

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, March 21, 2023

9:30 AM

**San Antonio Police
Training Academy**

The Public Safety Committee convened a regular meeting in the Council Briefing Room in the City Hall Complex beginning at 9:39 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*
Phyllis Viagran, *Member*

Members Absent: Jalen McKee-Rodriguez, *Member*
Manny Pelaez, *Member*

Approval of Minutes

1. Approval of minutes from the February 21, 2023 Public Safety Committee Meeting.

Councilmember Bravo moved to Approve the minutes of the February 21, 2023 Public Safety Committee meeting. Councilmember Viagran seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Briefing and Possible Action on

2. Briefing on the City of San Antonio Municipal Court Juvenile Court Case Manager Program and the Bexar County 436th Juvenile District Court. [Carla Obledo, Presiding Judge, Municipal Court]

Presiding Municipal Court Judge Carla Obledo listed several statutes governing most juvenile cases and outlined three service delivery platforms including: courtroom services, peer court and truancy services. Judge Obledo listed partnerships with various local school districts for the truancy prevention/intervention programs which included case management and wrap around services. Judge Obledo provided the breakdown of the participants and how the COVID-19 Pandemic impacted the program as well as performance measures over the past five academic years. Judge Obledo stated that the court was reevaluating truant behavior and would continue to provide mediation, targeted assistance and holding the school districts accountable.

Judge Cruz Shaw, Bexar County 436th District Court provided an overview of the two Bexar County Juvenile Detention Centers and noted that juveniles (age 10-16) could not post bond so hearings were held within 10 days. Judge Shaw noted that the system recognized that children were different as they were more amenable to rehabilitation so the program's intent was to balance accountability and treatment using an individualized approach. Judge Shaw provided a chart on the 2022 demographics of the youth referred to Juvenile Probation.

Judge Shaw listed specialty courts: Pre-adjudication Drug Court, Post Adjudication Substance use court, STRIVE (Success, Tenacity, Resiliency, and Victory) Court focused on education and truancy, Crossroads Court focused on girls mental health, MIND Court focusing on boys mental health, Crossover Court, Gang Court, Restore Court for victims of sexual exploitation, Family Enrichment Court focusing on youth domestic violence, and Reentry Court which provided post residential placement.

Judge Shaw provided statistics which indicated that violent felony referrals were up 27.5% in the past year with non-violent felony referrals at a 135% increase and total class A & B misdemeanors at a 23.7% increase. Judge Shaw reported that total delinquent referrals had increased 51% in the past year. Judge Shaw provided a chart of offenses over the past three years and an 18 year review of referrals to the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) noting these had decreased because in 2012, the state limited referrals to felonies and previously took misdemeanors.

DISCUSSION:

Chair Cabello Havrda thanked both Judges for presenting at the Committee and thanked them for handling our children with such care and tailoring the programs to the specific child. Chair Cabello Havrda expressed concern about the overcrowding at our local justice centers created by the backlog with TJJD and suggested that case management and referrals to non-profits was an excellent tool to help rehabilitate the youth.

Chair Cabello Havrda asked how peers were chosen to participate in peer court. Judge Obledo stated that some of those who had successfully completed their probation served on the peer court

and the case managers also recruited students from local school districts. Judge Obledo added that Municipal Court was looking for ways to streamline services due to budget constraints. Chair Cabello Havrda expressed concern that some children did not return to school after COVID so the truancy numbers might be misleading.

Councilmember Viagran requested metrics on whether community service or counseling worked better. Judge Obledo stated that case managers developed an individualized approach. Councilmember Viagran recommended coordination with Ready to Work so that as parents that participated in the program, youth could also receive services. Judge Obledo stated that she would meet with Mike Ramsey, Director of Workforce Development. Councilmember Viagran supported the specialty courts and also suggested that focusing on grandparents raising grandchildren could be an opportunity.

Councilmember Viagran asked if the courts had information on whether the females in the court system were single mothers and suggested that there could be more resources available to them. Councilmember Viagran recommended review of violent crime statistics for youth with SAPD statistics and suggested an opportunity for the UTSA study and analysis of the crime hot spots.

Councilmember Bravo commented that there were a variety of views in our community about how to handle crime and suggested restorative justice was a strong opportunity for youth to put them back on the right track while holding them accountable. Councilmember Bravo noted that jail was a prime location for youth to be mentored by criminals rather than productive community members. Chief Probation Officer Jill Mata stated that the Juvenile Probation Department was committed to restorative justice. Judge Obledo offered to participate in neighborhood associations and town halls to discuss restorative justice and truancy so that there could be a community approach.

Councilmember Bravo asked how other issues such as graffiti and minor theft were being addressed. Judge Rose Sosa reported that graffiti was a huge problem until six years ago when the amounts changed and dollar amount levels were raised to be arrested and/or charged. Councilmember Bravo commented that even though the number of referrals had decreased, the amount of graffiti had not. Councilmember Bravo asked about the differences between regular and specialty courts. Judge Sosa stated that the specialty courts offered wraparound services to youth on probation such as case management, counseling and referrals to other employment or social services.

Councilmember Bravo asked the Judges about their pain points. Judge Shaw stated that while referrals were down overall, violent offenses were increasing. Judge Jacqueline Valdez stated that access to weapons by juveniles was a huge issue. Judge Shaw added that social media was providing youth with ideas on how to make weapons more powerful and violence was exacerbated by bullying and emotional issues. Judge Valdez also noted that youth often recorded themselves on social media which assisted in arrests. Chief McManus commented that there were more children accessing guns.

Chair Cabello Havrda commented that random gunshots were a problem citywide but noted that it was important that residents reported gunshots to the Police and not just on social media. Chair Cabello Havrda asked Chief McManus for information on shot spotter. Chief McManus reported that the technology was implemented as a pilot a few years ago and in eight months they only made three arrests in the target area which was only because of residents reporting the gunshot, therefore, he felt the technology was not successful. Judge Shaw added that the technology did not help unless a resident was reporting and could be an eyewitness in court. Councilmember Bravo suggested that a homeless specialty court might help. Judge Shaw stated that they did not get too many homeless children on their dockets. Judge Valdez commented that sometimes there were struggles with homelessness which impacted entire families who might have children that came in contact with the juvenile justice system resulting in denial of services including housing at Haven for Hope. Chair Cabello Havrda listed the housing bond and the Strategic Housing Implementation Plan which included housing and wraparound services for children aging out of the foster system. Deputy City Manager Maria Villagomez offered to connect the Neighborhood and Housing Services Department with the court. Chair Caballo Havrda recommended a long term coordinated effort. Councilmember Bravo noted that \$40 million in contracts for permanent supportive housing was coming to City Council for consideration in a few weeks.

Councilmember Viagran commented that 21% of San Antonians lived in poverty and 50% of those in poverty were women so there needed to be more services for women to help change the direction of their lives and those of their children. Councilmember Viagran suggested that the accessibility of guns in gloveboxes or consoles of cars were important aspects to educate residents on how to keep themselves and our community safe. Councilmember Viagran recommended collaboration between law enforcement agencies on new technologies to ensure coverage and compatibility.

Councilmember Bravo requested a briefing on technologies that might assist with Public Safety.

Chair Cabello Havrda noted that this had been a good presentation and dialogue and recommended more discussion at a future meeting.

Item was for briefing only, so no action was taken.

Executive Session

There was no Executive Session held.

Adjournment

After the meeting, members of the Public Safety Committee may tour the San Antonio Police Training Academy, located at 12200 SE Loop 410 Access Road. No official action will be taken during this time.

There being no further discussion, Chair Cabello Havrda adjourned the meeting at 10:50 a.m.

Approved

Melissa Cabello Havrda, Chair

Debbie Racca-Sittre, City Clerk