

DEPARTMENT: City Manager's Office

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Maria Villagomez, Deputy City Manager

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: City Wide

SUBJECT: Update on Police Services Review Project

SUMMARY:

The Public Safety Committee will receive an update on the Police Services Review Project.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

A framework for a review of Police Services was presented by the City Manager to the Mayor and City Council as part of the FY 2021 Budget process. This framework centered around addressing foundational issues, community expectations of the police department, community input and service alternatives. On December 11, 2020 the City Manager provided a plan to review and analyze police service response over the next several months to the Mayor and City Council. The goal of this review is to distinguish between calls that require a traditional police response from those calls that may be better handled by another City department or combination of police and other service provider.

On May 5, 2021, City Council was briefed on the results of the community survey and the findings of the UTSA Review of Police Services Calls. In addition, the briefing outlined the community input process and the schedule for presenting this information to the Public Safety Committee and City Council.

Foundational Issues

As part of the foundational issues that will be addressed, accountability and discipline are top priorities. These priorities are being addressed as part of the ongoing collective bargaining negotiations with the San Antonio Police Officers Association (SAPOA). The City Council was briefed on May 5th on the City's priorities for the collective bargaining negotiations.

Community Expectations of the Police Department

Part of this project focuses on understanding the community expectations of police services and develop response alternative recommendations to ensure police officers are placed in encounters that need a law enforcement response.

Review of Police Services Calls by UTSA

In September 2020, the City partnered with the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) to perform an analysis of 911 calls.

The analysis performed by UTSA focuses on requests received by the City's 911 system that frequently result in or require police response. The work done by UTSA will help inform recommendations to the Public Safety Committee and ultimately City Council on types or categories of calls that potentially could be handled by non-sworn police personnel or which might be amenable to a co-response between police and other City agencies.

The UTSA research team is comprised of Dr. Michael Smith and Dr. Rob Tillyer, both professors of criminology and criminal justice in the College for Health, Community, and Policy at UTSA. The UTSA research team presented the results of their analysis to the Public Safety Committee on April 20th and their report is attached to this memorandum.

Police Services Survey

To begin to understand the community expectations of police services, the City engaged the ETC Institute to perform a scientific survey. ETC has extensive experience in local government including conducting community surveys for the City of San Antonio. The Survey was conducted in February and March 2021.

Community and Stakeholder Meetings

The survey results served as the foundation for continued community dialogue during the 27 virtual community meetings and 12 virtual stakeholder meetings conducted throughout the city from April to June, which provided residents the opportunity to offer qualitative feedback on the community's expectations of encounters with SAPD and potential response alternatives to certain 911 calls.

SAPD Officer Focus Group

On June 14, 2021, an SAPD focus group, comprised of 60 patrol officers representing every service area, met with the City Manager's Office to provide feedback on the results of the community survey and to offer their perspective on the ongoing police services review.

Service Alternatives:

The framework presented by the City Manager identified three key areas to focus and strengthen the city response to Mental Health Calls, Domestic Violence, and Homelessness.

In January 2021, the City amended its interlocal agreement with Southwest Texas Regional Advisory Council (STRAC) to support a mental health coordination study from the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute. The final report will be presented to the Public Safety Committee on August 2nd.

This report identifies improvements to the City of San Antonio's first response system, informed by existing data on mental health response and integrated response best practices. The goal of this study is to ensure that in an incident involving an individual in mental health crisis, first responders will have appropriate support to connect the individual and family members to clinical care as quickly as possible to ensure the safety and security of the individual and the community

The work by the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute will serve as a foundation to inform alternative ways to respond to calls that involve individuals with mental health and substance abuse issues who may also be facing homelessness.

Input from Community Health and Equity Committee

The Community Health and Equity Committee in response to the June 2020 Charge from the Mayor regarding: Evaluation of best policing practices to help promote race and gender equity in our community and review mental health de-escalation measures provided recommendations to the Public Safety Committee.

Updates to Public Safety Committee and City Council

The Public Safety Committee has been briefed on this project at four separate occasions in December 2020, January 29th, April 20th and June 23rd. The Mayor and City Council was briefed on May 5th and June 25th.

The June 23rd briefing to the Public Safety Committee included an update on the overall status of the project and timeline, recommendations from the Community Health and Equity Committee, results of community engagement, and framework for recommendations.

Subsequently, at the June 25th Goal Setting Session, the Mayor and Council were briefed on the project and the City Council expressed general consensus of the recommendations' framework outlined in the Police Services Review Project:

- Alternative responses to strengthen the police response to mental health, domestic violence, and homeless calls.
- Enhance transparency. Improve SAPD website and add interactive data tools, disaggregate data within existing reports, and improve timeliness of information.
- Review calls that can be addressed by non-sworn personnel including animal related calls, fireworks, and property found.

Specific recommendation addressing the input from the Mayor and City Council as part of the June 25th Goal Setting Session will be incorporated in the City Manager's Proposed Budget to be presented to the Mayor and City Council on August 12, 2021.

After the Budget is proposed, the Community will have an opportunity to provide feedback on the recommendations during the months of August and September. The Budget is scheduled to be approved on September 16.

A web page was created in the city's website to provide information and reports to the community: <https://www.sanantonio.gov/policeservicesreview/Surveys-Reports>. The reports cited in this memorandum can be found at this link and these include:

- Scientific Survey
- Presentations to Public Safety Committee and City Council
- Community Input Report
- Budget Goal Setting Session Report

ISSUE:

The Public Safety Committee will receive an update on the Police Services Review Project.

ALTERNATIVES:

This is a briefing item only.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This is a briefing item only.

RECOMMENDATION:

This is a briefing item only.