

**State of Texas**  
**County of Bexar**  
**City of San Antonio**



**Meeting Minutes**  
**City Council B Session**

City Hall Complex  
San Antonio, Texas 78205

**2021 – 2023 Council Members**

Mayor Ron Nirenberg

Mario Bravo, 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  
Ana Sandoval, Dist. 7 | Manny Pelaez, Dist. 8  
John Courage, Dist. 9 | Clayton Perry, Dist. 10

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**Tuesday, August 30, 2022**

**2:00 PM**

**Municipal Plaza Building**

The City Council convened a regular meeting in the Norma S. Rodriguez Council Chamber in the Municipal Plaza Building beginning at 2:09 PM. City Clerk Debbie Racca-Sittre took the Roll Call noting a quorum with the following Council Members present:

**PRESENT:** 8 – Nirenberg, Bravo, McKee-Rodriguez, Rocha Garcia, Castillo, Cabello Havrda, Courage, Perry

**ABSENT:** Viagran, Sandoval, Pelaez

**ITEMS**

1. Staff presentation on the FY 2023 Proposed Budget focusing on, but not limited to, the following

City Departments or Initiatives: [Erik Walsh, City Manager, Justina Tate, Director, Management & Budget]

A. CPS Rebate

B. Animal Care Services

City Manager Eric Walsh introduced the Items to be discussed which included the CPS Rebate and Animal Care Services Budgets.

#### CPS Energy Rebate Presentation

Chief Financial Officer Ben Gorzell provided an overview of the proposed Budget recommendation of providing \$50 million back to CPS Energy customers who were impacted by various factors to include higher transportation costs, high inflation and extreme temperatures. He stated that staff had revised the original recommendation and now recommended \$7.5 million for Resident Energy Assistance Partnership (REAP) and \$42.5 million for credits to CPS Energy customers. He stated that customers would be given an option to opt out of receiving a credit which would be returned to the rebate balance or REAP.

Gorzell provided an update on the status of customers on Affordability Discount Programs which had been funded through ARPA and stated that approximately \$16.7 million was the total estimated past due amount. Gorzell stated that the original ARPA funding and additional annual contribution and REAP contribution would be used to assist customers with past due accounts. The assistance total would be valued at \$8.5 million, He added that CPS Energy would auto-enroll customers who were delinquent on their energy bills and reviewed the proposed REAP assistance guidelines.

Gorzell provided specifics on the \$42.5 million credit to customers and noted that customers would be given the opportunity to opt-out of credit and allocated to the REAP program. He provided specifics of the opt-out program and credits. he also reviewed specifics on commercial account credits and the next steps of the CPS Energy credit consideration approval.

#### DISCUSSION

Mayor Nirenberg expressed his support for Councilmember Sandoval's proposal for development of a specific energy account allowing additional assistance to residents. He stated that he supported discussions to further address customer assistance. He noted that the \$50 million was only part of the \$75 million and reminded the City Council that they had approved a \$75 million funding plan with the Save for Tomorrow Energy Plan (STEP) at CPS Energy to support energy improvements.

Councilmember Courage stated that he did not support the recommendation and that he had conducted a community survey which showed that residents wanted to use funding for energy conservation and weatherization efforts. He stated that he had provided each Councilmember with

options and questions related to other recommendations. He noted that he had questions related to previous energy bill costs, energy conservation and weatherization efforts, projected savings if weatherization occurred, and associated costs to CPS Energy as a result of conservation and weatherization efforts.

Councilmember Courage expressed concern on whether the City and CPS Energy had the capacity to increase weatherization and energy improvement efforts truly needed to assist customers with their energy bills. He mentioned the need for smart thermostats and that CPS Energy should look into providing them to customers. He stated that new homes should be required to increase weatherization measures and that a \$240 bill rebate should be provided for homes that installed the devices.

Councilmember Courage discussed options for energy conservation and costs associated with commercial customers. He reiterated that energy efficiency was the key to increase savings to CPS Energy. He stated that he supported proposals submitted by Councilmembers Sandoval and Bravo. CPS Energy Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer, Cory Kuchinsky, stated that he would follow-up with Councilmember Courage and provide answers to his questions.

Mayor Nirenberg stated that there was not a unified plan to address these cost initiatives and asked if there was capacity to push \$42 million into the weatherization plan. City Manager Eric Walsh stated that City staff and CPS Energy would work together to address the available capacity and would need time to address questions on capacity, duplicated efforts and would move to provide a response to the City Council.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda asked for clarification for individuals that were above the limits for REAP assistance. Melody Woosley stated that there were specific guidelines that were followed but there was a waiver process in place but that was not the normal procedure. Councilmember Cabello Havrda stated that she would like to explore other options for medium income residents that did not qualify for assistance.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda stated that her residents did not support a rebate but asked for meaningful measures to improve heat issues. She asked Dr. Neil Debbage to provide information and presentation on the causes of the Urban Heat Island Effect. Debbage reviewed the current San Antonio Urban Heat Island situation and noted that the City had increased by 2-4 degrees since the previous year. He also discussed mitigation measures which could be performed to reduce the Heat Island Effect.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda asked what could be done to minimize the Heat Island Effect. Debbage stated that weatherization and energy efficient measures would be the most beneficial action to decrease the Heat Island Effect.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked Andrew Robinson with the Texas Energy Institute to address questions associated with the need for energy efficiency. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked which residents were the most burdened with energy efficiency issues. Robinson reviewed energy burden data associated with average energy burden costs, affordability gaps of Low and Moderate Income (LMI) population and the number of households impacted by energy

burdens. Robinson also provided maps to display patterns and demographics of energy burdened households. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez stated that he supported investing the proposed funding for increased energy burden efficiencies.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked how energy weatherization benefited energy conservation and resident household comforts. Robinson stated that energy weatherization was impactful to all components of energy efficiency and health related issues that were compounded by extreme weather.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked what the financial benefit would be to the City by increasing weatherization. Robinson stated that increased weatherization not only assisted residents but also the energy grid as a whole since there would be less demand of energy due to improved efficiencies. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez stated that he supported funding for energy efficiency efforts and not customer rebates. He noted his support for Councilmembers Sandoval and Bravo recommended proposals of energy conservation and stated that he challenged the increase for energy rate increases in the future.

Councilmember Bravo invited Tom Corser with Arboretum Place for Trees and provided points on the need for trees to increase energy conservation, decrease urban Heat Island effects and other heat related issues. He stated that it was crucial to increase tree canopy standards and discussed associated benefits with increased tree planting. He stated that consideration of allocating funding for tree planting was important to consider and that a partnership with SAWS would need to be coordinated. He stressed the importance of tree maintenance, building of an arboretum and actions with community partners and stakeholder and opportunities for State and Federal funding to be used for these efforts.

Councilmember Bravo stated that alternative proposals were being offered so to address extreme heat available funding and that it was important to look at all options for energy. Councilmember Bravo asked Assistant City Manager Jeff Coyle to provide an update on current legislative measures and grant opportunities at the Federal and State level. Bravo provided specific grant application opportunities and asked staff to keep abreast of this funding opportunities. Coyle confirmed that staff was following the funding opportunities in the legislature and would continue to monitor.

Councilmember Castillo expressed concern of weather extremes and flooding issues experienced by the City in the past and that residents with lower housing stock were impacted at a much greater rate than those who had been able to address energy issues within their homes. She stressed that improvements in weatherization would increase jobs in the community and mitigate the urban Heat Island Effect.

Councilmember Castillo invited Susan Scott, Texas State Director, The Nature Conservancy, to discuss the need for nature and green storm water improvements and investments in flood water improvements and efforts to improve the water shed. She stressed that it was important to provide investments in environmental improvements to include an increase in tree plantings which would assist in water runoff. Scott discussed the benefits of incorporating green storm water improvements to include beautification, energy efficiencies, job creation and productivity.

Councilmember Castillo expressed her support of the REAP proposals and plans submitted by Councilmembers Sandoval and Bravo. She supported efforts and measures proposed by the Office of Sustainability and noted the related benefits of the plans.

Councilmember Perry asked for clarification on the total funding available from CPS Energy revenue. City Manager Walsh stated that the \$25 million of the \$75 million would be used for planned maintenance to include sidewalk improvements and other Bond Projects. Councilmember Perry stated that it was important to address the total \$75 million proposed spending recommendations and stated that his residents wanted a rebate of the full \$75 million revenue. Gorzell provided an overview of the possible \$75 million revenue to be used on tier credit ranges for resident and commercial customers. Gorzell stressed that the extreme heat provided additional revenue which was not normally seen which is why staff recommendations were presented. Councilmember Perry reiterated that District 10 residents were supportive of refunds associated with the total \$75 million and that he supported the opt-out option.

Councilmember Bravo stated that at recent Council District 1 community meetings residents supported weatherization options and not rebates. He noted that the Tree Mitigation Fund was not sufficient to address urban Heat Island Effects but that it was important to increase tree planting and other weatherization efforts.

Councilmember Perry stressed that it was important to consider each council district resident comments and requests.

Mayor Nirenberg discussed the new guidelines for the REAP and STEP program and stressed that the entire City Council supported assisting residents to address energy efficiencies and cost savings. He noted that the current proposed plan did allow for opt-out options for residents but asked if the City had the capacity to address energy needs and if the current plans in place were eligible for grant funding opportunities. Assistant City Manager Coyle stated that at this time it was not known if the programs met the eligibility components, but he would know more once specifics for the grants were provided.

Mayor Nirenberg asked if more could be done with the Tree Mitigation Plan. City Manager Walsh stated that funds were available but that a closer look would be needed to address true capacity and partnering efforts. City Manager Walsh stated that the CPS Energy rebate item would not be discussed at the upcoming A Session meeting.

#### Animal Care Services Presentation

Animal Care Services (ACS) Director Shannon Sims provided an overview of the FY 2023 Proposed Budget recommendations to include the current landscape of animal welfare, populations and need for animal care services. Sims reviewed the department's proposed service metrics and stated that the department had updated the department's Strategic Plan. He noted that the Strategic Plan took into consideration community input and that residents sought out affordable veterinary services and spay/neuter services. Sims stated that future mapping included partner focus groups, community needs assessments and identification and addressing of barriers to animal care with the

finalized Strategic Plan being presented to the City Council.

Sims provided an overview of the improvements recommended by staff to include facility improvements, customer service enhancements to include an increase of five staff members and offering of free community clinics to meet resident needs. Sims recognized the Animal Care Services staff and their commitment to their mission.

## DISCUSSION

Mayor Nirenberg recognized the Animal Care Team and their efforts and asked Sims to outline the investments impacts in the near future. Sims stated that the increase in veterinary efforts would assist with offering affordable services to residents who were impacted by economic factors. Sims stated that a partnership with outside clinics and partners was crucial to improve services for residents especially in the spay/neuter category.

Mayor Nirenberg asked if there was future funding that was needed to improve animal care services. Sims stated that the spay/neuter efforts were the most important components to address the majority of animal care issues and had a trickle down effect on enforcement and services provided to the community.

Councilmember Castillo thanked the Animal Care Services Team for providing services to the southside community especially in the spay/neuter services. She asked if there was a targeted campaign to address pit bull population euthanization. Sims stated that there was not a current plan, but one could be addressed in the future. Councilmember Castillo asked if there was a program for city staff to adopt pets. Sims confirmed that there was a current program for discounted adoption fees for staff.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez stated that he supported all the services provided to the community and asked if there were navigation services available for residents to obtain animal care services. Sims stated that there was a high demand for animal care services and that there were options for residents to gain information.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez stated that there was a great need for animal care enforcement of stray animals especially within his council district and that his residents requested increased services. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez stated that he and Councilmember Cabello Havrda requested an animal care services strategic plan under a CCR and that a task force group be developed to include community animal advocates participation. Sims confirmed that the discussions and input from community advocates had already occurred and that good input was provided by these groups.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked about metrics associated with recidivism and current efforts. Sims provided an update of discussions and improvements associated with recidivism. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked what was the most important component that required continued funding. Sims stated that spay/neuter services were the most important services to be continuously provided and that funding would need to continue to meet metric goals which had yet to be reached.

Councilmember Perry asked for a meeting to clarify ACS staff position allocations in previous and current Budget allocations and associated service metrics. Councilmember Perry asked for clarification on the recent service contracts awarded for veterinary services. Sims spoke to the services provided to include spay/neuter services which would expand the services provided by ACS and that he would schedule a meeting with the Councilmember to further discuss.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda asked how transportation challenges were being addressed to provide ACS services to animal care desert communities. Sims stated that contracted service contracts have expanded services to these communities. Councilmember Cabello Havrda asked for additional information on animal care rescue services. Sims stated that a Request for Applications (RFA) was released to obtain non- profit organizations wanting to partner in animal rescue efforts. Councilmember Cabello Havrda stressed that it was important to identify satellite locations to provide services to the community to further expand services. Sims stated that staff continued to partner with organizations to provide services but would look into identifying other sites for services.

Councilmember Courage acknowledged the work performed by the ACS staff and volunteers. Councilmember Courage asked who ACS partnered with and the services they provided. Sims reviewed the organizations that ACS partnered with and stated that it included organizations of all sizes to provide services.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked how many kennels were available at ACS. Bethany Colonnese reviewed the kennel capacity for dogs, cats and other animals totaling about 1,300 kennels. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked how many animals had been euthanized. Colonnese provided data associated with capacity issues. Sims noted that an expanded facility would be used for expanded kennel capacity which assisted with decreasing euthanized numbers. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked if an inner city or downtown facility would assist in meeting the need for kennel capacity and response time. Sims stated that he did not feel that it would greatly impact the services provided.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez stated that he supported future funding for ACS efforts.

Councilmember Bravo expressed concern regarding the City being able to compete with veterinary private clinics to attract Veterinarians to accept City positions. Sims stated that he kept abreast of veterinary salaries and that he worked closely with human resources to attract veterinarians and would conduct outreach to gain more veterinarians which included offering signing bonuses.

Councilmember Bravo asked how expanded kennel facilities would assist in dealing with dangerous animals and other animal issues. Sims stated that the expanded contract kennel facilities and live release initiatives were crucial in addressing capacity issues. Councilmember Bravo asked if additional staffing was needed for dangerous animal issues. Sims stated that ACS continuously evaluated the need for additional staffing by addressing current capacity and incidents.

Mayor Nirenberg recognized ACS Board Members in the audience and thanked staff for their presentations.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

At any time during the meeting, the City Council may recess into executive session to consult with the City Attorney's Office (Texas Government Code Section 551.071) and deliberate or discuss any of the following:

No Executive Session was held.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 4:29 PM.

**Approved**

**Ron Nirenberg**  
**Mayor**

**Debbie Racca-Sittre**  
**City Clerk**