

City of San Antonio



Minutes Municipal Utilities Committee

2021 – 2023 Council Members

John Courage, Dist. 9
Jalen McKee-Rodriguez, Dist. 2 | Phyllis Viagran, Dist. 3
Melissa Cabello Havrda, Dist. 6 | Ana Sandoval, Dist. 7

Tuesday, November 29, 2022

10:00 AM

City Hall Complex

The Municipal Utilities Committee convened a regular meeting in the Council Briefing Room in the City Hall Complex beginning at 10:07 AM. Deputy City Clerk Aurora Perkins took the Roll Call noting a quorum with the following Committee Members present:

Members Present: John Courage, *Chair*
Melissa Cabello Havrda, *Member*
Ana Sandoval, *Member*
Jalen McKee-Rodriguez, *Member*
Phyllis Viagran, *Member*

Members Absent: None

Approval of Minutes

1. Approval of minutes from the October 25, 2022 Municipal Utilities Committee meeting.

Councilmember Sandoval moved to Approve the minutes from the October 25, 2022 Municipal Utilities Committee. Councilmember Cabello Havrda seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Courage, Viagran, Cabello Havrda, Sandoval
Absent: None
Abstain: McKee-Rodriguez

Briefing and Possible Action on

2. Briefing by CPS Energy regarding preparations for the upcoming winter season operating conditions including power plant generation, gas system operations, electric distribution system and customer communication plans [Ben Gorzell Jr., Chief Financial Officer; Troy Elliott, Deputy

Chief Financial Officer]

Benny Ethridge, CPS Energy Senior Vice President for Energy Supply, provided an overview of the weather outlook for CPS Energy in regard to energy supply needs. Ethridge noted that Winter preparedness considered safety, operational readiness and equipment readiness. He stated that CPS Energy staff had completed Winter preparedness assessments and completed needed identified tasks for preparedness. Ethridge noted that CPS Energy had sufficient supply for the projected winter season.

Richard Medina, CPS Energy Executive Vice President for Energy Delivery Services, stated that CPS Energy had worked closely with the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) to ensure Winter preparedness and that all energy substations had been inspected and tested for the upcoming winter season. Medina noted that CPS Energy had worked on load shed enhancements and provided training to staff and sister agencies for readiness preparedness.

Richard Lujan, CPS Energy Vice President for Gas Systems, provided an overview of the natural gas system and preparedness for the Winter season. He noted that staff had completed safety, operational and equipment testing and had developed public communications for customers so that they prepared for the Winter season.

Melissa Sorola, CPS Energy Vice President of Communications, provided an overview of Winter communications objectives by CPS Energy with safety at the forefront of communications. She noted that stakeholder and customer communication enhancements had been developed in both English and Spanish and spoke to the organization's preparedness for the Winter season. She added that Winter preparedness with partners had received training for emergency weather situations and preparedness.

DISCUSSION

Chair Courage asked for clarification on preparedness levels in relation to transformers and national supply issues. Medina stated that CPS Energy had an adequate supply of transformers and that the entity had projected future needs to ensure that an adequate supply was available.

Chair Courage asked for clarification on natural gas supply coordination and pricing controls. Lujan stated that CPS Energy had added gas suppliers to the vendor list and that pricing had been coordinated to assist with peak pricing control. Rudy Garza, CPS Energy President, stated that CPS Energy had worked hard to add vendors with pricing controls and eliminated other suppliers that had not worked well with the entity. Garza stated that CPS Energy could still experience some pricing challenges but felt that they were in a better position to control pricing in the event of extreme weather.

Chair Courage asked if the City facilities had been better prepared to meet the needs of residents for shelters. San Antonio Fire Department (SAFD) Assistant Fire Chief Bryan Norris stated that the City had coordinated to ensure that Resiliency Hubs had been hardened for future preparedness.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda asked for clarification on enhanced weatherization efforts. Medina reiterated that energy substations and transformers had been inspected and tested and that CPS Energy had provided ERCOT with updates on systems and load shed preparedness.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda asked if CPS Energy would continue to test the system to ensure readiness. Medina confirmed that testing and inspections were continuous and corrections were made as needed. Councilmember Cabello Havrda asked if reports were available of testing and preparedness. Garza stated that the CPS Board would be briefed today on report activity and then would be provided to the Committee once briefed to the Board.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez stated that he wanted to learn more on what type of communications were being completed for vulnerable community residents to ensure energy readiness. Sorola stated that communications had been developed for vulnerable community members to include print, television and other sources to ensure information was accessible for all. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked if communication efforts had been performed with local school districts and if not, that it be considered in the future. Sorola stated that coordination with the school districts would be considered.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked if a listing of medically vulnerable community residents had been compiled. Norris stated that City staff and CPS Energy had worked on a reporting system to identify individuals and entities which required medical equipment energy backup and reporting was continuously updated as individuals/facilities were added.

Councilmember Sandoval asked for clarification on load shed efforts and solutions. Medina provided an overview of system enhancements and smart switches installation to meet energy needs. He stated that the system was much better prepared to meet energy requirements.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez expressed concern regarding ERCOT readiness and energy preparedness. Ethridge stated that completed energy enhancements put the energy system in a better situation for energy needs.

No action was required for Item 2.

3. Briefing by the San Antonio Water System on winter preparedness and implementation of recommendations from the Committee on Emergency Preparedness' Report [Ben Gorzell Jr., Chief Financial Officer; Troy Elliott, Deputy Chief Financial Officer]

SAWS President Robert Puente provided an update on the winter preparedness and implementation of recommendations from the Committee on Energy Preparedness. He stated that SAWS Senior Vice President and Chief Operations Officer Steve Clouse was retiring at the end of the year and noted the large impact that he had to SAWS and developing improvements for water needs in the future.

Clouse provided an update on community emergency preparedness recommendation statuses to include enhanced customer service delivery and communications. He stated that on-line status maps were made available to customers. He stressed that SAWS worked closely with CPS Energy to coordinate energy readiness preparedness to include the installation of back up generators at SAWS key pump stations. He provided an update on the natural gas generator Request for Proposals (RFP) and diesel site generator installations.

Clouse stated that SAWS had enhanced the Bulk Water Distribution Plan which was coordinated with the San Antonio Police Department (SAPD) and the Office of Emergency Management (OEM)

along with CPS Energy. He noted SAWS readiness for delivery of potable water distribution/delivery. He stated that the Wastewater System was also enhanced to meet readiness and that enhancements had been completed to those stations. He added that supply and freeze protection steps had been completed to meet staff needs during emergency events. Clouse reiterated that SAWS was prepared for an emergency event.

DISCUSSION

Chair Courage asked if there was a plan to continue to assist customers who had water pipe issues during emergency events. Gavino Ramos, SAWS Vice President of Communications and External Affairs, confirmed that the program was continuing under a non-profit established to assist customers as needed.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda asked for clarification on the critical generators installation timeline. Clouse stated that it was anticipated to take 18 months for installation but that there were key steps to prepare for installation which would begin immediately. Councilmember Cabello Havrda expressed concern on the delivery of water after an emergency due to ruptured water pipes. Clouse stated that generators would greatly enhance the availability of water delivery and address demand.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez expressed concerns on needed communications for vulnerable customer communities and stressed the importance of timely communications for all residents. Ramos stated that communication plans had been enhanced to include partner communications and “robo-call” notifications to all customers. He also noted that digital tool kits had been developed and signage within neighborhoods to inform residents of activity.

Chair Courage noted that council district staff needed information or a communications packet to assist residents that contacted the district offices for information. Gavino stated that information cards with key contact data had been delivered to all council offices. Clouse noted that communications delivery would also be coordinated since both SAWS and CPS Energy would be located jointly with the City at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Chair Courage requested that council districts be informed when testing.

Councilmember Sandoval asked if the natural gas emergency generators would cover the entire City for water needs. Clouse stated that the new generators would not cover the entire City but would cover essential and key services/operations to include military installations, City facilities and organizations such as HEB grocery sites.

Councilmember Viagran asked for clarification on communications provided to residents. Ramos stated that combined communications from the City, CPS Energy and SAWS would be released to ensure timely and efficient communications.

Councilmember Viagran asked if personnel hiring was impacting delivery of services. Clouse stated that as with many large businesses there were continued challenges to hiring staff to make sure delivery services were not impacted but that efforts were continuous to meet emergency needs.

Puente reiterated that SAWS was ready for an emergency weather event.

No action was required for Item 3.

4. Briefing on implementation status of recommendations to the City of San Antonio by the Committee on Emergency Preparedness [Maria Villagómez, Deputy City Manager]

SAFD Assistant Fire Chief Bryan Norris, provided an overview of the implementation status for recommendations to the City of San Antonio by the Committee on Emergency Preparedness. He stated that the City had completed the 24 recommendations provided by the Committee. He reviewed enhancements to communications delivery and communications systems, generator purchase and installation at key City facilities, equipment and supply inventory preparedness, review of Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA), situation utilization, training and exercise of processes and response training.

Norris reviewed enhancements to communication processes to include those by City channels and those in combination with CPS Energy and SAWS. He noted that staff had developed enhanced communications with each of the council districts and that there was dedicated staff identified to assist each one. He noted that a situational awareness platform had been developed to enhance communications delivery and availability.

DISCUSSION

Chair Courage reiterated that it was important to communicate to the general public of emergency situations and the need for a better warning system to alert the community such as used in smaller towns. He asked that staff explore the use of such systems to alert residents of emergencies. Chair Courage asked that staff research different “toned” phone alerts such as amber alerts to be developed in order to inform residents of an emergency.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked who were the stakeholders included in the Emergency Preparedness Committee. Chief Financial Officer Ben Gorzell stated that the members were appointed by the Mayor and that he would share the list of the members for his review. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked if outreach had been conducted with outside organizations such as churches that developed emergency shelters or hubs in emergency events. Norris stated that initial outreach had begun but the concentration was to ensure that the four resiliency hubs received communications and staffing during events. Councilmember McKee- Rodriguez stressed the need for communications to residents and that continued consideration be conducted to improve communications.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda agreed that communications with community partners was needed to include non-profits, churches and non-city senior centers. Norris stated that communications were in place for community partners and that more and more organizations were identified to receive communications. Councilmember Cabello Havrda stressed the need to include community partners and the need for expansion of communications to those organizations. She thanked CPS Energy, SAWS and City staff for their collaboration of improved communications and support in emergency weather events.

Councilmember Sandoval asked if additional Resiliency Hub sites would be considered. Norris confirmed that additional hubs would be considered in the Hazard Mitigation Plan. Councilmember Sandoval asked if there was a written commitment to expansion of HUBs. Gorzell stated that he would meet with the executive leadership to address an expansion plan.

Councilmember Sandoval stated that it was important to identify grant opportunities for additional funding for enhancement of services. Gorzell stated that staff would provide an update on grant opportunities at a B Session.

Councilmember Sandoval asked for clarification on the water distribution plan and delivery. SAWS Chief Operations Officer Steve Clouse stated that SAWS and the City collaborated to have water resources from SAWS and delivery from the City. Gorzell also provided clarification on delivery of water through the EOC operations framework and would provide the Committee with additional information on processes and plan. In addition, Norris provided clarification on water procurement and delivery to the community. Councilmember Sandoval expressed concern on the need to develop a specific plan for water delivery. Chair Courage also expressed concern on the need for an emergency plan for water delivery and requested that a plan be established. Gorzell clarified that a plan would include procurement and delivery components and that staff would follow up on finalization of the plan for water delivery.

No action was required for Item 4.

Executive Session

There was no executive session.

Adjournment

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 12:15 PM.

Approved

John Courage, Chair

Debbie Racca-Sittre, City Clerk