

**ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2021 2:00 PM**

Members Present:	Councilmember Manny Pelaez, <i>Chair, District 8</i> Councilmember Phyllis Viagran, <i>District 3</i> Councilmember Adriana Rocha Garcia, <i>District 4</i> Councilmember Teri Castillo, <i>District 5</i> Councilmember John Courage, <i>District 9</i>
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Call to Order

Chair Pelaez called the meeting to order at 2:02 P.M.

Public Comment

Ronnie Wilson signed up to speak online but did not attend and did not submit a written comment.

1. Approval of the minutes from the Economic and Workforce Development Committee meeting on October 26, 2021.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia moved to approve the minutes of the Economic and Workforce Development Committee Meeting on October 26, 2021. Councilmember Viagran seconded the motion. The motion prevailed unanimously.

2. Briefing and Possible Action on the San Antonio Economic Development Corporation Board vacancy. [Debbie Racca-Sittre, Interim City Clerk]

Brenda Hicks-Sorensen, Director of Economic Development Department provided an overview of the San Antonio Economic Development Corporation Board duties, responsibilities, and board composition. Hicks-Sorensen reported that 18 applications were received and 16 eligible, the subcommittee shortlisted to 5 applicants to be interviewed. City Clerk noted for the record that Courtney Shudak was originally scheduled for an interview but withdrew her application.

Those interviewed were:

1. Sandra Jasso (provided a written statement that was entered into the written record)
2. Erika Moe
3. Karlerik "Erik" Naslund
4. Jose Padilla

All Committee Members participated in the interview by asking questions which the interviewees responded.

Chair Pelaez recessed the committee into executive session at 2:41 for consultation with the City Attorney's Office concerning attorney client matters under Chapter 551 of the Texas Government Code.

Chair Pelaez reconvened the meeting at 3:04 and announced that no official action was taken in Executive Session.

Chair Peleaz thanked the candidates who were interviewed and called for a motion.

Councilmember Viagran moved that Erika Moe be recommended for the appointment of Citizen At-Large to the San Antonio Economic Development Corporation for the remainder of a term to begin upon approval by City Council and to expire on May 31, 2022.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia seconded the motion.

Motion passed unanimously.

3. Briefing on recent activity by the San Antonio Economic Development Corporation (SAEDC) and the San Antonio Military Medical Innovation (SAMMI) Fund. [Alejandra Lopez; Assistant City Manager and Brenda Hicks-Sorensen, Director, Economic Development Department]

Brenda Hicks-Sorensen, Director of Economic Development Department provided an overview of the SAEDC, listed board members, and provided the budget. Hicks-Sorensen introduced Corey Levenson who was hired in October 2019 under a 3-year contract to oversee the SAMMI Fund which was specific economic development tool for medical care of service members. Levenson provided background on SAAMI Fund along with the investment criteria for the fund and the past investment portfolio.

Chair Pelaez cited a positive example of the investments that SAMMI had made and asked how the SAMMI guided the companies. ACM Lopez replied that local innovators often had lack of access to capital and this fund could help them get to the next stage. Levinson mentioned Alamo Angels and other venture firms in San Antonio including the work planned at Port San Antonio to promote medical startups.

Councilmember Castillo wanted to see a commitment to outreach the community with tabling at events so the community were aware of how these investments helped veterans or provided improved care for service members. Levenson explained that many of the products are still under development and not yet for sale.

Councilmember Courage asked about companies that had shuttered and requested return on investment. Lopez explained that the SAEDC still had shares in those companies and was holding onto the equity. Review is currently underway and once completed and shared with the SAEDC board, will be forwarded to City Council.

Councilmember Viagran asked Levenson if he was tracking how these investments could create learning that may not make a financial profit but provided positive industry advancements. Levenson provided some examples of investments but stated that it was probably too early to tell.

There was no action needed for this item.

4. Briefing and update on Launch SA. [Alejandra Lopez, Assistant City Manager; Brenda Hicks-Sorensen, Director, Economic Development]

Janie Barrera, President and CEO of LiftFund in San Antonio provided information on partnerships that the City of San Antonio has made with LiftFund and the impact of those partnerships in helping Small Businesses grow. Barrera also mentioned other initiatives that LiftFund has been managing recently. Barrera introduced Ryan Salts, Director of Launch SA. Salts introduced Launch SA Board Member Jody Newman and Margaret Wilson-Anaglia, Director of the Women's Business Center who attended the meeting.

Salts provided background on Launch SA as the only free program that supported the creation of entrepreneurial businesses. Salts listed the board members and provided statistics on Launch SA's activities including a report that compared FY2020 and FY2021 client demographics. Salts outlined the FY2022 Launch SA program goals and noted that COVID-19 had a negative impact on the program and small businesses such as inability to connect in-person, digital divide, shifting consumer interest and other uncontrollable factors in the market. Community support partners were listed and four specific programs were outlined including Break Fast & Launch, HELM, San Antonio Entrepreneur Week and One Million Cups.

Chair Pelaez and Councilmember Courage commented on the positive work being done by Launch SA.

Councilmember Viagran requested a breakdown of services to individuals over the age of 60 and persons with disabilities to ensure more inclusivity. Councilmember Viagran noted the Travel and Tourism industry really needed help.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia inquired about the workspace at Central Library and whether Geekdom was a location for Launch SA. Salts explained that the Geekdom partnership was more related to education. Councilmember Rocha Garcia suggested Launch SA connect to the outreach done through podcasts by Geekdom.

Councilmember Castillo asked about walk-in requests and whether they had received requests for help with rent or storefront grants. Salts replied that the outreach for these programs was done by the Community Development Corporations and Launch SA would make referrals for assistance to partners. Councilmember Castillo requested a report on the type of assistance being requested by the walk-in customers. Janie Barrera added that funding rent for small businesses through the ARPA funding would be supported. Salts and Barrera would recommend amounts for commercial rent.

Chair Pelaez suggested that the help of attorneys the Young Lawyer's Associations would be useful to small businesses. Salts said that Launch SA makes referrals and has partnered with local law schools to help entrepreneurs create their corporations. Barrera noted a grant from the insurance industry for small businesses that was being administered through Lift Fund. Margaret Wilson-Anaglia announced an upcoming small business event being hosted by Lift Fund's Women's Business Center. Chair Pelaez expressed concern that Asian Business Owners tended to get targeted by scams and asked Launch SA to visit District 8 to provide information and services to this population. Salt said they have worked with Culturingua, Center for Refugee Services and the San Antonio Asian Chamber of Commerce and offered to do more in District 8.

5. Briefing on the Train for Jobs SA workforce development program. [Alejandra Lopez, Assistant City Manager; Michael Ramsey, Director, Workforce Development]

Director of Workforce Development, Michael Ramsey presented an update on the program including testimonials, statistics, demographics of participants, outreach and employer engagement sessions.

Councilmember Viagran thanked Ramsey for going to Brooks and providing information to the community but recommended there should be more help for persons with barriers such as mental health.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked if the holidays would impact employment. Ramsey said seasonal hiring might slow down but there are many other opportunities available. Councilmember Rocha Garcia suggested that higher wages could be the reason that people are no longer working multiple jobs and that was causing a labor shortage. Ramsey said he had not heard this theory but thought it made sense.

Councilmember Castillo asked for data regarding the starting wage for the new hires he reported. Castillo asked for statistics on amount of funding spent.

Councilmember Courage asked for dates of the program which Ramsey replied that the program started in September 2020. Councilmember Courage expressed concern that the program had not placed more people in jobs. Ramsey stated that 1,441 people had completed the program which Councilmember Courage said looked like only 60% had obtained jobs after over a year of the program.

Chair Pelaez provided an example of a potential client. Ramsey provided the eligibility criteria and noted that the client would need to apply.

Chair Pelaez thanked his fellow Councilmembers, the staff and volunteers and wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 4:20 PM.

Manny Pelaez, Chairman

Respectfully Submitted,

*Debbie Racca-Sittre
Interim City Clerk
Office of the City Clerk*