

City of San Antonio



Minutes Municipal Court Advisory Committee

Tuesday, November 14, 2023

1:00 PM

Council Briefing Room

The Municipal Court Advisory Committee convened a regular meeting in the City Hall Council Briefing Room beginning at 1:03 PM. City Clerk Debbie Racca-Sittre took the Roll Call noting a quorum with the following Committee Members present:

Members Present: Jalen McKee-Rodriguez, *Chair*
Teri Castillo, *Member*
Melissa Cabello Havrda, *Member*
Marina Alderete Gavito, *Member*

Members Absent: Manny Pelaez, *Member*

Approval of Minutes

1. Approval of the minutes from the Municipal Court Advisory Committee meeting on May 24, 2023.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda moved to Approve the minutes of the May 24, 2023 Municipal Court Advisory Committee meeting. Councilmember Alderete Gavito seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: McKee-Rodriguez, Castillo, Cabello Havrda, Alderete Gavito
Absent: Pelaez

Public Comments

There was no public comment.

Briefing on the following items

2. Overview of the Municipal Court. [Andy Segovia, City Attorney]

Municipal Court Presiding Judge Carla Obledo provided an overview of the San Antonio Municipal Court (SAMC). Judge Obledo introduced her team of Judges: Trial Docket Judge Melanie Castillo, Arraignment and Magistration Judge Yvonne Gomez, Animal, Quality of Life and License Docket Court Judge Lisa Gonzales, Arraignment and SA Road Ready Docket Judge Dan Kassahn and Magistrate Judge Michael Ramos.

Obledo noted that an Assistant Bexar County District Attorney was assigned to SAMC. Obledo stated that the mission of the San Antonio Municipal Court was to administer justice fairly, impartially and efficiently. She indicated that SAMC was committed to providing a transparent and trustworthy forum where individuals could be heard and considered with dignity and respect.

Obledo stated that SAMC was a court of record that served as the judicial branch of government for the City of San Antonio for fine-only class C misdemeanors and those established by State Law or City Ordinance. She noted that citations issued by the San Antonio Police Department (SAPD), Park Police, Airport Police, Animal Care Services (ACS) and the Development Services Department (DSD) were included.

Obledo stated that Judges were appointed by the Mayor and City Council for two-year, staggered terms and their duties were set forth by City Ordinance, City Charter and the Code of Criminal Procedure, according to Obledo. She also mentioned that all SAMC Judges served as Magistrates and had the authority to enforce court orders through warrants or capias.

Obledo stated that SAMC held criminal hearings including: traffic violations, theft of less than \$100, assault offenses including domestic violence, public intoxication and animal violations. She added that the court also held civil hearings including: aggressive/dangerous dog appeals and failure to comply, serious bodily injury hearings and cruelty hearings.

Obledo stated that SAMC held Administrative Hearings including civil offenses related to parking and stopping of vehicles, animal care and control, public and fire safety, building maintenance and appearance.

Obledo stated that SAMC Court Services included daily walk-in appearance dockets, call center/email/USPS/snap engage/ online services, in-person and virtual hearings, dedicated technology stations for citizens, in person and virtual trials, kiosks with text messaging capabilities and an Attorney e-file portal.

Obledo stated that SAMC Specialty Dockets consisted of animals, assault/family violence, attorney connect/plea bargains, civil parking and administrative code hearings, code compliance/environmental, community court, license & weight/commercial motor vehicles, juvenile/truancy prevention and intervention, quality of life and SA Road Ready Court.

Obledo stated that SAMC Magistrate Services consisted of initial appearance and probable cause determinations, all misdemeanor and felony on-site arrests, SAPD, Park Police, Airport Police, Department of Public Safety (DPS) and in 2021 Juvenile Processing Center designation.

Obledo reported that SAMC Magistrate responsibilities consisted of issuing search and arrest warrants, DWI blood draw warrants, orders of emergency protection, orders of mental health

evaluations, orders of emergency detention and admonishing juveniles of their rights before providing a statement to law enforcement.

DISCUSSION:

Chair McKee-Rodriguez thanked the new Members of the Committee for serving and provided an overview of the work of the Committee.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito thanked Judge Obledo for her work.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda thanked Judge Obledo and all the SAMC Judges for their work; and suggested that more people should learn about the good work of SAMC.

Councilmember Castillo thanked Judge Obledo for the presentation and for their work in Council District 5. Councilmember Castillo asked whether SAMC orders for a mental health evaluation by The Center for Healthcare Services (CHCS) was prioritized over the other requests noting that it could take years to get an evaluation. Judge Obledo stated that CHCS was responsible for timing of the evaluations.

Councilmember Castillo requested more information on the process and services for unhoused individuals. Judge Obledo mentioned collaborations with the Bexar County District Attorney's Office and other agencies to help clear tickets that the homeless individuals were receiving; SAMC was not issuing warrants for the arrest of homeless individuals. Councilmember Castillo asked where the no trespassing affidavits were filed. Judge Obledo stated that most were a higher class than SAMC handled.

Councilmember Castillo asked how quickly a code compliance case might be called to SAMC. Municipal Court Clerk Fred Garcia stated that the timing could vary and entered based on the appearance date which might be written on the citation. Councilmember Castillo recommended data sharing of citations between SAPD and DSD Code Compliance, including electronic citations to help process them through SAMC more quickly.

Chair McKee-Rodriguez asked the Committee for future items to be heard. Councilmembers Castillo and Alderete Gavito requested a briefing on the animal care cases.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito requested information on cases that were shifted to Bexar County or CHCS. Councilmember Cabello Havrda agreed.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda suggested inviting the Animal Care Services (ACS) Department to the discussion. She also recommended trying to keep the municipal fees down for residents in a systemic manner.

Councilmember Castillo requested a briefing on the Incentive and Diversion Program, the Intoxication Diversion and the DWI Program

Councilmember Castillo requested data on theft less than \$100 and second chance hiring partnerships with Bexar County. She requested a briefing on special dockets for code compliance.

Chair McKee-Rodriguez supported the entire Committee hearing all of the Items suggested and noted that the Committee would be able to meet the remaining judges.

Obledo mentioned the SAMC's new Resource Education Room and other programs for education and job training with partnerships such as Ready to Work.

Item was for briefing, so no action was taken.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 1:40 p.m.

Approved

Jalen McKee-Rodriguez, Chair

Respectfully Submitted

Debbie Racca-Sittre, City Clerk