

City of San Antonio



Minutes Community Health, Environment, and Culture Committee

2021 – 2023 Council Members

Chair: Dr. Adriana Rocha Garcia, Dist. 4

Jalen McKee-Rodriguez, Dist. 2 | Phyllis Viagran, Dist. 3

Teri Castillo, Dist. 5 | Rosie Castro, Dist. 7

Thursday, April 27, 2023

2:00 PM

City Hall

The Community Health, Environment, and Culture Committee convened a regular meeting in the City Hall Media Briefing Room beginning at 2:01 PM. City Clerk Debbie Racca-Sittre took the Roll Call noting a quorum with the following Committee Members present:

Members Present: Dr. Adriana Rocha Garcia, *Chair*
Jalen McKee-Rodriguez, *Member*
Rosie Castro, *Member*

Members Absent: Phyllis Viagran, *Member*
Teri Castillo, *Member*

Approval of Minutes

1. Approval of minutes for the March 15, 2023, Community Health, Environment, and Culture meeting

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez moved to Approve the minutes of the March 15, 2023 Community Health, Environment, and Culture Committee meeting. Councilmember Castro seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Rocha Garcia, McKee-Rodriguez, Castro
Absent: Viagran, Castillo

Public Comments

Briefing and Possible Action on

2. Potential approach in response to the Council Consideration Request requiring domestic

violence prevention signage in places of public accommodation. [Erik Walsh, City Manager; Claude A. Jacob, Director, Metro Health]

Chair Rocha Garcia recognized Councilmember Manny Pelaez who introduced the Council Consideration Request (CCR) by providing a story about a recent domestic violence incident where an ex-husband attempted to murder his wife and two year-old daughter and successfully murdered his 11 month old daughter. Councilmember Pelaez reported that he commonly heard victims say they did not know there was help and that is why he created the CCR regarding installation of signage in all public businesses noting that many businesses had supported the CCR.

Erica Valler-Stevenson, Public Health Administrator responsible for the Violence Prevention Division of the San Antonio Metropolitan Health District (Metro Health), provided background, overview and history of the CCR. Valler-Stevenson reported that Metro Health had conducted extensive outreach and a survey of the public which produced an overall positive response with 80% supporting a mandate for the signage. Valler-Stevenson showed a sample of a sticker that could be placed on restroom mirrors and outlined the proposed Ordinance which would require signage featuring domestic violence resources to be posted in places of public accommodation. The stickers would be provided by the City but there would not be a fine assessed for noncompliance.

DISCUSSION:

Chair Rocha Garcia commented that the Houston Astros had similar signs in the restroom stalls at their games and many airports had the universal sign for help but that many people did not know what the universal sign for help which was included on the sample sticker. Chair Rocha Garcia supported the Ordinance.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez supported an Ordinance for public good to protect marginalized populations but expressed concern that the preemption legislation working its way through the State might invalidate this Ordinance. City Manager Erik Walsh recommended that City Council make their decision independent of what might or might not happen at the State legislature.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez recommended development of an outreach team to deliver the stickers and provide information to the businesses. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez suggested staff talk to all of the Councilmembers before taking the Item before the full City Council.

Councilmember Castro supported the proposed Ordinance.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez moved to Approve. Councilmember Castro seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Rocha Garcia, McKee-Rodriguez, Castro
Absent: Viagran, Castillo

3. Process for Developing a Migrant Memorial. [Lori Houston, Assistant City Manager; Krystal Jones, Director, Department of Arts & Culture]

Krystal Jones, Director of the Department of Arts & Culture (Arts), provided background on the tragic situation that occurred last year where 64 migrants were left locked in a tractor trailer rig off of Quintana Road; 53 died of heat illness as a result. Jones provided photos of a makeshift memorial currently onsite consisting of homemade wooden crosses and plastic flowers.

Jones recommended a process that would include the City's Immigrant Liaison and Department of Human Services to develop options which could include a formal memorial marker, public art on city-owned property, and video/photo documentation of the existing memorial for a digital archive.

Jones provided an option of including some bronze markers on the pavement at the site that would include each victim's name and country of origin. Jones reminded the Committee about the timeline for a public art project. Jones stated that a public art project would take an estimated 24 month and cost \$350,000 to \$500,000 which could be included as a part of one of the existing Public Art projects in the 2022 Bond Program near the location.

DISCUSSION:

Chair Rocha Garcia noted that while the tragedy occurred in Council District 4, it could have occurred in any council district and recommended a larger discussion with City Council related to the location for public art because the street was very small and narrow. Chair Rocha Garcia stated that her goal was to provide a space for the families and the community to grieve.

Councilmember Castro stated that she would like to see the space with the current community memorial preserved and suggested planting some flowers for a healing garden along the roadway.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez recommended respecting the way the community had chosen to grieve and supported a marker or garden in addition to what was already there. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez requested more information about community engagement and the potential location. Jones stated that Miller's Pond and Byrum Avenue were nearby. Councilmember Rocha Garcia stated that both were close, but Byrum was a corridor along the train tracks and could be a possible location since many migrants followed the tracks and there were tragedies connected to train tracks.

No action was required for Item 3.

4. Council Committee discussion on access to health care in the community.

Dr. Christine Drennan, Professor of Urban Studies at Trinity University, provided a report on the medical needs and assets of the community and the impact of the closure of the Texas Vista Medical Center (TVMC). Drennan provided a population map of the City showing concentrations

of vulnerable populations. Drennan stated that life expectancy was an indicator of health vulnerability with factors including genetics and physiology, educational attainment, economic stability, community, neighborhood and the built environment and access to healthcare.

Drennan provided a map overlay of the hospitals in San Antonio along with the vulnerable populations and concluded that the loss of TVMC would increase the distance that people on the south west side of town would need to travel to get services and they would likely access already burdened facilities. Drennan stated that Council Districts 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 would be impacted by the loss of TVMC due to the shift in access and availability.

Drennan stated that the disparities in all types of services, including healthcare, was a product of the distribution of wealth in our city as a result of economic segregation. Drennan recommended awareness and action to ensure access to health care for the most vulnerable as this impacted all of San Antonio and not just the south side.

DISCUSSION:

Chair Rocha Garcia agreed that access to health care services was important to our entire community and additional minutes to get to a medical facility could cost someone their life. Chair Rocha Garcia noted that the COVID-19 Pandemic showed us that healthcare was everyone's business, not just private business. Chair Rocha Garcia expressed concern that something could happen during Fiesta and there would be stresses on our medical and emergency systems that could not be overcome.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez thanked Drennan for her presentation adding that the information would help the City Council make better decisions. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez recalled when the Northeast Baptist maternity ward closed shortly after he took office two years ago and the strain it caused on other systems and the local Council District 2 population. He hoped that today's conversation could underscore that healthcare in private hands put profit before people and was systemically racist.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez asked City Manager Walsh how we could change this trajectory. City Manager Walsh stated that the University Hospital System (UHS) was the public hospital system responsible for access to care throughout Bexar County which included the City of San Antonio and recommended engaging the board of UHS and the Bexar County Commissioners Court. He stated that in 2008, all Metro Health clinics were transferred to UHS and this needed to be a much larger conversation.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez stated that the scope of Metro Health was clear and wanted to know how to start the conversation with Bexar County and UHS. City Manager Walsh reported that before the pandemic, Councilmember Sandoval had been interested in the City having authority to place members on the UHS Board. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez noted that residents were being taxed and did not always get equitable access to services, particularly health care.

Councilmember Castro recommended exploring Public Private Partnerships as an option to take over some of these health assets when the private companies did not come through with the services. She also suggested partnerships with Alamo Colleges and other educational institutions. She asked what was going to happen to the building. City Manager Walsh stated that he had heard that the private equity group wanted to sell the building to UHS but he did not know UHS's strategic vision. City Manager Walsh stated that he spoke with the chairman of the UHS Board George Hernandez and warned him that the Committee would be discussing the issue and would have questions for him.

Councilmember Castro asked if City Manager Walsh knew how the County Commissioners felt about the situation. Chair Rocha Garcia stated that Commissioner Rebecca Clay Flores had told her to wait until the new hospital was built in four years, but Commissioner Moody seemed interested in discussing a shorter term solution. Chair Rocha Garcia noted that the building was grandfathered in for licensing but once they closed, there would be upgrades needed.

Councilmember Castro suggested a review of rural hospitals that had been able to stay open over the last several years to use as a model. Chair Rocha Garcia noted that the number of medical and mental health beds were on decline.

City Manager Walsh stated that he would work with staff to summarize the Committee's questions and would invite UHS to come to CHECC on a day with no other agenda items. Chair Rocha Garcia supported the efforts of the staff and thanked Drennan for developing the presentation on short notice.

No action was required for Item 4.

Adjournment

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 3:24 p.m.

Approved

Adriana Rocha Garcia, Chair

Debbie Racca-Sittre, City Clerk