

City of San Antonio



Minutes Public Safety Committee

2021 – 2023 Council Members

Melissa Cabello Havrda, Dist. 6, Chair
Mario Bravo, Dist. 1 | Jalen McKee-Rodriguez, Dist. 2
Phyllis Viagran, Dist. 3 | Manny Pelaez, District 8

Tuesday, February 21, 2023

9:30 AM

**Council Briefing Room,
City Hall**

The Public Safety Committee convened a regular meeting in the Council Briefing Room in the City Hall Complex beginning at 9:32 AM. City Clerk Debbie Racca-Sittre took the Roll Call noting a quorum with the following Committee Members present:

Members Present: Melissa Cabello Havrda, *Chair*
Mario Bravo, *Member*
Jalen McKee-Rodriguez, *Member*
Phyllis Viagran, *Member*
Manny Pelaez, *Member*

Members Absent: None

Approval of Minutes

1. Approval of minutes from the January 17, 2023 Public Safety Committee meeting.

Councilmember Pelaez moved to Approve the minutes of the January 17, 2023 Public Safety Committee meeting. Councilmember Bravo seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Cabello Havrda, Bravo, McKee-Rodriguez, Pelaez
Absent: Viagran

Briefing and Possible Action on

2. **Briefing by the San Antonio Metropolitan Health District on the collaborative development of a Metro Health Violence Prevention Strategic Plan.** [María Villagómez, Deputy City Manager; Claude Jacob, Director, Health]

Deputy City Manager Maria Villagomez introduced the Item and Claude Jacob, Director of Metro Health, who presented an overview of the violence prevention continuum which included upstream and downstream interventions to reduce health inequities. Jacob provided data on homicide, sex offenses and assault rates in Bexar County comparing 2020 to 2021. Jacob listed social determinants of health such as education, economic stability, social context, neighborhood and access to healthcare.

Jacob provided an update on the domestic violence strategy effort which included a collaboration of 14 agencies focusing on domestic violence. Jacob listed a timeline and process for development of the Violence Prevention Strategic Plan (VPSP) which would begin with community input, development of work groups to identify objectives, strategies and success indicators with the Plan to be completed in fall 2023.

Chair Cabello Havrda thanked the team for their work on developing a comprehensive and innovative approach to the VPSP. Chair Cabello Havrda noted that there appeared to be significant collaboration between Metro Health and the San Antonio Police Department (SAPD). She stressed that violence prevention was a key strategy and recommended a broad approach to public safety to include public health and mental health. Chair Cabello Havrda requested a mental health and public safety strategic plan. She also requested a dashboard to track progress on all plans.

Chair Cabello Havrda asked Jacob to develop innovative ways to collect data about victimization from vulnerable populations. Deputy City Manager Villagomez commented that the Community Collaborative on Domestic Violence (CCDV) collected data from non-profits and faith-based organizations to help capture the data. Chair Cabello Havrda recommended coordination with Bexar County and the Court system.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez requested clarification on the process for community feedback. Erica Haller-Stevenson, Public Health Administrator, stated that the department was working with non-profit partners and grassroot organizations, town halls in the faith-based community as well as collaborating with SAPD. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez stated that his office would be happy to help support the outreach efforts.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez recommended crime prevention through community and environmental design and cited a program in Dallas called the “Better Block Program.” Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez recommended more collaboration between departments.

Councilmember Pelaez thanked the non-profit For Her for being at the meeting and Judge Monique Diaz for her contribution to the Collaborative Commission on Domestic Violence (CCDV). Councilmember Pelaez suggested that more men should get into the conversation and advocate to

prevent domestic violence and noted that SAPD has had a victim's unit but that program was downstream. He further stressed that upstream efforts related to prevention needed to be the focus, particularly with young men.

Councilmember Bravo recommended a comprehensive approach to public safety but expressed concern that the planning process felt academic and urged immediate action such as a focus on restorative justice. Jacob stated that there was a five-year program called "My Brother's Keeper" in 17 school districts across the city focused on restorative justice that was a collaboration with the city. Councilmember Bravo requested a presentation on the program.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez was interested in more collaboration.

No action was required for Item 2.

3. Committee policy discussion and possible action on Mental Health investment priorities for the use of \$4.6 million in American Rescue Plan Act Plan Act (ARPA) State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF). [María Villagómez, Deputy City Manager; Claude Jacob, Director, Health]

Deputy City Manager Maria Villagomez introduced the Item and provided background on the \$4.6 million available for mental health and requested recommendations from the Committee to City Council. Claude Jacob, Director of Metro Health, outlined background on the \$19.35 million that was previously awarded and presented alternatives for the remaining \$4.6 million to provide equitable outcomes in three impact areas: \$3 million for foster care and at-risk youth, \$1 million for family violence and \$600,000 for harm reduction strategies related to substance use. Jacob outlined the recommended services in each of the three areas, requested that the Committee finalize priorities and the department would issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the services recommended. Jacob introduced Jessie Higgins, Chief Mental Health Officer.

DISCUSSION:

Chair Cabello Havrda supported the recommendation to issue an RFP and supported the key impact areas. Chair Cabello Havrda recommended comprehensive geographic representation.

Councilmember Bravo strongly supported harm reduction recommendations which included providing more access to Narcan for overdoses. He suggested that some of the employment strategies for at-risk youth might be provided under Ready to Work Program funding and recommended reducing the first category by \$1 million and moving it to Family Violence. Deputy City Manager Villagomez clarified that youth needed to be enrolled in the Ready to Work Program to receive wrap-around services so the funding in the mental health category for youth would be less restrictive. Councilmember Bravo suggested that collaboration could be a category included.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez stated that the approach seemed comprehensive but expressed concern that when the ARPA funding was over, could there be a carry-over into the Delegate Agency Program goals to fill gaps in services long-term. Deputy City Manager Villagomez

explained that there would be a full City Council discussion in a future B session on City Council priorities for Delegate Agency funding.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez noted that 40% of the proposals rejected in the prior RFP came from agencies headquartered in City Council District 2 and recommended a more equitable approach so that all high-need areas of the population received services.

Councilmember Pelaez thanked staff for their work and expressed support for the staff recommendation.

Councilmember Viagran requested clarification on the amount of funding and the definition of at-risk youth. Higgins stated that the agencies would propose services and help define the services. Councilmember Viagran recommended a clear definition of at-risk youth and added that all youth emerging from the pandemic were at-risk.

Councilmember Viagran suggested that legal services were already being provided to victims of domestic violence through the contract with Family Violence Prevention Services from Bexar County. Metro Health Violence Prevention Administrator, Erica Haller-Stevenson stated that the City did not directly fund this service but could not guarantee services as this was a referral-based program. Councilmember Viagran stated that she did not feel that \$1 million for family violence was enough money and wanted to see more contracts for agencies that we did not normally fund. Deputy City Manager Villagomez pointed out that the focus was on agencies that had not previously received ARPA Funding.

Councilmember Pelaez recommended a list of agencies that provided services and the requirements which could be used by the city council field offices.

Councilmember Bravo recommended broadening the categories and letting the market propose the services in a creative manner.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez suggested funding to support teachers with mental health services. Deputy City Manager Villagomez stated that this was not the focus of the city's funding but was supposed to be addressed by Bexar County and stated that she would ask for a breakdown of the funding.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez moved to shift \$250,000 to provide mental health services to San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD) teachers. The item did not receive a second and fell to the floor. Councilmember Pelaez stated that he might consider the option of funding for teachers' mental health after hearing from Bexar County.

Chair Cabello Havrda commented that the City had not helped foster youth until ARPA and strongly advocated for keeping \$3 million with the youth category.

Councilmember Bravo did not recommend adding funding to the Ready to Work Program and supported the staff recommendation so the Item could be discussed with the full City Council.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez moved to approve staff recommendation for ARPA funding for Mental Health. Councilmember Viagran seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Cabello Havrda, Bravo, McKee-Rodriguez, Viagran, Pelaez

Executive Session

There was no Executive Session held.

Consideration of items for future meetings

Councilmember Bravo recommended a briefing on the My Brother's Keeper Program.

Adjournment

There being no further discussion or business, Chair Cabello Havrda adjourned the meeting at 2:15 p.m.

Approved

Melissa Cabello Havrda, Chair

Debbie Racca-Sittre, City Clerk