in excess of the 10% to be split at 80% for the CPS Energy resiliency and reliability projects and 20% for the City's Reliability, Energy Efficiency and Sustainability (REES) Fund and while it had not been adopted, Gorzell recommended it as a sound policy.

Councilmember Viagran did not agree with the policy of allocating 80% to CPS Energy as many aged homes did not meet the criteria for their assistance and weatherization programs. She requested the dollar amount for the off system sales to see how much money there could be in addition to the rate revenues.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito expressed concern with the lack of transparency at CPS Energy for its Affordability Discount Program (ADP) and stressed that the income guidelines needed to be updated. Mayor Nirenberg stated that the CPS Energy Board, of which he was a member, had discussed that last month and adjusted the eligibility to allow more flexibility. He added that these improvements to program eligibility were planned to be brought before the City Council next month.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez recommended more definition behind what CPS Energy might consider to be resiliency and reliability projects. He recommended that the Office of Sustainability be involved with reviewing their projects to make environmental initiatives a priority. Gorzell explained that this was only triggered above the 10% that the City would keep. City Manager Walsh clarified that the intent was to help mitigate rate increases. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez stated that he was less interested in mitigating rate increases because he felt CPS Energy would still raise rates anyway so we might as well focus on sustainability.

Councilmember Pelaez suggested that the State Legislature could potentially take our city owned utility away from us and take away our ability to improve the effects of past redlining and discriminatory practices. He recommended protecting CPS Energy and its revenues to the City as losing those would keep us from paying Police and Fire fair wages, fighting crime and domestic violence, and delivering other services to our community. Councilmember Pelaez supported the staff recommendation.

Councilmember Whyte recommended doing whatever was needed to offset CPS Energy rate increases and recommended a line item in the Budget to go back to CPS Energy that would provide certainty for them. He supported the staff recommendation but wanted more to go to CPS Energy and encouraged his colleagues to deny CPS Energy another rate increase by voting against the next request.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia wanted to assure residents that their money was invested in items that were in their best interest so she wanted to discuss sustainability, weatherization, homeowner programs, and other programs that would help residents with their utility bills. She felt that the City was transparent, but CPS Energy was not sharing their full financial picture and suggested that CPS Energy look into innovation.

Gorzell clarified that the policy today was that the City would keep the first 10% of revenues that came in above the budgeted CPS Energy Revenues and the City would decide what would happen with any funds above that 10%. Gorzell stated that the proposal to split the remainder at 80% CPS Energy resiliency programs and 20% City REES was not currently the policy. He offered to provide a breakdown of the amounts expected this year.

Councilmember Castillo recommended more transparency from CPS Energy and suggested that many residents could not access CPS Energy's Weatherization Program because of the condition of their home which was being helped by the City's Home Rehab Program. These older homes were not only less efficient but could be unsafe for air conditioners due to older wiring, and these were the folks that needed help the most, according to Councilmember Castillo.

Councilmember Kaur requested an analysis of the return on investment for the City's renovation and weatherization of homes versus CPS Energy's affordability programs noting that she would support whatever had more impact to the resident.

Councilmember Courage commented that CPS Energy revenues was seen as another source the City could use to fund its services, noting that some was included in the base Budget including the

amount CPS Energy estimated for off system sales. Gorzell clarified that this policy proposal did not include extra off system sales, only the revenue from ratepayers which the extra revenues could be due to weather or fuel price increases. Councilmember Courage noted that the City received 14% of CPS Energy's revenues and CPS Energy received the rest. Gorzell explained that the City received 14% of the total revenues including pass through fuel costs and CPS Energy's revenues were reduced by pass through costs and they used their money for operational expenses.

Councilmember Courage recalled that the last two rate increases were presented by CPS Energy at a higher rate than what was recommended by Gorzell, and the City Council ultimately approved Gorzell's lower number. He asserted that City Council was the watchdog for the residents looking over what CPS was requesting and ensuring that they were only getting what they needed.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda reminded the City Council that the City owned the utility and they reported to City Council so she was perplexed with the mistrust. She commented that there had been extensive conversations with the community about CPS Energy's rate hike and the concern was reliability and affordability.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda asked Gorzell to explain the rate case review process. Gorzell stated that his team worked with CPS Energy before they began to request a rate increase and reviewed their financials in detail. Councilmember Cabello Havrda clarified that the rate increase was a collaborative and transparent effort, noting that it would be irresponsible as owners of the utility to deny all future rate increases.

The new policy, according to Councilmember Cabello Havrda, needed to focus on maintaining a strong utility and ensuring sustainability. She recommended that more money go to the City's REES Fund and supported more briefings from both utilities like when there was a Municipal Utilities Council Committee. Councilmember Cabello Havrda asked whether the REES Funds could be used for home rehabilitation. City Manager Walsh stated that City Council could decide how the REES Fund was structured and its uses.

Mayor Nirenberg acknowledged that there was a trust deficit with CPS Energy as a result of Winter Storm Uri and stated that the purpose of the Municipal Utilities Committee was to develop an emergency plan which was accomplished, but offered to have CPS Energy provide more briefings to the City Council if that was needed. Mayor Nirenberg reminded the City Council that CPS Energy was a city owned utility and it was imperative to ensure they could provide reliable electricity to residents. He added that their service was very capital intensive and suggested that those expenses could be mitigated by the off system sales.

Mayor Nirenberg noted that CPS Energy, despite being an energy producer as well as distributor, was incredibly affordable. Mayor Nirenberg listed several weatherization programs such as the Sustainable Tomorrow Energy Plan (STEP) and others being managed by the Alamo Area Council of Governments (AACOG).

Councilmember Viagran commented that the residents of the City of San Antonio were the ones that did not trust CPS Energy basically because of Winter Storm Uri but also because they were

denied participation in CPS Energy's affordability programs and sometimes, CPS Energy did not come trim trees or haul them off in a timely manner during a storm.

Councilmember Whyte expressed concern with the turnover of City Council noting that it was difficult for them to understand the needs of CPS Energy when they first took office which resulted in approvals of CPS Energy's requests suggesting that it would take the political will of the City Council to deny CPS Energy a rate increase. He reiterated wanting a specific line item in the Budget with a set dollar amount.

Councilmember Courage suggested that it took more courage to say yes to a rate increase and explain to the constituents why there was a need for more revenues to keep the utility stable. He noted that CPS Energy received more revenues than had been projected and the matter at hand was to determine how to handle excess funding to the City. He noted that the rate case was a year over year request and a one-time amount could not make up \$85 million annually.

Councilmember Pelaez asked Gorzell to provide a policy that would help CPS Energy maintain its good standing with the rating agencies. Gorzell explained that the base policy already in place lined up with the two-year Budget practices for the City and the rating agencies would see this as favorable. Councilmember Pelaez commented that a future City Council could always undo any policy so he urged his colleagues to approve the staff recommendation.

Councilmember Castillo asserted that the tough decisions were made by residents at their kitchen table but supported the staff's recommendation to keep the 20% for the City's REES Fund and send 80% to CPS Energy with the caveat that CPS Energy provide a presentation to the City Council Community Health Committee describing their resiliency programs.

#### FINANCIAL POLICIES – PROPERTY TAX

Deputy Chief Financial Officer, Troy Elliott reminded City Council that last year, they had approved increasing the homestead exemption from 10% to 20%, the over 65 exemption from \$65,000 to \$85,000, and disabled persons exemption from \$12,500 to \$85,000. There was a tax freeze in place for all over-65 and disabled persons, according to Elliott, and the childcare facility exemption that City Council approved earlier this month would be included in the 2025 model.

Elliott stated that, by law, all homesteads in Texas were limited to 10% appraisal value increase per year to reduce the impact of sharp increases in tax bills. In 2019, Senate Bill 2 (SB2) reduced the Property Tax Roll Back Rate (Voter approval rate) from 8% to 3.5% applicable to the Maintenance and Operations (M&O) portion of the tax rate. The City could not go above the 3.5% but was able to bank any unused increment up to three years and a half percent was still available to the City at this time but was now capped at \$5.5 million (under SB 1999) and would roll off at the end of this year.

Elliott estimated market value increases of 2.6% for single family residential, 12% for multi-family residential and 7.6% for commercial for an overall total of a 6.2% increase. He stated that taxable value growth was at 7.4% for FY 2025 using preliminary estimates from the Bexar County Appraisal District (BCAD).

The property tax rate was made up of the M&O tax rate and the debt service rate explained Elliott. Texas Proposition 4, approved by voters on November 3, 2023, temporarily limited all non-homestead real property valued at \$5 million or less to a 20% appraised value increase per year. Elliott provided key dates noting that he could not provide reliable numbers yet because tax protests could still be filed until May 15, 2024 and the City would not receive its certified roll from BCAD until July 25, 2024.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito requested clarification on the unused increment. City Manager Walsh explained that the \$5.5 million unused increment was not included in the FY 2025 revenue projections but it could be. She recommended including the \$5.5 million in the FY 2025 Budget as there were many unmet needs.

Councilmember Viagran commented that Council District 3 continued to grow and recommended programs to let people know what was available. She supported including the \$5.5 million in the FY 2025 Budget.

Councilmember Courage asked where the \$5.5 million would come from. Elliott stated that including the increment in the new tax rate and would mean a higher tax rate.

Councilmember Castillo commented there were many inactive properties that were not paying their taxes and recommended title clearance so they could be required to pay the taxes.

#### AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT (ARPA) FINANCIAL UPDATE

Deputy City Manager Maria Villagomez provided an update on all ARPA Grants which were budgeted at \$565.6 million of that amount, \$379.8 million had been spent which was 67% of the funding. She added that all funding was anticipated to be spent by FY 2027 and reports were sent to the United States Treasury Department quarterly; an online dashboard was also available to show the community how the funds were invested.

City Manager Walsh introduced the discussion by noting major efforts for FY 2025 such as ongoing airport Terminal Development Plan (TDP), continuation of 2022 Bond Program, Transit Oriented Development (TOD), police staffing plan to get to 60% proactive time, additional improvements in the San Antonio Fire Department (SAFD), continuation of the Animal Care Services (ACS) improvements through their Strategic Plan, SA Tomorrow, Strategic Housing Implementation Plan (SHIP), homeless services, Downtown Strategic Plan, Code Compliance Strategic Plan, completing ARPA spending on time, and critical replacement of City facilities.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez commented that ACS was a priority including the East and West Spay/Neuter Clinics and adding more ACS Officers including a staffing analysis. He recognized that the City's benefits did not cover In-vitro Fertilization (IVF) and family planning and recommended increasing parental leave to eight weeks. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez recommended adding housing navigators to the homeless outreach teams and an increase to the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) from \$1 million to \$1.25 million and increasing the Neighborhood Accessibility & Mobility Program (NAMP) from \$450,000 to \$500,000 for City

Council to prioritize needs in their council districts. He also requested support for expansion of the Teen Corps Program.

Councilmember Viagran supported ensuring equity and elimination of economic disparities around the City. She prioritized keeping ARPA spending on track and requested an update on where Bexar County was with their spending of the funding they had committed. Councilmember Viagran commented that downtown belonged to the whole city and recommended full City Council updates on downtown. She supported review of benefits for staff, particularly women's health and hiring practices of persons with disabilities. Councilmember Viagran recommended working with the union to allow staff more opportunity to participate in the political process.

Councilmember Viagran supported public safety initiatives such as the ACS Strategic Plan and educating the community on how to care for their animals and be responsible pet owners and the police substation and new fire stations in her council district, domestic violence revention/intervention and gun violence programs as well as 24-hour, 7-day per week (24/7) coverage for the Community Operation Resource Education unit (SA CORE). She supported rehabilitation of the Father Ramon Center and City facility maintenance for libraries, senior centers, parks, and other facilities as well as purchase of relevant gym equipment for seniors.

Councilmember Viagran supported the diabetes insulin cost share program, homeless outreach, and nutrition. She prioritized more Code Enforcement Officers and asked Director of Development Services Department Mike Shannon how many more Officers were needed. Shannon stated that the Code Officers were currently achieving their response time and proactivity metrics and he felt they were staffed sufficiently.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito prioritized public safety with enough Police Officers, Firefighters, and ACS Officers and recommended a staffing analysis for ACS. She noted that the new ACS Spay/Neuter Clinic would open in September 2024 and recommended focus on sterilization citywide. Councilmember Alderete Gavito prioritized infrastructure with more funding for CIP and NAMP and noted that homelessness was an issue, parks needed funds for maintenance and shade over playgrounds, and she supported funds to expand the Construction Mitigation Grant Program and extension of the Senior Compliance Assistance Pilot Program.

Councilmember Whyte supported more money for the Infrastructure Maintenance Program (IMP), CIP and NAMP, Police, Fire including related staffing and equipment for new Police Officers. He proposed funding for neighborhood playgrounds such as \$10,000 per council district to help neighborhood associations maintain and upkeep their community facilities. He recommended Zero Based Budgeting (ZBB) which could require additional resources such as personnel or third-party contracts.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda noted that the City needed to adapt to a post COVID community but suggested that mental health was still an issue. She supported funding for homelessness, children, foster kids, special needs, and recommended a \$300,000 planning grant for the non-profit Latino Texas Policy Center; \$250,000 for the "Through Project" for kids aging out of the foster system; \$1 million for the Asian Resource Center of San Antonio (ARCSA); and \$100,000 for the PEACE Initiative.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda supported an increase to NAMP and IMP and more investment in ACS as well as Councilmember Whyte's recommendation for \$10,000 per council district for neighborhood maintenance. Councilmember Cabello Havrda recommended that the City enhance and focus Ready to Work (RTW) on apprenticeship programs that might partner with local schools or trade unions. She supported continuance of the Violent Crime Reduction Plan and funding for the 100 Club of San Antonio who served families of fallen first responders.

Councilmember Kaur recommended more funding for drainage and streets, homelessness, ACS, and Code Enforcement. She supported development of a program for quick build projects such as bike lanes or striping without a full construction process, budget for additional directional signage on construction projects and easier access to city council offices to provide information, funds for failed sidewalks and drainage issues, and higher staff pay to mitigate challenges retaining Engineers to do traffic studies. She supported funding for pedestrian crosswalks in capital projects.

Councilmember Kaur recommended more Code Enforcement Officers and support after 6 p.m. and on weekends to quickly address dangerous premises as well as more ACS Officers available after hours and on weekends with more education and community outreach. She also recommended more resources to increase the number of kennels and incentives for ACS partner organizations.

Councilmember Kaur supported funding for long-term homeless solutions and a marketing campaign to educate residents about how the City was helping the homeless as well as more funding for the Minor Home Repair Program under the Neighborhood and Housing Services Department (NHSD). She recommended small business construction mitigation grants and getting projects completed more quickly with incentive-based programs as well as an improved Development Services Department (DSD) permitting process education for small businesses.

Councilmember Kaur recommended that the Center City and Downtown Operations Department (CCDO), Economic Development Department (EDD) and Ready to Work (RTW) support food and beverage businesses. Downtown and building maintenance, particularly historic buildings and the riverwalk, were also important to the Councilmember. She recommended adding community engagement staff within each department to build community relationships as well as an update of salary levels for the Local Government Corporation (LGC) staff to ensure recruitment of high level staff on the City Council teams.

Councilmember Castillo recommended support for public housing maintenance and prioritized home rehabilitation through NHSD. She recommended investment in homeless services within the division of the Department of Human Services (DHS). Councilmember Castillo suggested providing Firefighters with the resources they deserved including providing the San Antonio Police Department with Cellebrite software and funding the Animal Care Services (ACS) Strategic Plan.

Councilmember Castillo supported the increase in NAMP and CIP and requested restrooms in Monterrey Park separate from the daytime center to support the ball fields and courts after hours. Councilmember Castillo supported providing City employees with IVF benefits and adding more San Antonio for a Fear Free Environment (SAFFE) Officers.



Councilmember Pelaez supported more public safety including more Police Officers on the streets, shorter response times to 9-1-1 calls including a response time goal reduction plan, domestic violence program funding, funding for public art from the General Fund, \$1 million for the Goodwill Industries training center downtown, \$1 million for the American Cancer Society location near the hospitals for parents to stay when their children received treatment (HOPE Lodge), the SA Sports Foundation, senior centers' Seniors in Play Program, more economic development outreach in Latin America and India, and suggested that VIA Busses could advertise San Antonio to our visitors and display public art. He supported increased restroom availability at Monterrey Park as well as lighting in parks across the City. Councilmember Pelaez recommended elimination of HAZMAT Fees for convenience stores.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia expressed concern with the healthcare ecosystem on the South Side and requested a heat map of ambulance calls. She noted that Barlight Street, Somerset Road, and Southwest Military Drive used to house doctor's offices and clinics that had moved away, and residents had to go further for healthcare which created health disparities for persons living south of Highway 90.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia suggested that the City continue to invest in non-profits running out of ARPA funds. She recommended programs including the SHIP rental assistance, homeless services through faith-based organizations and Haven for Hope with a priority for families that worked and needed childcare. She stated that Opportunity Home's waitlist was also a concern. She requested the schedule for the mobile shower that had been purchased.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia supported citywide service for spay/neuter and the ACS Strategic Plan. She stated that public safety staffing levels were important and requested expansion of Hot Spot Policing and more partnerships with SAFTE Officers. Infrastructure recommendations from Councilmember Rocha Garcia included an increase in NAMP and CIP for sidewalks with an increase of discretionary funding of IMP Sidewalks for gaps and repairs. She recommended an International Affairs Department liaison for the Asian community and the Asian Resource Center of San Antonio (ARCSA). Councilmember Rocha Garcia stated that staffing and pay for LGC as well as benefits for IVF for employees was also a priority.

Councilmember Courage focused on the overall goals for the Budget and stated that public safety was a commitment which included increasing the size of SAPD by 15% each year and the implications of the Firefighter contract were major expenses that would impact future budgets. He supported more funding for all types of housing (workforce/affordable housing and others), emphasized home repair, and innovative ways to address homelessness.

Councilmember Courage stated that more jobs and better paying jobs through RTW including a support for small businesses to pay better wages were a priority as well as education and training through RTW, public education, unions, and businesses. He recommended more mental health professionals for the City to help people in crisis including homelessness and incentives for teachers to stay in the education industry.

Energy and water security were an important focus for Councilmember Courage as it impacted

economic development and the welfare of our community. He recommended tightening our belts and supported planning for the ZBB in FY 2027 as the City was facing Budget deficits in three years.

Mayor Nirenberg acknowledged the efforts undertaken over the years such as the SHIP including home preservation and expansion, low barrier shelters to address homelessness, and harm reduction programs. He recommended development of a plan to reduce public safety response times, and supported funds to continue the Violence Prevention Plan and Hot Spot Policing. He supported long-term strategies for transportation including mass transit, Transit Oriented Development (TOD), and airport expansion.

Economic mobility was an important challenge for Mayor Nirenberg, and he recommended a commitment to geographic inclusion for better paying jobs and access to education with a reduction of barriers such as childcare. He suggested that the City set aside resources to deal with those issues in a more robust way.

Mayor Nirenberg supported transitioning the SA Forward Health Plan from grant funding to the General Fund. Smaller important items included reducing the time for construction projects which, he said, could include incentives for faster completion and penalties for delays. Mayor Nirenberg noted that the Solid Waste Department was doing a good job but felt there was too much trash on our streets, and the City should hold the Texas Department of Transportation accountable for cleaning up the state highways. He recommended an anti-litter marketing and education campaign. He supported the creation of ARCSA and the HOPE Lodge with the American Cancer Society.

Councilmember Whyte supported ARCSA and accelerating construction and creation of a permanent construction mitigation fund as well as more direct funding for small businesses.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito supported more funding for drainage and wanted to ensure that City Council staff could be paid more so they could attract high-quality individuals. She agreed with Councilmember Pelaez that we needed to explore school safety and agreed with the Mayor that litter cleanup was needed. Councilmember Alderete Gavito recommended more availability of 3-1-1 call operators.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez supported speeding up construction projects but stressed that quality should be maintained, and contractors held accountable. He suggested that more support for ACS partners was needed to alleviate the shelter overcrowding and recommended a pilot program for the mobile spay/neuter unit.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez recommended a review of the pay structure for LGC employees. He requested a map of the parks in the City that had full bathrooms and not just port-a-potties and supported the addition of a bathroom in Monterrey Park. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez supported expansion of the Senior Compliance Assistance Pilot Program as well as competitive wages for Firefighters, and a permanent construction mitigation grant fund. He suggested more leeway with small projects. He supported trash cleanup around the City and noted that vacant properties around the city with out-of-town owners accumulated more dumping.

Councilmember Viagran agreed with Councilmember Rocha Garcia that there were health disparities on the South Side. She wanted the 2017 Bond Projects, particularly Roosevelt Avenue, to be completed and expressed concern about the quality of work of construction contractors for Council District 3 projects. Councilmember Viagran requested requirements for giving money to organizations. She recommended more funding for public art maintenance and additional lighting in parks. She understood that the City needed to cut its Budget and asked her colleagues where they wanted to cut.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda supported funding for IVF for employees.

Councilmember Castillo commented that cutting programs meant City employees could lose their jobs and suggested that City Council have the discretion to pay LGC employees amounts within their budgets even if they were over the amount recommended by Human Resources. She supported the work of the truancy court and recommended connecting RTW and the ambassador programs to at-risk youth.

Councilmember Castillo stated that the Senior Compliance Assistance Pilot Program should be continued and recommended a mobile spay unit and expansion of façade grants for small businesses. She supported an educational campaign about trash and illegal dumping. Medical support for the South and East Sides of town were also a concern for Councilmember Castillo.

Councilmember Kaur recommended safe passage areas to walk to school and supported help for public housing maintenance projects with funding for Opportunity Home (formerly the San Antonio Housing Authority) as well as a program to provide down payment assistance for homeowners to build Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs).

Councilmember Kaur supported inclusion of IVF in employee healthcare and support for mental health professionals. She suggested allocating some Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) revenues to support the SA Sports Foundation as they were bringing the Final Four Tournament to San Antonio which was a huge tourism opportunity.

Councilmember Pelaez supported making parks ultra-accessible for children and families of all abilities including the restrooms. He recommended expanding bicycle skills tracks all over town like the one at McAllister Park.

City Manager Walsh stated that he would compile what was heard and share a summary after lunch. He stated that he would ask for lower priorities after lunch and clarified that the City Council could identify any program, not only the ones discussed earlier.

Mayor Nirenberg recessed the meeting at 12:29 p.m. for lunch and reconvened the meeting at 1:56 p.m.

City Manager Walsh recapped the two morning policies which included CPS Energy Financial Policy which did not appear to have a clear consensus from the morning session, and whether to include the unused increment (\$5.5 million) of the Property Tax General Fund revenue which would

be expiring if not used in FY 2025.

Priorities with clear consensus included infrastructure, public safety, Animal Care Services, Housing/homeless, according to City Manager Walsh. He stated that some Councilmembers had mentioned the Senior Compliance Assistance Pilot Program, health disparities, clean City, employee issues and park improvements. City Manager Walsh noted that a detailed list would be provided to the City Council later.

City Manager Walsh asked for lower priorities and areas that could be reallocated due to their prioritization. Segovia reminded the City Council that the session was for goal setting and nothing was being counted or voted on at the meeting.

Mayor Nirenberg suggested that each Councilmember look at their own list of items and help prioritize. City Manager Walsh clarified that lower priority items could be those that were not discussed in the morning.

Councilmember Courage asked more about realizing the \$5.5 million increment noting that it would mean a tax increase. City Manager Walsh clarified that the tax rate would be lowered because of the SB2 calculation, the unused increment was layered on top and even with the unused increment there would still be a lower tax rate. Councilmember Courage recommended acceleration of hiring of the 360 new Police Officers in less than three years.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez supported the breakdown of CPS Energy revenues with a little more for the City's REES Fund and recommendations from the Office of Sustainability for the CPS Energy resiliency projects. He did not support any staff losing their job and noted that growing Code Enforcement was not a priority for him. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez suggested a hiring freeze in some departments for vacancies. He noted that public safety was a huge priority, however, Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez noted that crime was down not only in the City but nationally and stated that SAPD's Budget was already high and he would not accelerate hiring of police but rather slow them down, and SAFD was a priority over SAPD.

Councilmember Whyte recommended acceleration of hiring of Police Officers and an increase in pay for LGC City Council staff.

Councilmember Castillo emphasized that the REES Fund should be increased using CPS revenues and she also supported Metro Health. She supported using the unused tax increment to clear property titles to ensure that the City was collecting property taxes from those with "tangled titles." Councilmember Castillo supported funding for SA CORE and StandUp SA Programs. She suggested reviewing delegate agencies that did not meet their metrics for savings.

Councilmember Viagran recommended discussing the CPS Energy policy only after the revenues actually came in over 10% and supported using the unused tax increment for the added costs to public safety including Animal Care Services. She offered to provide a list of ways for tightening up of departments but continued to advocate for expansion of staff for Code Enforcement.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia agreed with the comments but requested more assurance from CPS

Energy regarding reliability and resiliency projects that would be funded with excess revenues. She recommended preparing for changes in Federal funding as a result of possible changes in administration with potential cuts to workforce, education, and healthcare at the Federal level. Councilmember Kaur agreed.

Mayor Nirenberg supported the staff recommendations for CPS Energy excess revenues as it allowed for a policy discussion later noting that City Council could always approve a variance. He asserted that with lots of construction projects in the pipeline, market saturation was causing delays, therefore, he did not support adding more funding to infrastructure.

Mayor Nirenberg heard concerns about the LGC, noting that there was a consistent need for hiring flexibility, however, the City Council Budgets had disproportionately grown compared to the rest of the City departments, so he encouraged his colleagues to work within their Budgets. Mayor Nirenberg expressed concern with the Migrant Resource Center funding and suggested a close review of the ARPA funding to ensure the projects would meet the deadline for spending and current priorities and reallocate ARPA funding as necessary.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH PLAN

Alanna Reed, Director of the Communications & Engagement (C&E) Department, provided the FY 2025 Budget Community Outreach Plan which included use of a statistically valid community survey by consultant ETC Institute, but with an engagement strategy that informed the community about the need to slow spending. Reed stated that the survey would be in both English and Spanish, administered by mail, phone, and online and would represent our city's demographics. She noted that 1,065 surveys would be completed citywide with a report for the samples in each council district but the survey would also be available to anyone through SA SpeakUp. Reed provided a timeline for the survey that included results being presented to City Council on June 20, 2024.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez affirmed that items listed as lower priorities from the community survey did not mean residents did not want those things, but they might just be satisfied with those.

Councilmember Courage recommended increasing the survey responses to 2,000 with 200 per council district.

Councilmember Pelaez stated that it was important that each council district distribute links to the SA SpeakUp portion of the survey. He suggested breaking out homeless outreach from encampments as his constituents were more concerned with encampments.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda asked if sidewalk repair was already in the Budget. City Manager Walsh stated that the sidewalk inventory and some repair was in the base Budget and an update would be provided later in the summer. Councilmember Cabello Havrda asked how cleaning up the city could align with garbage and recycling services which residents did not list as a priority. City Manager Walsh felt that litter cleanup was different from garbage services and noted that the survey indicated that the Solid Waste Management Department was doing a good job with garbage collection.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda requested a list of the proposed survey questions for review to ensure people could understand the questions. City Manager Walsh stated that a link to the website showing last year's questions would be sent to City Council. Councilmember Cabello Havrda offered to help get the word out about the SA SpeakUp Survey and suggested providing a paper survey option in addition to the online and phone options.

Councilmember Castillo highlighted the tools that her office used to set budget priorities and looked forward to the public meetings.

Councilmember Whyte asked how many years the City had conducted a survey. Reed stated that this was the second year of the statistically valid survey, however, an SA SpeakUp Survey was conducted many years before that but noted that every year the responses were influenced by current events. Councilmember Whyte asked about the cost of the survey. Reed stated that the contract was for \$49,000 and included development of the questions and surveying including recruiting the respondents.

Councilmember Kaur was reviewing last year's survey questions online and expressed concern that the questions might be too short and noted that lists were organized alphabetically rather than by related subject and recommended more explanations on what services were provided within the subject as well as a breakdown of needs versus satisfaction instead of an aggregate score. Councilmember Kaur requested information on how the consultant determined who would be Surveyed. Laura Mayes, Assistant Director of C&E, stated that the consultant had lists and would ensure the respondents met our required demographics.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia recommended sharing the survey with the Neighborhood Leadership Academy to assist with development of the survey instrument. She suggested that C&E host a general community engagement session at events such as the Book Festival or at the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez requested comparison of prior years' survey responses. Reed stated that the questions were not the same so a direct comparison would not be possible. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez suggested a sliding scale or better description of the service as sometimes survey developers made assumptions about categories; he asserted that the way a question was worded could drive the response in a certain way. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez supported provision of paper copies of the SA SpeakUp Survey and requested review of the questions before they went out.

Councilmember Viagran offered to support distribution of the SA SpeakUp Survey or ensure those who received the statistically valid survey would complete it. She conducted her own survey by encouraging residents and neighborhood association leadership to email their top priorities to her office.

Councilmember Viagran commented that people wanted homeless services and not just encampment cleanup because these were our neighbors. She still recommended more staff for Code Enforcement and suggested a look at illegal garbage dumping.

Mayor Nirenberg clarified that the survey would be informed by today's discussion. He agreed that this was one of several tools that the City Council used when developing priorities, however, the survey responses seemed consistent over time and with their own stated priorities. Mayor Nirenberg agreed that data must be interpreted properly. He asked about the qualitative data that was used and recommended focus groups. Reed stated that open ended questions were included in the survey and were qualitative in nature.

City Manager Erik Walsh closed the session by noting that he would need to align expenses with revenues and stated that the Trial Budget would be presented on May 8, 2024.

Mayor Nirenberg thanked the City Council for their open and candid feedback.

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Mayor Nirenberg recessed the meeting into Executive Session at 2:57 p.m. to discuss any of the following:

- A. Economic development negotiations pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 551.087 (economic development)
- B. The purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 551.072 (real property).
- C. Legal issues related to collective bargaining pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 551.071 (consultation with attorney).
- D. Legal issues related to litigation involving the City pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 551.071 (consultation with attorney).
- E. Legal issues related to collective bargaining pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 551.071 (consultation with attorney).

Mayor Nirenberg reconvened the meeting in Open Session at 3:54 p.m. and stated that no official action had been taken in Executive Session.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 2:57 p.m.

**Approved**

**Ron Nirenberg**  
**Mayor**

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

DRAFT