

**ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, JANUARY 10, 2022**

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 10:15 am.

Public Comment

None.

1. Approval of the minutes from the Economic and Workforce Development Committee meeting on November 23, 2021.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia moved to approve the minutes of the Economic and Workforce Development Committee Meeting on November 23, 2021. Councilmember Castillo seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Briefing on proposed opening of a second NXT Level Youth Opportunity Center in Northside Independent School District (NISD) with Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Funds. [Lori Houston, Assistant City Manager; Melody Woosley, Director, Human Services]

Melody Woosley, Human Services Director, provided a briefing on the second NXT Youth Opportunity Center in the Northside Independent School District (NISD) paid for with Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Funds. Woosley provided an overview of the NXT Level program that provided services to youth and young adults from the ages of 16-24. Woosley noted that the program began in February 2019 and stated that in September 2021, NISD approached the City to expand the program. Rebecca Flores, Program Manager with the Department of Human Services, expanded the program overview and reviewed the national recognition of the program, participant profile, program expansion/goals, previous phase outcomes, program participant challenges, and proposed next steps/timeline.

Councilmember Viagran asked of the graduation rates of program participants. Flores stated that statistics were being tracked. Councilmember Viagran stressed the importance of tracking data for future success of participants and links to the program along with participants with disabilities and other challenges. Councilmember Viagran stated that she supported the program.

Councilmember Courage spoke of the challenges of youth being able to participate in these types of programs and stressed the importance of expanding options for these youth. Councilmember Courage

also stressed that it was important to educate the general public regarding these programs, opportunities and the long-term benefits of the program.

Councilmember Castillo noted that there was not a shortage of youth that could participate in this program and asked if the program would be expanded to other school districts. Woosley stated that the City was looking to expand to other school districts and addressed the challenges to expanding the program. Flores stated that the City had partnered with the Municipal Court to identify potential participants and that a waiting list had been created of potential participants. Castillo stated that she supported the program.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia stated that she was pleased with the collaborations with NISD and other entities. Councilmember Rocha Garcia expressed concern over the lower number of students that were able to enroll in the Alamo Promise Program at Alamo College. Flores explained the make-up of participants who were interested in entering the program and noted that staff was working closely with Alamo Colleges to expand programs and other services to be made available to all participants.

Chair Pelaez noted his agreement with the comments of his Committee colleagues and stated that the program was important to continue.

Councilmember Castillo moved to recommend and forward the proposed opening of a second NXT Level Youth Center in NISD to City Council for consideration. Councilmember Courage seconded the motion. The motion prevailed by the following vote:

AYE: 4 - Viagran, Castillo, Pelaez, Courage

ABSTAIN: 1 - Rocha Garcia

3. Briefing on Loan Interest Buy Down Program Partnership with LiftFund. [Alejandra Lopez; Assistant City Manager and Brenda Hicks-Sorensen, Director, Economic Development Department]

Ana Bradshaw, Economic Development Assistant Director, provided an overview of a partnership with LiftFund and the Loan Interest Buydown Program. Bradshaw reviewed the number of loans provided by Council Districts for FY 2016 through FY 2021, loan participant demographics, lending activity and program outcomes. Bradshaw reviewed program outreach efforts and success story testimonials.

Councilmember Castillo noted that the program was great for the community and asked for continued conversations on how to expand the program to individuals with digital divide challenges. Councilmember

Councilmember Courage asked of the break down of different types of businesses participating in the program. Bradshaw stated that staff did not have the current breakdown but would provide it. Councilmember Courage asked for data on the success of businesses still in business and their success and requested that staff provide this data to the Committee.

Councilmember Viagran asked for clarification on the number of loans provided by council district and asked for specific data for Council District 3. Councilmember Viagran stated that expanded outreach was needed in Council District 3 and for individuals with disabilities.

Chair Pelaez noted his concern for the lack of participation in certain council districts and asked that staff review opportunities for expansion. Bradshaw stated that staff would be meeting with the Small Business Advisory Committee to further discuss opportunities to provide outreach and identify other opportunities.

No action was taken on Item 3.

4. Consideration of the creation of a Sub-Committee to review applicants for the Small Business Advisory Commission Vacant At-Large Board Seats. [Debbie Racca-Sittre, Interim City Clerk, Office of the City Clerk]

Brenda Hicks-Sorenson, Economic Development Department Director, spoke of the need for appointments to be made for at-large seats to the SBAC. She requested that a Subcommittee be created to review the 31 submitted applicants.

Councilmember Viagran asked which categories still needed representation on the Committee. Hicks-Sorenson reviewed the needed representation categories. Councilmember Viagran asked who would be participating in the Subcommittee. Councilmember Pelaez stated that Subcommittee Members would include Councilmembers Rocha Garcia and Viagran.

Councilmember Castillo moved to appoint Councilmembers Rocha Garcia and Viagran to the SBAC applicant review Subcommittee. Councilmember Rocha Garcia seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Briefing on the status of the City's economic development incentives guidelines update. [Alejandra Lopez, Assistant City Manager; Brenda Hicks-Sorenson, Director, Economic Development]

Brenda Hicks-Sorenson provided an overview of Economic Development incentive guidelines and themes. Hicks-Sorenson reviewed the actions to date of the program development and associated meetings and reviewed the next steps and timeline of the guidelines report finalization.

Councilmember Courage asked how long the existing policy would be in place and if there were any major concerns with the current policy. Hicks-Sorenson stated that the current policy would be in place until the new policy was approved and that the only concern, she had was to address processes associated with the guidelines and review if there were any challenges for entities to participate in the program. Councilmember Courage asked that identified findings be briefed to the Committee as they arised.

Councilmember Viagran stressed the importance of including stakeholders in conversations especially in the area of digital divide.

Councilmember Castillo stated that it was important to include housing incentives in these programs. Councilmember Castillo asked if the guidelines were only used on 312 and 380 Economic Development Agreements. Assistant City Manager Alex Lopez stated that these guidelines were specific to those type agreements. Councilmember Castillo requested a meeting to further discuss.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked how the Ready to Work Program was being included in the guidelines. Hicks-Sorenson stated that conversations were being held with the Workforce Development Office and its director Mike Ramsey to see what made sense and should be included.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia stated that it was important to include work apprentice programs in the new guidelines and wage requirements. Hicks-Sorenson stated that apprentice programs were being considered in the new guidelines along with wage considerations. Councilmember Rocha Garcia stressed that it was important to address the wage issues and asked if there was a way to speed up implementation of wage requirements. Councilmember Rocha Garcia also noted that gender pay issues needed to be addressed in the guidelines and asked how the guidelines could address these concerns. Hicks-Sorenson stated that the guidelines were in place to make sure that issues were addressed but that continued conversations were had with companies to address these issues. Assistant City Manager Lopez clarified that while the current guidelines did not address gender pay or other issues staff still addressed these issues with entities and had incorporated in previous agreements.

Chair Pelaez stated that he had participated in policy revisions previously and stated that it was important to note if previously policy guidelines were effective or should have addressed certain areas. Hicks-Sorenson stated that it was important to address this and that staff would be reviewing and asking those questions of the previous policy and guidelines.

Chair Pelaez asked if a perception study had been conducted of the program. Hicks-Sorenson stated that a perception study had not been conducted but would be included in the review for March 2022. Hicks-Sorenson stated that a consultant specializing on this type of study would be hired and noted that a solicitation had been conducted and a consultant would be hired to complete the study.

No action was taken on Item 5.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 11:50 AM.

Manny Pelaez, Chairman

Respectfully Submitted,

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