

City of San Antonio



Minutes

Community Health Committee

2023 – 2025 Council Members

Chair: Teri Castillo, Dist. 5

Dr. Sukh Kaur, Dist. 1 | Phyllis Viagran, Dist. 3

Dr. Adriana Rocha Garcia, Dist. 4 | Marina Alderete Gavito, Dist. 7

Thursday, October 26, 2023

2:00 PM

City Hall

The Community Health Committee convened a regular meeting in the City Hall Media Briefing Room beginning at 2:00 PM. Deputy City Clerk Aurora Perkins took the Roll Call noting a quorum with the following Committee Members present:

Members Present: Teri Castillo, *Chair*
Dr. Sukh Kaur, *Member*
Phyllis Viagran, *Member*
Dr. Adriana Rocha Garcia, *Member*
Marina Alderete Gavito, *Member*

Members Absent: None

Approval of Minutes

1. Approval of minutes from the Community Health Committee meeting on September 28, 2023.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia moved to Approve the minutes of the September 28, 2023 Community Health Committee meeting. Councilmember Viagran seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Castillo, Viagran, Rocha Garcia, Alderete Gavito
Absent: Kaur

Councilmember Kaur entered the meeting after the Minute vote.

Public Comments

Briefing and Possible Action on

2. Briefing on the Metro Health 2.0 Strategic Plan [Erik Walsh, City Manager; Claude A. Jacob, Director, Metro Health]

Dr. Claude Jacob, Director of the Metro Health Department, provided an update on the Metro Health 2.0 Strategic Plan (Plan) and introduced staff and Dr George Benjamin who worked with staff on the Plan. Dr. Benjamin noted that he had been meeting with the Metro Health staff and the Office of the City Manager. Dr. Benjamin stressed the importance of public health and associated programs and noted that he was here to provide support to the City and staff.

Jacob provided an overview of the Plan and noted that it was the set for the next five years. He added that the program had six categories to include: Community Health, Data and Information Technology, Financing, Partnerships, Public Health Laws and Governance and Workforce

Jacob spoke to the National Public Health Framework and stated that the Plan was informed by the framework and was in alignment with Public Health Accreditation and Measures. He added that the Plan was also aligned with the Community Health Improvement Plan and necessary to maintain accreditation.

Jacob noted that the City had received a Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Public Health Infrastructure Grant and was awarded \$1.9 million to support SA Forward Initiative priority areas and to retain 22 positions. He stated that this was important because it addressed the need for a public health workforce and other institutional knowledge to address other medical public health issues.

Jacob stated that Metro Health had engaged staff and stakeholders in the strategic planning process in each focus area in the Plan. He reviewed the Plan timeline to include kickoff meetings in March 2022, analysis, grant funding awards, roll out of the Plan and Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) Reaccreditation in December 2024.

Jacob provided a comparison of the SA Forward and the Plan and noted that the Plan was a five-year plan to address infrastructure. He reviewed the key documents required for reaccreditation and the process to achieve completion of those requirements.

Jacob reviewed the goals for each of the six areas of the Plan and accreditation and noted that the Plan would modernize the City's public health infrastructure and would create pipelines for the future public health workforce while strengthening the City's capacity for partner and community engagement.

DISCUSSION

Councilmember Alderete Gavito asked for clarification on the reason why the public health workforce was leaving the field. Jacobs stated that the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic strongly exhausted workforce nationally as well as locally. He stated that the Plan was instrumental in building that workforce. Councilmember Alderete Gavito noted that it was important to have a robust community engagement program and that her and her staff were ready to assist.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked what weaknesses were identified in the strategic planning

process. Jacob stated that lack of funding and workforce were the key weaknesses. Councilmember Rocha Garcia noted that today was the 25th Anniversary of Methodist Children's Hospital and asked of the impact of the Plan to youth health. Jacob acknowledged the continued need to address youth health regarding obesity, nourishment and other health issues.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked if Metro Health had enough employees to address the growing needs of the community. Jacob stated that while the City Council had been committed to Metro Health programs, funding was always needed to expand services. Councilmember Rocha Garcia noted that preventive health programs were the core of Metro Health programs and needed to continue.

Councilmember Viagran was supportive of the Item and noted that Metro Health took a national framework approach to its Plan. She expressed concern on the lack of community workforce and the need for education within schools at younger grade levels to make them aware of health careers.

Councilmember Kaur asked if the Plan was created before the Supreme Court ruling that overturned Roe v. Wade or after. Jacob stated that it was created before and was created in order to set benchmarks for the five-year Plan. He added that a dashboard would be created to address progress on an annual basis and would align goals as needed.

Chair Castillo stated that it was positive that the Plan took into consideration stakeholder and community input. She asked if Metro Health coordinated programs with other departments to expand them. Jacob confirmed that the Plan was anchored in collaboration and outreach.

Chair Castillo asked if outreach was conducted at schools of all levels. Jacobs confirmed that student outreach was conducted and just that day a briefing was conducted at UT Health Science Center.

No action was taken on this Item.

3. Briefing on Report of Access to Health Care in Bexar County during COVID-19 [Erik Walsh, City Manager; Claude A. Jacob, Director, Metro Health]

Metro Health Department Medical Director, Dr C. Junda Woo, provided an overview of the Report of Access to Health Care in Bexar County and provided background of the report completion. She spoke to community stakeholders and partners that provided input on the report to include the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio, UTSA, The Health Collaborative, C3HIE and CI:NOW. She noted that meetings and surveys began in May 2022 and included an SASpeakUp community survey which had over 1,800 responses.

Woo spoke to the findings of the SASpeakUp Survey which included respondent demographics and identified barriers to health care. She reviewed findings from partner surveys which revealed greater impacts to marginalized populations in maintaining health insurance, health services and dental services. Woo reviewed the impact of COVID in the areas of immunizations, drug related deaths, suicide and prenatal care.

Woo noted that findings in the interview and focus groups revealed that there was an increase in policy changes to provide Medicaid and partnerships providing medical care. She identified

barriers to health care which included language, transportation needs and the exodus of the medical workforce. Woo also stated that funds for communications were identified as a need by the focus groups.

Woo stated that in working towards solutions the recommendation was to increase community conversations, increase awareness resources and the need to educate clinicians on stigma free practices.

DISCUSSION

Councilmember Alderete Gavito noted that there was an increase in Medicaid enrollments and an decrease in prenatal care and asked of the reason. Woo stated that there were a number of factors to include lack of communications of services and that continued study and discussion was needed. Councilmember Alderete Gavito stated that an educational campaign was needed to navigate the medical access to services.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito asked if SASpeakUp survey respondents' information was available in order to reach out to assist them with services. Woo stated that the surveys were anonymous.

Councilmember Kaur noted that the surveys had a high response rate and asked how staff was able to achieve that. Woo stated that the relationships with community partners were instrumental in gathering data.

Councilmember Kaur noted that many schools had reported a decrease in attendance due to medical issues and asked if data was gathered on this issues. Woo stated that data on this issue was not collected. Councilmember Kaur recommended that information and data on absenteeism due to medical issues should be included in future surveys.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia noted the importance of gathering data on access to medical clinics which should continue to be monitored and identifying alternatives for access to transportation. She asked if VIA provided data on usage of medical transportation bus vouchers. Woo stated that data had not been gathered since there were not enough City clinics to gather the relevant data.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia supported the need for marketing efforts to medical services and stressed the need to expanded education and marketing efforts. She noted her pleasure on the number of Spanish speakers who provided input to the survey and stressed the needed for Spanish speaking staff and resources for Metro Health program services.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia noted that there was an increase in Central American children entering schools needing expanded services. Woo stated that work with school districts was key to address medical services needs.

Councilmember Viagran spoke to the importance of telehealth services and opportunities to educate telehealth services and addressing issues of the digital divide. She also supported the need for marketing of medical services and awareness to the community.

Chair Castillo noted the importance of VIA to immunization clinics and transportation to other medical services.

Chair Castillo asked for clarification on drug related deaths. Woo stated that the majority of deaths were due to the use of methamphetamines and there was an increase in the use of Fentanyl. Chair Castillo stated the importance of dental care for recovering addicts and those trying to gain employment. She also stressed the importance of prenatal care services in lower income areas.

No action was taken on this Item.

Adjournment

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 3:11 PM.

Approved

Teri Castillo, Chair

Debbie Racca-Sittre, City Clerk