

**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 11, 2024

1:00 PM

City Council Chambers

The City Council convened a special meeting in the Norma S. Rodriguez Council Chamber in the Municipal Plaza Building beginning at 1:10 PM. Deputy City Clerk Aurora Perkins took the Roll Call noting a quorum with the following Council Members present:

PRESENT: 9 – Nirenberg, Kaur, McKee-Rodriguez, Rocha Garcia, Castillo, Cabello Havrda, Alderete Gavito, Pelaez, Courage

ABSENT: 2 - Viagran, Whyte

ITEMS

1. Briefing and update on the state of homelessness services and encampment clean-up [Lori Houston, Assistant City Manager; Melody Woosley, Director, Human Services].

City Manager Erik Walsh introduced the Item and noted the development of a Homelessness Dashboard to monitor homeless population services and metrics. He referred to the Council Consideration Request (CCR) submitted by Councilmember Alderete Gavito on homeless encampment abatements and stated that staff would provide the presentation. City Manager

Walsh noted that City services to date had surpassed set delivery goals for services provided by City staff and community partners. He spoke to the commitment of staff on addressing homeless encampments throughout the City and stated that it was a highly coordinated process with community partners.

Assistant City Manager Lori Houston provided an introduction on the briefing and update on the state of homelessness services and encampment clean-up efforts. She acknowledged community partners that assisted in the delivery services to include Corazon San Antonio, Close to Home, Haven for Hope, Center for Health Care Services, SAMMinistries, Christian Assistance Center, and Centro San Antonio. She also recognized staff from the departments of Human Services, Metro Health, Public Works, and the Neighborhood and Housing Services. Assistant City Manager Houston stated that the focus of the Collective Impact Leadership Group was to coordinate and deliver emergency response, set investment planning, set policy priorities, and build strategic communications. She introduced Melody Woosley, Department of Human Services (DHS) Director, who expanded on the presentation.

Woosley spoke to the commitment of City departments who delivered homeless services and encampment cleanup/abatement. Woosley spoke to the development of the Collective Impact Leadership Group which included community partners and focused on emergency response, investment planning, identification/development of policy priorities, and delivery of strategic communications.

Woosley reviewed the Collective Impact Dashboard that monitored Point in Time counts and enrollment of individuals/families in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) at Haven for Hope. She noted that the Point in Time Count conducted on January 23, 2024 identified 3,155 individuals as homeless with 2,281 being sheltered and 874 being unsheltered; and 11,178 individuals were enrolled in the HMIS system. Woosley also stated that in FY 2024, 2,207 individuals moved to homeless shelters or housing. She added that 1,456 individuals were newly homeless or returned to homelessness which meant that 751 net individuals moved to better living situations.

Woosley spoke to housing and shelter emergency shelter statistics noting that total shelter capacity was 1,808+. She stated that shelters included the Haven for Hope Emergency Shelter with a capacity of 909 which was currently over capacity with 981 individuals. She indicated that the Low Barrier Emergency shelter had 429 slots at Haven for Hope but was over capacity at 1,455 at 622. Woosley noted that there were 491 successful exits from the shelter into permanent housing due to counseling and delivery of needed services to individuals and families. She added that the non-congregate low barrier SAMM shelter was set to include 200 slots and would be at capacity by June 1, 2024.

Woosley noted that the Strategic Housing Implementation Plan (SHIP) had set a goal of 1,000 new Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) units over the next 10 years and stated that the delivery of PSH was on track and had reached 48% of the goal. She spoke to the facilitation of 496 PSH units and noted that \$10 million in funds were remaining in the 2022 Housing Bond that would be dedicated to PSH and the Request for Proposal (RFP) solicitation was currently open for housing development.

Woosley provide an overview of Rapid Rehousing resources which included rental assistance for 3-24 months with case management to promote housing stability She stated that these services were available to people experiencing homelessness and prioritized through Homelink for the most vulnerable individuals/families. She noted that rapid rehousing units available in FY 2024 was 925 households which was an increase from the FY 2023 capacity of 613. She added that the current waitlist reflected 2,222 active households for rapid rehousing and/or PSH as of March 1, 2024.

Woosley mentioned that in the delivery of affordable housing, set aside vouchers and project based vouchers were key to the delivery of affordable housing and spoke to current goals and obtainment for deeply affordable homes. She noted that data showed that housing goals were well ahead with obtaining 50% for PSH, 48% for individuals at 0-30% of Average Median Income (AMI) and 75% for those at 31-75% of AMI.

Woosley reviewed the delivery of day services for the unsheltered population which included daytime and drop in services for the unsheltered population, providing services connections. She indicated that services were delivered by Corazon Day Center for indoor respite, hot meals, group sessions, case management, harm reduction, and other services. He added that the Christian Assistance Ministries (CAM) partner provided many services to include breakfast, showers, mail, ID recovery, and case management services.

Woosley provided an overview of downtown engagement services which were primarily delivered by Centro San Antonio Quality of Life (QOL) Ambassadors and worked in partnership to refer individuals to other partners for further services, observed and reported crimes to police, provided safety escorts and were equipped with body cameras to aid reports to service providers. She added that the QOL Ambassadors worked from 6 AM to 10 PM, seven days a week.

Woosley identified targeted populations and delivery of services to homeless populations. She stated that services included 90 Families in 90 Day Initiative, skilled nursing and assisted living service delivery and services to homeless veterans. She spoke to demographics for each category and wrap around service delivery by other community partners.

Woosley reviewed services delivered to the youth population to include services to youth that had aged out of the foster care system to include services under the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program which included funding to multiple youth services. She spoke to dedicated shelter space at Haven for Hope (56 beds) for youth between the ages of 18-24 and noted that it was currently at full capacity. Woosley added that the next steps for youth services was to develop system mapping with the goal of a adult housing summit in the fall of 2024.

Woosley spoke to delivery of services of targeted population of survivors of domestic violence which included services provided by partner Close to Home which had developed a skills accessor pathway and training to connect survivors into housing faster. She mentioned that the Homeless Connection Hotline had designated two staff as domestic skills accessors and that there was HOME-ARP funding for tenant-based rental assistance set aside for those experiencing homelessness due to domestic violence situations.

Woosley reviewed outreach services and staff which was comprised of 38 outreach team members from various community partners and City staff and stressed the importance of building trust and rapport with individuals living in spaces not meant for human habitation to include drainage ditches and encampments. Woosley stated that the outreach team offered service connections to individuals for various wrap around services to include health care, shelter, and case management.

Woosley spoke to system delivery of service improvements to include uniform standards for staff, development of the Field Guide Application to assist community workers of services, establishment of centralized shelter coordination, development of self-care program that included workshops and materials, and the expansion of DHS Homeless Services staff with four additional members.

Woosley provided an overview of efforts related to encampment abatement and noted that the target of 700 encampment abatements had been met while addressing each site within two weeks of notification of site. Woosley reviewed the CCR submitted by Councilmember Alderete Gavito requesting the addressing of homeless encampments and priorities and reviewed the current procedures in place and the dashboard established to track progress and data. She stated that staff was on track to exceed current goals and addressing of encampment sites within the two week goal with an average of 13.8 days on removal of encampments. She stated that 520 encampments from October 2023 to April 2024 were addressed. She spoke to encampment abatement schedules.

Woosley spoke to the importance of homeless prevention by Human Services and NHSD staff which included staffing the homeless hotline, homeless diversion program initiatives, prevention of homelessness through the delivery of case management services, eviction court assistance services, and rental assistance programs. She noted that the Homeless Hotline had processed 17,662 calls since October 2023 with 33% of calls dealing with at risk of homelessness issues. Woosley stated that 325 individuals were served by homeless diversion services and that \$2.4 million in Federal grants was allocated to provide medium-term rental assistance and case management. She added that under the Rental Assistance Program, 3,743 households were pre-screened through the Homeless Connections Hotline between February 15, 2024 and March 29, 2024 and referring 2,087 household with 1,376 applications completed during that time.

Assistant City Manager Houston reiterated the great work of staff and partners in the delivery of services and initiatives to address homelessness and encampment abatements. She noted that in Year 3 of a 10 year program, staff and partners has met over 45% of services goals.

Mayor Nirenberg expressed his support of the delivery of homelessness services and that he had made housing for the homeless population a priority in 2017. He stated that he was proud that the City and partners had made great strides in the delivery of services but that he would continue to challenge staff and partners to continue to deliver homelessness services and prevention of homelessness.

Mayor Nirenberg stressed that it was important to stress the need deeply affordable housing and for set aside vouchers and project based vouchers for housing. He spoke to the myriad of coordination needed for the delivery of services and stressed that every entity addressing

affordable housing and homelessness needed to be included in conversations to further provide services to at risk populations.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito acknowledged the work performed so far in addressing homelessness and encampment abatement but noted that a fire had needed to be set and progress was now being made. She stressed that the removal of encampments was not the only goal but also to deliver services to individuals experiencing homelessness to include mental services, delivery of training and education.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito stated that it was important to address encampments in areas around schools and other sensitive areas. She stressed the importance of compassion in the delivery of services and encampment removal. Councilmember Alderete Gavito spoke to the CCR request to prioritize homelessness and abatement in sensitive areas.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito spoke to frustration of a return of habitual encampments after being abated and spoke to continuous frustration of residents of the areas. She noted that great strides had been made but that continued work was still needed.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia acknowledged the work of staff and partners on addressing homelessness and spoke to strides and success in the delivery of sheltered housing especially those made at low barrier shelters at Haven for Hope and other sites. She recognized Roger Narvaiez and his work on addressing homelessness issues to include addressing of homeless panhandling around Lackland Air Force Base and his coordination with other business owners to build a coalition to address the issue.

Councilmember Rocha García noted that in January no abatements were addressed in Council District 4 and asked for data in that area. Woosley stated that staff worked to address all encampments across the entire City and that January was a lower serviced months and that staff concentrated on priority sites during that time. She stated that she would review schedule to ensure optimal coverage throughout all districts.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia noted that in October of 2022, she had submitted a CCR she referred to as a declaration of a housing crisis and spoke to challenges of not only encampment abatements but the delivery of needed services at homeless shelters. She stated that it was important to be creative in the delivery of services and to include church facilities and other non-profit services to try and meet the need for temporary homeless shelter delivery.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia noted that in the previous year, there was \$76.8 million of funding spent on indirect service with the bulk of that funding going to SAPD. She stressed the need to build on SAFFE Officer programs. She requested data on direct and indirect cost of delivery of homelessness services in preparation for the upcoming Budget Goal Setting meeting. She requested research of available homeless and community services available from churches and other non-profits.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez expressed concern that there were larger numbers of individuals not being identified as homeless and asked that additional initiatives be created to identify those individuals to include the Point in Time Count. He stressed that the wrap around

social services were needed to assist people at risk of homelessness and truly meet the need of assistance by the at risk and homeless populations.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez expressed concern regarding abatement efforts and it not addressing the true need of at risk populations. He supported identified approved encampment areas and delivery of services at the sites. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez spoke to gaps in the delivery of services to include the need for more permanent supportive housing especially within his council district for individuals for all populations to include seniors, youth and families.

Councilmember Kaur acknowledged the work of the City's homeless outreach teams in building trust within the homeless populations. She expressed support of programs for at risk youth and the importance of engaging the Youth Advisory Committee and other youth groups to gain knowledge of challenges and needs of youth addressing homelessness.

Councilmember Kaur asked for clarification on low barrier shelters and services provided at those facilities. Woosley stated that the facilities provided not only housing but other services to include case management services. Councilmember Kaur asked if the low barrier shelters were used for emergency shelters and services associated at the sites. Woosley stated that low barrier shelters were not permanent housing and that services were delivered on a temporary basis until movement of individuals into permanent housing.

Councilmember Kaur asked if there were any responses to the RFP on the Affordable Housing Bond Program. NHSD Director, Veronica Garcia, stated that the RFP would close in the following week and the submissions would identify projects and the number of units to be built. Kaur stated that it was important to identify the number of units available to project the need for housing in the future.

Councilmember Kaur asked what happened when capacity was met at homeless shelters to include Haven for Hope. Woosley stated that shelters worked together to identify other available shelters. Councilmember Kaur asked if it was possible to identify potential housing at the new shelter coming on line. Jeffries clarified that individuals were not turned away due to capacity but could be found alternative shelter, other Haven shelter programs or allowed to camp within the Haven campus.

Councilmember Kaur noted challenges in addressing homeless abatements in drainage channel areas and the importance of addressing them quickly but with compassion. Woosley reviewed the process for addressing abatements in drainage areas with considerations for safety and work done in partnership with the Public Works Department to close access to encampment opportunities.

Councilmember Kaur stressed the importance of timeliness of addressing and acknowledged the study being conducted by UTSA to assist in addressing challenges.

Councilmember Courage noted that while making great strides in the delivery of homeless shelter services, there was still a great need for additional units and services. He stated that it was important how to address challenges of outreach workers in the delivery of homeless wrap around services and counseling to this at risk population. Councilmember Courage stressed the

need for drug rehabilitation services and the need for additional workers to meet the need and trust of the homeless community. He also spoke to need for public safety service delivery in the areas of policing and public works.

Councilmember Courage stressed the continuous need for rapid rehousing and eviction prevention services. He spoke to the need of youth coming out of foster care and services needed which were no longer provided since they had aged out of the foster system. Councilmember Courage requested data on what other cities or counties were doing in addressing these challenges.

Councilmember Castillo noted the work and challenges of outreach workers and that they often took their work home with them. She stressed the need to continue to engage Opportunity Home in addressing homelessness issues/challenges.

Councilmember Castillo acknowledged the challenges of encampment abatement and meeting the need throughout the City. She also wanted to set realistic outcomes of number of homeless shelter units and asked how staff was addressing the development of additional units with community partners. Assistant City Manager Houston stated that it was important to identify all sources of housing and resources to get individuals to shelters/housing as needed. She stated that continuous coordination was performed to ensure that housing services delivery was completed to include those at community partners, churches, and other non-profits.

Councilmember Castillo asked staff to further research options to working with organizations such as Incarnate Word University and other agencies.

Councilmember Viagran noted the compassion and knowledge of outreach workers in the delivery of services to the homeless community and those at risk of homelessness. She acknowledged the time needed to address many issues by the coordinators and challenges they face in the delivery of wrap around services to this population.

Councilmember Viagran asked for clarification on services delivered to chronic homeless families. Woosley stated that outreach workers continuously worked with service delivery agencies and that a database was often updated for the most accurate services available.

Councilmember Viagran asked if domestic violence assessments were being updated to address the entire picture of violent situations. Woosley stated that DHS staff worked closely with others in the Departments of Metro Health and NHSD to meet the need for safety and services needed by families served.

Councilmember Viagran asked how homes and hotel/motels that were unofficially serving as low barrier homeless shelters were being tracked. Assistant City Manager Houston stated that staff would work to identify methods of recording those establishments/homes.

Councilmember Viagran requested data of individuals that were in encampments in order to better identify needed services.

Councilmember Pelaez acknowledged the work of City staff and community partners in the

delivery of services to the homeless population and those at risk of homelessness. He also noted the challenges in delivering complete services and continuous need for these services in the future. Councilmember Pelaez spoke the commitment of the City Council to stress the need for these services in the current challenging economic times.

Councilmember Pelaez asked of the challenges of the need for philanthropy funding to support non-profit programs. Haven for Hope President, Kim Jefferies, stated that loss of funding as that provided by such organizations as Nu-Star was critical and that non-profits were continuously looking to diversify in identification of funding to include other grants and Federal funding.

Councilmember Pelaez asked for clarification on the delivery of services to families and if they were ever turned away. Jefferies spoke to compassion stay standards at Haven for Hope and referral services to other communities. She stated that the only individuals that were turned away were migrants but they were immediately referred to the Migrant Resource Center.

Councilmember Pelaez stressed the need for compassionate delivery of services and challenges in balancing priorities in the delivery of those services.

Councilmember Castillo stressed the need to identify priorities of services for homeless populations and affordable housing. She stated that it was important to poll agencies on the services they delivered and gain knowledge on their need for funding especially for the upcoming Budget discussions.

Mayor Nirenberg acknowledged the work of Haven for Hope and the importance it served as an emergency shelter throughout the community. He stressed the need to address advocacy and priorities with the business community to provide philanthropy opportunities for these type of services.

No action was taken on the Item.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Executive Session was not held.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 3:03 p.m.

Approved

**Ron Nirenberg
Mayor**

**Debbie Racca-Sittre
City Clerk**