

City of San Antonio



Minutes Public Safety Committee

2023 – 2025 Council Members

Melissa Cabello Havrda, Dist. 6, Chair
Dr. Sukh Kaur, Dist. 1 | Jalen McKee-Rodriguez, Dist. 2
Marina Alderete Gavito, Dist. 7 | Marc Whyte, District 10

Tuesday, October 10, 2023

1:30 PM

City Hall Complex

The Public Safety Committee convened a regular meeting in the City Hall Council Briefing Room beginning at 1:43 PM. City Clerk Debbie Racca-Sitre took the Roll Call noting a quorum with the following Committee Members present:

Members Present: Melissa Cabello Havrda, *Chair*
Dr. Sukh Kaur, *Member*
Jalen McKee- Rodriguez, *Member*
Marina Alderete Gavito, *Member*
Marc Whyte, *Member*

Members Absent: None

Approval of Minutes

1. Approval of minutes from the September 19, 2023 Public Safety Committee Meeting

Councilmember Kaur moved to Approve the minutes of the September 19, 2023 Public Safety Committee meeting. Councilmember Alderete Gavito seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Cabello Havrda, Kaur, McKee-Rodriguez, Alderete Gavito, Whyte

Briefing and Possible Action on

- Briefing on the Violent Crime Prevention Plan** [Maria Villagómez, Deputy City Manager; William P. McManus, Chief of Police]

Deputy City Manager Maria Villagomez provided an overview of the Item and introduced Dr. Michael R. Smith with the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) who led the team to develop and measure implementation of the Violent Crime Prevention Plan (Plan).

Smith outlined the three primary strategies of the Plan which included: 1) A near-term strategy (hot spots) meant to substantially increase police visibility in areas where violent crime was concentrated and prioritize street level deterrence, 2) A mid-term strategy focused on violent places in the City using a Problem-Oriented, Place-Based Policing (POPBP) approach, and 3) A longer-term, offender-based strategy that would utilize Focused Deterrence to help break the cycle of violence among the small number of repeat and high-risk offenders, who were responsible for the majority of violent crime in San Antonio.

Smith provided a report on the results of the Plan which was currently in the near-term strategy during its first six months. Smith provided statistics on the average time police spent in the targeted hot spot area versus criminal activity in the area by comparing the same months in the previous year. He noted that they also compared crime statistics for the buffer areas around the hot spots to determine if crime had simply been displaced or if the adjacent area also benefitted. He concluded that the areas around the treatment area experienced improved crime rates referred to as the diffusion of benefit effect.

Smith displayed a chart of crime by type of activity comparing the same six month period of 2023 versus the previous year; murder decreased by 14.4%, robbery of individuals decreased by 5.1%, robbery of businesses increased by 7.1%, non-family related aggravated assaults decreased by 12.0%, and deadly conduct decreased by 27.4%. Smith also provided results broken down by police substation but noted that overall arrests had increased during the period; violent arrests were down. Smith reported that calls for service related to violent crime had decreased in the treatment areas more than in other parts of the city.

Smith provided a chart that indicated that crime had been rising steadily over the past four years prior to the adoption of the Plan. He reported that compared to the same time last year, citywide crime saw a 12.6% reduction in average violent crime incidents and violent crime victims; crime in treated Hot Spots had a 41.5% reduction in average violent crime incidents. He added that over the past 12-Month comparison the treated Hot Spot areas had a 8.7% reduction in average violent crime incidents citywide and a 45.1% reduction in average violent crime incidents in treated hot spots.

Smith stated that the next Steps included continued evaluation and reporting and continued on the Hot Spot policing; He noted that period six would begin November 1, 2023. He indicated that the year one evaluation would occur in January 2024 and they planned to begin implementation of the mid-term strategy, Problem-Oriented, Place-Based Policing (POPBP) which was a data-driven strategy to identify the proximate causes of violence at crime-prone locations and develop tailored solutions. He indicated that UTSA would continue to report on results at six-month intervals.

Chair Cabello Havrda requested a report of the treated Hot Spot areas in three months and again in six months to see if there had been a lasting effect. She recognized that this strategy had been

effective in other cities but wanted to ensure it was really working in San Antonio. Chair Cabello Havrda requested clarification on why arrests were up if calls were down. Smith stated that violence related arrests were down city-wide and significantly in the treated areas; while firearm arrests were up city-wide, and drug and weapon arrests were lower in the treated areas versus city-wide.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito requested information on hot spots for her specific council districts. Deputy City Manager Villagomez stated that the locations were not shared publicly due to concern for the safety of the Officers, but this information would be shared privately with the Councilmember. Councilmember Alderete Gavito asked when the peak crime hours were. Smith replied that peak crime hours were different for each hot spot.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito noted the increase in crime on businesses and requested an explanation. Smith stated that he was not completely sure; however, robbery was a repeat offense conducted by a small number of people and they kept committing robberies until they were caught. Councilmember Alderete Gavito asked whether 3-1-1, Code Compliance or Animal Care Services calls were included in the number of calls. Deputy City Manager Villagomez stated that the original identification of the hot spot location did not include other calls, but they would be overlaid for the purpose of additional treatment.

Councilmember Kaur requested the exact number of arrests in those areas of lower arrests and an update on the total arrest rate for future periods to get larger data sets. Smith stated that there would be more data available after a year of the Plan. Councilmember Kaur asked if there was overlap in hot spot areas over the three two-month periods within the six months of the Hot Spot Policing Program. Smith stated that there was some overlap and was purely based on crime data and trends. Councilmember Kaur asked if the location of the 135,000 grids within the City were available to the public. Smith stated that the whole map (135,000 grids) was public, but the specific hot spots were not; noting that 50% of the crime occurred in about 3,000 of those grids.

Councilmember Kaur recommended surveying the Police Officers about how they felt about the Hot Spot Policing Program and whether San Antonio Fear Free Environment (SAFFE) Officers were informed when their areas were identified to be treated. Chief William McManus stated that the SAFFE Officers were informed, and he did not feel the need to survey Officers as this program was more passive so many Officers might think it was less exciting than going after the bad guys.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez stated that his promise to his electorate was to advocate for reimagination of public safety and to address the root causes of crime because the strategies of the past were not working. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez noted that there were positive results with the Plan, and it was a shift in strategy from the past, however, he requested tracking of Officer-involved shootings as an outcome in each of these areas. Deputy City Manager Villagomez stated that SAPD could map the incidents relative to the Hot Spot treatment areas. Smith stated that it would be difficult to analyze the data due to its rare occasion.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez recommended overlay of streetlighting or community programming and other investments as well as economic circumstances of residents in the Hot

Spot treatment areas. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez requested data from July-September 2023 as the report only covered January-June 2023.

Councilmember Whyte declared the Plan to be a success after looking at the report, however, he expressed concern about crimes against businesses and asked what could be done. McManus recommended education for businesses and residents on how to make them less of a target as well as prevention techniques.

Item was for briefing only so no action was taken.

3. Briefing on the San Antonio Police Department crime statistics for the period of January 2023 to September 2023 and Property Crime Task Force Update. [María Villagómez, Deputy City Manager; William P. McManus, Chief of Police]

Deputy City Manager Maria Villagomez introduced the Item and Chief of Police William McManus, who reported that calls for services from January through September 2023 had increased compared to the previous year. McManus stated that the first three quarters of the year showed over a 1.5% increase in crime according to the FBI's National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) crime comparison statistics. He reported that violent crimes against persons had decreased by 10.9%, crimes against society decreased by 1.8%, but property crimes increased by 6.3% mostly due to vehicle theft which was a nationwide problem.

McManus explained the work of the Property Crimes Task Force which resulted in a higher clearance rate and more property recovery as a result of their proactive work with scams on Facebook Marketplace and against the elderly as well as motor vehicle burglaries and incidents of jugging which was when criminals waited as unsuspecting victims withdrawing cash from an Automated Teller Machine (ATM), following the victims to their destination and, in many cases, robbing them at gunpoint. He reported that recent grant funding allowed one additional staff for the Auto Theft Unit which provided community education, training for businesses, distribution of steering wheel locks and coordination with other law enforcement agencies.

Chair Cabello Havrda appreciated the new programs but questioned whether any of the strategies had reduced crime. McManus stated that he needed to wait for new statistics to come out to determine effectiveness.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito asked how many children under age 18 had been abducted out of the 84 kidnappings reported. McManus stated that the victims were mostly adults. Councilmember Alderete Gavito asked what could be done about mailbox theft. McManus stated that the penalty for mail theft was not that great and not much of a deterrent. He noted that the locks were provided by the postal service so improved lighting in the area was their best recommendation to deter theft.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez stated that the strategies to curb motor vehicle thefts had been the same ones used for several years and noted that he had not heard about the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) etching or steering wheel lock events so he offered to conduct outreach. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez recommended a holistic crime prevention strategy

and more support for prevention.

Chair Cabello Havrda requested statistics on domestic violence. McManus stated that domestic violence was not a NIBERS category, but he would provide the information.

Councilmember Kaur requested more information on blackmailing and extortion which had increased by 100%. Councilmember Kaur asked if there was data related to theft of packages from residents' front porches and whether the doorbell cameras helped. Deputy City Manager Villagomez stated that she could provide the previous year's analysis of 9-1-1 calls.

Councilmember Whyte asked if there was information on how many repeat offenders committed property crimes. Deputy City Manager Villagomez stated that the data would be reviewed. McManus noted that the NIBERS statistics included reported crimes and not arrests but he would provide information on the number of arrests. McManus stated that one group called the "Stick up crew" committed 58 burglaries in the same area and were recently caught.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez requested clarification on the statistics and classification.

Item was for briefing only so no action was taken.

4. Briefing on the recommendation to extend the Body Worn Camera Contract and amend it to include In Car Video and Interview Rooms [Maria Villagómez, Deputy City Manager; William P. McManus, Chief of Police]

Deputy City Manager Maria Villagomez introduced the Item which had been discussed by the Committee previously and the update included feedback received. Deputy City Manager Villagomez noted that this was an opportunity for the Committee to provide additional feedback. Chief of Police William McManus introduced Andrew Grayson with Axon, the body camera company.

McManus stated that the San Antonio Police Department (SAPD) had a 2009 contract with COBAN Technologies (COBAN) for in-car video cameras which contained dash-board cameras that gathered and stored video recordings of Officer and resident interaction which would expire on December 31, 2023. McManus reported that most in-car video cameras were at the end of life and needed to be replaced. He indicated that SAPD and the Information Technology Services Department (ITSD) conducted evaluation and testing to replace existing units at an annual expense of \$833,450.

McManus reported that the 2015 contract with Taser International, Inc. (currently known as Axon) for body worn cameras used by SAPD, Parks and Airport Police, and the San Antonio Fire Department's (SAFDs) Arson Unit would expire this month. He stated that the Axon body cameras gathered and stored video recordings of Officer and resident interaction and was an annual expense of \$2.4 million.

McManus recommended in-car video technology that provided increased functionality utilizing modems installed in patrol vehicles. He stated that this enabled video to be uploaded to the cloud

instantaneously while patrolling, included an automated license plate reader, simplified Officer interface through an auto tagging function, allowed for two cameras to record simultaneously, included a backseat camera with infrared capabilities. alternative camera activation methods during lightbar activation or speed of the vehicle detection, improved audio using a microphone that could capture audio from 1,000 feet away, and included a 15-year warranty with a Technical Assistance Program upgrade at the 60 and 120 month period.

McManus further recommended to extend the current contract with Axon to increase functionality for body worn cameras with auto-tag computer aided dispatch and a records management system to upload to Evidence.com for improved sharing, with the capability to gather all video evidence of Officer and resident interactions. McManus suggested that the City amend the Axon contract to include in-car video and interview rooms, include cloud-based options for in-car video to provide mobile video uploading from marked patrol vehicles and seamless integration with the Axon's cloud based digital evidence management system that was currently employed by SAPD.

Chair Cabello Havrda asked who would own the cloud based servers. Chief Technology Officer Craig Hopkins stated that the current system was stored locally by ITSD; the new system would be hosted by Axon on Evidence.com. Chair Cabello Havrda supported improved collaboration with Bexar County to help keep repeat offenders off the streets, noting that with the new cloud-based system, the District Attorney could get the body camera footage quickly.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked how long the new body cameras were expected to last. Assistant SAPD Director, Rick Riley reported that the contract included an upgrade every 60 months. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked if there was a space limitation in the cloud and expressed concern about security and the potential for hacking. Hopkins stated that there was always more storage in the cloud if we paid for it through a subscription based service and added that the City had a high security standard that our vendors were required meet.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito recommended a quick timeline access to body camera videos from the cloud through a service level agreement. Councilmember Alderete Gavito asked if the license plate readers could identify stolen vehicles.

Councilmember Kaur asked what additional area could be captured using the new cameras. Riley stated that the system would allow ingestion of doorbell camera data from residents as well as body worn cameras and in-car video including the backseat.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked whether families would be allowed to see body camera footage more quickly. McManus clarified that the technology would not necessarily change the process required for release.

Item was for briefing only so no action was taken.

Executive Session

No Executive Session was held.

Consideration of items for future meetings

Adjournment

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 3:21 p.m.

Approved

Melissa Cabello Havrda, Chair

Debbie Racca-Sittre, City Clerk

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