

# City of San Antonio



## Minutes

### Community Health, Environment and Culture Committee

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**Friday, March 25, 2022**

**2:00 PM**

**Municipal Plaza Building**

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**Members Present:** Ana Sandoval, *Chair*,  
Mario Bravo, *Member*  
Jalen McKee-Rodriguez, *Member*  
Phyllis Viagran, *Member*  
Teri Castillo, *Member*

**Members Absent:** None

#### Approval of Minutes

**1. Approval of minutes for the March 8, 2022, Community Health, Environment, and Culture Committee meeting.**

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez moved to Approve the minutes of the March 8, 2022 Community Health, Environment, and Culture Committee meeting as amended. Councilmember Castillo seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye:** Sandoval, Bravo, McKee-Rodriguez, Viagran, Castillo

Deputy City Clerk Perkins read amendments as provided by the City Attorney's Office associated with page 4, second paragraph of the draft meeting minutes for March 8, 2022 Community Health, Environment and Culture Committee.

Chair Sandoval announced that Items 4 and 5 were tabled and would be moved to an upcoming Committee meeting.

#### Public Comments

There was no written or public comment.

## **Briefing and Possible Action on**

### **2. The City's COVID-19 response and preparedness updates by Metro Health staff. [Erik Walsh, City Manager; Claude A. Jacob, Director, Metro Health]**

Metro Health Director Claude Jacob provided an update to the City's COVID-19 on-going response and preparedness to include the current status of COVID cases, positivity rates, hospitalization information and vaccination rates. Jacob noted that the Alamodome Vaccine site was officially closed that morning and would no longer be servicing COVID related activity. Jacob reviewed the community impact of the different COVID variants and related surges and reviewed the status of the COVID-19 vaccination incentives gift card program. He noted that the Federal Government would be ending reimbursement for testing/vaccinating for COVID.

Chair Sandoval asked for clarification on the B82 COVID variant and how to best prepare for it. Jacob stated that the best course of action was still vaccination and masking. Chair Sandoval asked of the recommendations for masking. Jacob stated that individuals with health issues were recommended to still wear masks but it was no longer a requirement to wear masks in public. Chair Sandoval asked if there was an easier method to communicate that masks were highly recommended to the general public due to conflicting communications from various sources. Jacob stated that City staff would continue to monitor requirements and methods to better communicate mask mandates. Medical Director Dr. C. Junda Woo clarified that individuals should monitor the community risk level, their vaccine status, their own health status and their personal preference.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked if vaccination rates for different categories and by Council Districts was available. Jacob stated that the data was not currently available, but staff was currently working on updating the dashboard.

Jacobs stated that mental health issues were continuously being evaluated and monitored to promote programs. McKee-Rodriguez expressed concern that an additional COVID surge was possible and asked staff to monitor and prepare to address and additional COVID surge.

Councilmember Castillo asked of the positivity rate to be achieved in order to reopen the mass testing sites. Jacob replied that staff would review the community risk level, trends, impact on hospitals and the positivity rate which would determine if mass testing sites should be reopened.

Councilmember Castillo asked if there was a certain booster rate that was needed to be achieved to decrease the use of masks. Jacob stated that factors were being evaluated and monitored. Chair Sandoval stated that communications for clarity would be required by City Council to properly educate residents on COVID sites be reopened/closed or actions be taken. Jacob stated that decisions made by Metro Health were based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and recommendations made by the State. Jacob stated that Metro Health would triangulate and land on the best action.

Jacob stated that staff evaluated several factors with all COVID management entities to determine future actions and recommendations.

Councilmember Viagran asked if a data was available for services provided to Veterans and seniors. Jacob stated that there was no data for those specific categories. Councilmember Viagran recommended that a possible study with UTSA could be conducted to gather data. Councilmember Viagran stated that the COVID home test kits were highly effective for addressing COVID cases and asked that the City have kits available for residents who were not able to obtain kits from the Federal Government. Councilmember Viagran requested that any new information and education materials be provided to the general public on symptoms of new COVID variants.

Chair Sandoval reviewed the Committee Member requests and thanked staff for their work.

No action was required for Item 2

**3. The SA Forward Strategic Plan by Metro Health staff.** [Erik Walsh, City Manager; Claude A. Jacob, Director, Metro Health]

Claude Jacobs provided an overview of the SA Forward Strategic Plan which addressed communicable diseases, community health and safety, environmental health and operations, and mental health and community resilience initiatives. Jacob introduced a video that provided a historical overview of public health in San Antonio.

Dr. Golarah Agah, Chief of Informatics, provided an overview of the determinants of health and disease in Bexar County and reviewed data which addressed socioeconomic, racial/ethnic and regional disparities in the county. Jacob reviewed the SA Forward timeline for SA Forward Plan implementation. Jacob noted that the timeline included an official roll out of name change to SA Forward and related communications.

Jacob reviewed the communications and goals of the six health priorities which were access to care, data and technology infrastructure, food insecurity and nutrition, health equity and social justice, mental health and community resilience, and violence prevention. Dr Agah provided an overview and demonstration of the SA Forward dashboard and platform.

Chair Sandoval thanked Jacob and Metro Health staff for their work on the Plan and recognized the work being done while addressing the numerous other health care issues and programs to include COVID efforts. Chair Sandoval noted that data was available to the public and asked if data provided would be at the County or City level. Dr. Agah stated that both City and County data would be available in the dashboard and that the dashboard would provide clarification on which data was provided by each entity. Chair Sandoval asked about the Metro Health workforce for the Program. Jacob stated that Metro Health was a nationally accredited Health Department, recognized and designated by the Health Accreditation Board. Jacob added that approximately 10%-12% of boards nationwide had met this designation and Metro Health

earned theirs in November 2019.

Councilmember Viagran noted that it was important to include the dashboard information with future ARPA discussions. She expressed her support of addressing mental and health related issues in relation to socioeconomic and ethnic disparities. Councilmember Viagran stated that she supported the program and asked if food deserts would be addressed by Council District and if City Councils could assist in providing information. Jacob stated that Metro Health staff would be reaching out to Council Districts for information and materials on areas.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez noted that the state of Black communities needed to be included in surveys and requested that that community have focused attention in programs. McKee-Rodriguez asked how members of the community could advocate for healthcare facilities in a certain area.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez noted the need for a facility need assessment for Council District 2 so to address those needs and implementation of those facilities. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez also noted the need for assessment of food deserts in the district.

Councilmember Castillo expressed her support of the proposed programs. She asked staff to consider what ARPA funding could be identified for possible funding of the Plan. Jacob stated that the Plan was a five year plan and that all funding to include ARPA funding would be evaluated and monitored for funding opportunities. Councilmember Castillo asked staff to consider how senior food program assistance could be expanded.

Councilmember Castillo asked for clarification on services provided for violence prevention priority area. Dr. Agha provided clarification of services provided by Metro Health Department.

Councilmember Bravo noted that the City and other entities were now spending more money in the area of mental health and that it was long overdue. He thanked staff for their work on addressing the priority areas in the Plan.

There being no further discussion, Chair Sandoval thanked staff for their work on the program.

4. **WITHDRAWN** – The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Spending Framework – Impactful Investments for Seniors [Lori Houston, Assistant City Manager; Melody Woosley, Director, Human Services]
5. **WITHDRAWN** – The disbursement of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds for Arts. [Lori Houston, Assistant City Manager; Krystal Jones, Interim Director, Department of Arts & Culture]

## **Adjournment**

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 3:59 PM.

**Approved**

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*Ana Sandoval, Chair*

**Respectfully Submitted**

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*Debbie Racca-Sittre, Interim City Clerk*