

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

Wednesday, August 31, 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 2:08 PM. City Clerk Debbie Racca-Sittre took the Roll Call noting a quorum with the following Council Members present:

PRESENT: 9 – Nirenberg, Bravo, McKee-Rodriguez, Rocha Garcia, Castillo, Cabello Havrda, Sandoval, Courage, Perry

ABSENT: 2 - Viagran, 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. Library

B. Neighborhood and Housing Services
C. Human Services and Delegate Agencies

City Manager Erik Walsh introduced the Items and presenters. Ramiro Salazar, Director of the Library Department provided an overview of the FY 2023 Proposed Budget which included an 11% or \$5 million increase. Salazar acknowledged the contribution by the San Antonio Public Library Foundation and grants. He reviewed performance measures and results from 2019 through projected 2023. Salazar explained that \$1.5 million was being added to the library book and materials Budget for a total of \$6.7 million which was expected to shorten wait times and support a growing community.

Salazar outlined the transformation of the Texana Resource Center with the improvements included in the 2022 General Obligation Bond with two positions being added to the operational Budget for FY 2023 for the Center. He reported that \$3.2 million was budgeted to upgrade various library branch facilities and listed 2022 Bond Projects for the Library including renovation of Central, Carver and Las Palmas Branch Libraries.

Salazar introduced Paul Stahl, Chair of the Library Board of Trustees, who provided a message from the Board in support of the Proposed Budget.

Veronica Garcia, Director of Neighborhood & Housing Services Department (NHSD) provided an overview of the FY 2023 Proposed Budget including how the Budget supported the Strategic Housing Implementation Plan (SHIP). Garcia stated that the Budget included a \$5 million increase in the General Fund due to the reorganization of the City Fee Waiver Program from Center City and Downtown Operations Department (CCDO) and several Budget initiatives including the addition of 16 new staff (12 to support the Bond, two Housing Navigators and two Accountants). Garcia noted a reduction in grant fund revenues due to a decrease in Federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding and the spending down of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) emergency funds.

Garcia outlined the various components of the Department and highlighted the Proposed \$136 million Affordable Housing Budget which included \$92.3 million from the 2022 General Obligation Bond. Garcia listed FY 2022 accomplishments and FY 2023 proposed performance measures and goals. Garcia recommended restoring the City Fee Waiver Program to \$2.5 million for Affordable housing, Historic and Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation, small Business, and target industries and restoration of the Inner City Incentive Fund to support targeted investment as well as \$250,000 to create a new community educational campaign to assist residents with combating property taxes through protests and exemptions.

Melody Woosley, Director of the Department of Human Services (DHS), provided an overview of the FY 2023 Proposed Budget including the department's operational Budget and funding for Delegate Agencies. Woosley reviewed the five-year Budget history which included grants and the General Fund, highlighted Budget initiatives which included a \$25 million or 12.1% increase over the prior fiscal year and the addition of 19 new positions. Woosley provided a breakdown of funding for homeless programs and services for senior citizens.

Woosley stated that the Budget included funding for facilities improvements to the Frank Garrett and Ella Austin Community Centers and the addition of a Multi-Generational Center in City Council District 1 through Bond funding. She provided a breakdown of the \$21.9 million investments in Delegate Agencies and provided a timeline of the next two-year funding cycle for Delegate Agencies.

Mayor Nirenberg thanked the Directors for their presentations and opened the floor for discussion by the Councilmembers.

Councilmember Sandoval thanked Paul Stahl for his service on the Library Board and Assistant Library Director Dale McNeill for supporting the “Freedom to Read” Campaign on Texas Public Radio. She supported funding for new books and materials particularly audio and digital collections. Councilmember Sandoval asked if the Budget included an extension of Library Hours and supported this idea proposed by Councilmember Castillo. Salazar commented that extended hours were not budgeted. Councilmember Sandoval suggested using ARPA Funding to extend hours and requested a Library Plan update at a meeting of the Community Health Environment and Culture Committee (CHECC).

Councilmember Sandoval expressed concern that some of the West Side Library Branches had been closed for renovations at the same time. Salazar stated that the department tried to balance the needs of the community with the needs for building upgrades and renovations.

Councilmember Sandoval supported funding to assist homeowners with property tax assistance, suggested leveraging of funding and making the program available seasonally similar to the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA), and asked who would provide the assistance and outreach. Garcia stated that NHSD was working on an outreach plan and was expected to contract for services with partners such as the Texas Rio Grande Legal Association, St. Mary’s School of Law and San Antonio Legal Services Association (SALSA) who were potential partners.

Councilmember Sandoval suggested researching affordable housing models to help small landlords to create affordable rental properties. Sandoval asked when the Housing Navigators got involved with code violations. Garcia responded that NHSD planned proactive outreach and coordinated with the Development Services Department (DSD) as soon as DSD received a code violation.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia commented on a reduction in Grants and noted that the increase in funding was mostly due to the 2022 Housing Bond and asked about the General Fund. Tate stated that the General Fund was increasing \$5 million from FY 2022. Director Garcia stated that Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Federal Funding had been reduced nationwide and noted that there had been \$50 million in Federal Grants that were winding down. She added that the \$7 million Emergency Housing Assistance Program (EHAP) Budget provided assistance with rent, relocation and right to counsel. Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked for numbers on how many could be served with the \$2.2 million in relocation.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia shared Council District 4 resident stories about evictions and difficulties that residents were having due to the pandemic, high energy bills, medical costs, food

costs and inflation. She added that NHSD had helped many residents but there was not enough funding, and some were ending up homeless, therefore, she supported the Budget for NHSD.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda supported renovations to the libraries including Great Northwest, Guerra, Las Palmas and Carver Branch Libraries, additional funding for books and materials, particularly e-books. City Manager Walsh mentioned that the Interlocal Agreement with Bexar County was expiring in 2023 in which Bexar County provided \$2 million for the San Antonio Public Library (SAPL) to service their residents that did not live in the City. Councilmember Cabello Havrda suggested the addition of a new branch library on the border of Council Districts 5 and 6 near Old Highway 90.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda asked if all NHSD programs were only available to families in poverty and wanted to learn more about the income levels. She suggested first time homeowner programs for Teachers. Garcia stated that there were two City sponsored first time homeowner assistance programs; one for City Employees and another for First Responders, as well as a Federal Program that provided down payment assistance. Councilmember Cabello Havrda suggested NHSD coordinate with CPS Energy to help families with home rehabilitation so that they could qualify for the utility company's Weatherization Program.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda asked how foster youth were helped by DHS and suggested prioritizing the population. Woosley mentioned that Next Level Program, homelessness grant to provide housing and other opportunities for youth, ARPA funds for youth and mental health adding that many were foster youth aging out of the system that were referred by Municipal Court and San Antonio Police Department (SAPD). Councilmember Cabello Havrda advocated for funding for mental health services to supplement existing Federal and State programs.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez expressed support for renovations of the Carver Branch Library and suggested that computers and technology equipment upgrades should be performed regularly or at least with Bond funds. Assistant Library Director Kathy Donnellan confirmed that public use computers were replaced every four years through the Computer Replacement Program, but that Carver's computers would be replaced with Bond funds. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez suggested that Community Centers could have a greater library presence and recommended developing an outreach program to attract more young people to the libraries.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez recommended the addition of more staff to perform outreach for the homeless and requested an update on the homeless count. Woosley stated that she would provide the latest homeless count report and added that Delegate Agencies could provide homeless outreach and other services. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez expressed concern that Haven for Hope excluded low barrier housing and persons with disabilities who needed assistance with daily living tasks. Woosley stated that the skill level of staffing might not be available, and this was a gap that needed more attention and added that DHS was coordinating with Haven for Hope and other partners.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez noted that the City spent \$400,000 in FY 2022 to abate encampments and suggested that the funding could be used to provide showers and restrooms and meet the needs of the neighborhood.

Councilmember Courage suggested that the City should invest in a digital library. Salazar stated that the SAPL already had a digital library that was widely used in conjunction with the traditional books and materials collection. Councilmember Courage highlighted the improvements to some of the libraries, suggested more shade over the playground areas that could potentially incorporate solar panels, and commented on Parman Library's partnership with the nearby park. Councilmember Courage recommended that each comprehensive senior center facility be utilized for community events and activities in the evenings and the weekends and suggested adding \$50,000 to each facility's operating Budget. Deputy City Manager Maria Villagomez stated that the Public Safety Committee was recommending that the current library hours be Monday through Friday from 7:00 AM be extended to 7:00 PM for four days out of the week with a survey of the Senior utilization.

Councilmember Courage requested a copy of the changes in services provided by the Delegate Agencies and their funding for FY 2023 as well as the usage and effectiveness of the homeless hotline. Woosley stated that she would provide the information in writing.

Councilmember Castillo noted that \$300 million was needed for home renovations according to the SHIP and suggested that the Homeowner Rehab and Weatherization Program Budgets should increase to at least \$30 million annually in order to meet the needs over 10 years. She quoted a San Antonio Housing Trust (SAHT) study which highlighted that evictions led to health issues and contributed to health inequities.

Councilmember Castillo recommended more rental and mortgage assistance. Garcia stated that 2,000 families were in the housing assistance pipeline and that NHSD was working through those shelters. Councilmember Castillo suggested working with delegate agencies to serve more needs and was hopeful that the new fiscal year could help more families.

Councilmember Castillo suggested connecting individuals in need of housing assistance with the Ready to Work Program and home modification for differently-abled residents to help with ramps and other adaptations so they could stay in their homes. Garcia stated that the Minor Repair Program and non-profit Merced Housing helped make resident's homes accessible to persons with disabilities. Councilmember Castillo suggested more partnership with Opportunity Home, formerly the San Antonio Housing Authority (SAHA).

Councilmember Castillo asked how NHSD would work with Code Compliance. Director Garcia stated that DSD would refer families facing code violations to get connected with the Housing Navigators.

Councilmember Perry noted that the library circulation had not returned to pre-pandemic levels and asked why they needed more staff. Salazar clarified that the new staff were to expand services specifically related to the Texana Center. Tate explained that civilian compensation increased by \$2.4 million from FY 2022 as a part of the City Manager's overall recommendation to improve salary and benefits. Councilmember Perry asked for a list of all Library Department improvements and the return on investment.

Councilmember Perry noted the substantial increase in NHSD positions and requested a breakdown of the number and cost of positions by program area for NHSD. Garcia stated that 12 positions would implement the Bond with eight of those being added to the home rehabilitation team, two were Housing Navigators and two were fiscal staff. City Manager Walsh stated that the follow up memo would recap where all the new Bond positions would be housed.

Councilmember Perry asked what would happen when the COVID grants were depleted. Garcia stated that instead of COVID grants, State grants would pay for the relocation and right to counsel and the General Fund would provide rental assistance. Councilmember Perry requested a breakout of the FY 2023 Affordable Housing Budget by individual homes, apartment complexes and preservation which he felt rehabilitation of existing homes was too expensive and the funding would be better spent on new affordable housing through large apartment complexes.

Councilmember Bravo was pleased to see funding for property tax relief and recommended direct proactive outreach in low income areas and added that the Bexar County Appraisal District (BCAD) could provide a list of potential homeowners that did not claim the homestead exemption who could be targeted.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia supported the education campaign for property tax protest and requested more information on the Affordable Housing Fund including the fund balance as well as information on the Fee Waiver Program.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia recommended the addition of more outreach coordinators for the South Side as this was a large geographic area. Woosley mentioned that the Delegate Agency, consolidated funding and ARPA funding for Mental Health was proposed to fund more outreach for Veterans and the chronically homeless. Councilmember Rocha Garcia requested a breakdown of \$77 million in community investment and recommended more low barrier shelters outside of downtown.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia supported increased library services including digital collection and upgrades to the library facilities and suggested allowing residents to print and make copies free of charge.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez supported Councilmember Courage's recommendation to extend the uses of the Senior Centers and Councilmember Rocha Garcia's request for more shelters outside of downtown adding that the houseless populations were best served in their own neighborhoods.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez supported Councilmember Castillo's request to increase funding for home rehabilitation and requested statistics on eviction avoidance. Garcia stated that the department had asked for \$44 million in ARPA reallocations from other communities that could not spend their ARPA dollars but usually got 10% of the request and they had accomplished 1,200 eviction dismissals. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez wanted to ensure that the rental assistance program included an assurance that the families would not get evicted after they were helped and expressed concern that the Home Rehabilitation Program forgivable loan would not transfer to a family member who inherited a home.

Councilmember Courage recommended more individuals for the Street Outreach Team. Woosley clarified that there were 12 positions, one for each Council District, an extra for downtown and a manager position. Councilmember Courage asked about the Senior Art Program. Woosley stated the previous program was funded by Gonzaba Medical Group and Bexar County and the Proposed Budget added \$100,000 to add four additional sites.

Councilmember Courage requested more information on the breakdown of how the City would meet the SHIP goals and noted that homeowners were required to have insurance and be current on taxes in order to qualify for EHAP. Director Garcia stated that the requirements were Federal.

Councilmember Castillo supported funding for the homeless outreach workers and recommended that those workers provide quality of life check-ins adding that housing was health care and public safety. Councilmember Castillo recommended increased funding for the Mobile Integrated Health Unit.

Councilmember Castillo spoke in support of the renovations to Memorial and Las Palmas Branch Libraries but expressed concern about closures during elections. Salazar stated that Memorial Branch Library would not be available for use as a polling site this November due to renovations, but Las Palmas would be open. Councilmember Castillo recommended extending hours of the libraries as many were used as resilience hubs.

Councilmember Perry requested more detailed discussion on DHS's outcome measures and the requested additional positions. Woosley stated that homeless and senior improvements were \$4 million and \$4.4 million was the increased personnel costs. Councilmember Perry requested a comparison of the DHS General Fund Budget from FY 2021, noting the FY 2022 \$46 million and FY 2023 \$51 million. Tate stated that the FY 2021 General Fund allocation was \$41 million.

Councilmember Perry asked where the 8,000 homeless statistics came from and if it was the point-in-time count. Woosley stated that the homeless numbers came from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Councilmember Perry commented that the money being spent on homelessness kept increasing but the number of homeless individuals had not changed.

Councilmember Castillo suggested that the extension of senior services hours would be providing more services to seniors such as additional meals and also extended services to those in the neighborhood regardless of age.

Mayor Nirenberg noted that the City continued to spend more money on homelessness but were not seeing increased results and recommended developing substantive strategies that produced results. Mayor Nirenberg requested a 10-year funding plan for housing that would help us stay on target to produce new units and to preserve existing housing stock. Mayor Nirenberg stated that the City of San Antonio was one of 22 cities in the inaugural data alliance that focused on using data in better ways and more accountability.

Mayor Nirenberg requested an updated on the Housing Commission Subcommittee on removing barriers and suggested creativity with strategies such as alternative dwelling units in the Unified

Development Code and closed the discussion.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

No Executive Session was held.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 4:38 PM.

Approved

Ron Nirenberg
Mayor

Debbie Racca-Sittre
City Clerk