

City of San Antonio



City Council Special Session

No in-person access for this meeting

Wednesday, September 2, 2020

2:00 PM

Videoconference

ROLL CALL

The City Council convened in a Special Meeting. City Clerk Tina J. Flores took the Roll Call noting a quorum with the following Councilmembers present:

PRESENT: 11 - Mayor Nirenberg, Treviño, Andrews-Sullivan, Viagran, Rocha Garcia, Gonzales, Cabello Havrda, Sandoval, Pelaez, Courage, and Perry

Once a quorum is established, the City Council shall consider the following:

1. **Staff presentation of the FY 2021 Proposed Budget focusing on, but not limited to, the following City Departments or Initiatives:** [Erik Walsh, City Manager Scott Huizenga, Director, Management and Budget]

A. Animal Care Services

Animal Care Services Director Heber Lefgren spoke of the need to reinvent service delivery without attracting large crowds at the beginning of COVID-19. He noted that Animal Care Services (ACS) moved quickly to make operational modifications and never stopped responding to calls. He indicated that in order to keep staff and the community safe, the following changes were implemented:

1. Appointments for most services*
 2. Hours of operation*
 3. Space utilization*
 4. Curbside pickup of pets*
 5. COVID-19 signage
 6. Traffic flow through buildings
 7. Rabies quarantine at home
- *permanent changes**

Mr. Lefgren stated that immediately following the issuance of the Stay Home Work Safe Order by Mayor Nirenberg, ACS issued a call for new foster program participants. He reported that 129 pets entered the foster program in March 2020 at a rate 60% higher than expected. He noted that the ACS

live release rate for FY 2020 was expected to be nearly 92%, which would be the highest release rate in San Antonio history. He stated that ACS created a digital strategy designed to support existing pet owners, advertise services available, and build a sense of community online. He noted that in-person dog training classes cancelled for a few months, and the education team worked with the trainers to host pet training question and answer sessions on Facebook Live.

Mr. Lefgren reported that ACS was required by the State of Texas to ensure that any pet released from its care was spayed or neutered. He indicated that it took a few months to create a safe way for surgeries to resume on site and now all required surgeries were completed on site. He noted that for a few months this summer, animals were allowed to leave the ACS campus unsterilized. He stated that individuals with animals that left the campus were required to sign a sterilization agreement and were provided with vouchers for free services redeemable at partner organizations. He indicated that partner facilities temporarily stopped operations due to safety concerns or operated at a reduced volume. He reported that this reduction was aligned with performance metrics and reductions experienced by other cities.

Mr. Lefgren presented performance measures for ACS, as follows:

| ACS Performance Metrics | | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| | FY 2019 Actuals | FY 2020 Target | FY 2020 Estimate | FY 2021 Target |
| Call for service requests | 118,759 | 101,000 | 100,352 | 101,000 |
| Intake | 32,630 | 31,000 | 28,130 | 28,130` |
| Live Release Rate | 91% | 90% | 91% | 90% |
| Pets returned to owners | 8,059 | 7,100 | 8,015 | 7,100 |
| Pets rescued | 11,983 | 12,200 | 11,160 | 12,200 |
| Pets adopted | 7,551 | 7,800 | 6,378 | 7,800 |
| Microchips | 20,506 | 20,000 | 15,462 | 15,000 |
| S/N surgeries performed | 41,759 | 45,455 | 34,655 | 36,955 |

Mr. Lefgren stated that the FY 2021 proposed Budget for ACS was \$16.1 million which was allocated to: Live release (\$2.75 million); Shelter (\$2.16 million); Field (\$4.56 million); Clinic (\$4.54 million); Education and community outreach (\$0.65 million); and Administration and support services (\$1.47 million). He reported that there would be no reduction in the FY 2021 proposed Budget for spay/neuter services. He noted that the Budget included the cost neutral conversion of 11 temporary positions within ACS to full-time positions.

Mr. Lefgren reviewed the following ACS equity commitments:

- Continue to develop an equity-oriented fee structure for animal reclaim fees and payment plans for residents who were experiencing economic challenges
- Assess ACS and equity-driven data to provide more targeted services to low-income communities while still meeting service level requirements
- Continue to partner with key agencies and organizations to provide resources and education to marginalized residents

- Deepen equity capacity internally to more effectively provide equitable services and review policies with an equity lens

Mr. Lefgren recounted an instance where 12 dogs, 16 chickens, 2 Ferrets, 1 cat, 1 parrot, and 1 duck were housed at ACS for six months and how ACS staff cared for them. He stated that due to the extreme weather in the Gulf of Mexico, ACS was asked to assist with the City’s hurricane response. He noted that over the past 10 days, ACS had provided service at three new locations, and as of September 1, 2020, ACS had provided emergency housing for 115 pets of evacuees.

B. Development Services

Michael Shannon reported that the Development Services Department (DSD) had an enterprise fund for development activity such as construction and permitting which comprised two-thirds of the department Budget. He indicated that code enforcement services comprised one-third of the department Budget and was funded by the General Fund.

Mr. Shannon stated that the FY 2021 proposed Budget for DSD was \$49.5 million. He reported that the Budget for the Development Services Fund was \$35.2 million and revenues were expected to decrease. He stated that the Budget for the General Fund and grants was \$14.3 million and there would be no changes to code enforcement services. He noted that due to the recession, DSD was projecting a revenue loss of \$3 million in FY 2021. He reported that in order to mitigate the revenue loss, DSD was holding 37 vacant positions, cutting operational expenses, and utilizing reserve funding.

Mr. Shannon stated that the major accomplishments by DSD during COVID-19 included:

- One-Stop changes limiting face-to-face interaction
- Emergency declaration enforcement by code
- Virtual Board and Commission meetings
- Telecommuting for staff without negatively impacting levels of service
- Remote video inspections
- 30-day educational phase for Code Enforcement

Mr. Shannon reported that the BuildSA Project would transition service functions into a sole address-based permitting, zoning, and code enforcement system. He indicated that line development zoning was complete and the remaining business would go live at the end of November 2020. He stated that the Strike Team was comprised of a team of inspectors which addressed unsafe renovation and construction and assisted customers with compliance. He noted that the City Code was updated to include MF-33 and RM-4 zoning designations, baby changing stations, and the composition of the Board of Adjustment.

Mr. Shannon presented the performance measures for DSD, as follows:

| Development Services | FY 2020 Target | FY 2020 Estimate |
|--|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Building inspections performed as scheduled | 95% | 98% |
| Complex commercial plan review (calendar days) | 18 | 15 |

| | | |
|--|----|----|
| Initial residential plan review (business days) | 3 | 2 |
| Calendar days for major plats technical review | 20 | 28 |

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| Code Enforcement | FY 2020 Target | FY 2020 Estimate |
|--|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Proactive cases – Tier 1 and Tier 2 | 65% | 70% |
| Response time – Tier 1 | 2 days | 2 days |
| Response time – Tier 2 | 3 days | 3 days |
| 45-day compliance rate – Tier 1 and Tier 2 | 90% | 84% |
| Graffiti abated | 50,000 | 52,497 |
| Response time – graffiti | 3 days | 1 day |

Mr. Shannon highlighted a few larger construction projects such as Credit Human, Heritage Apartments, high rise hotels, and the Cavender Building. He reviewed the accomplishments for DSD related to the Budget Equity Tool:

- Offered free consultation services for building permitting, zoning, and code enforcement to low-income homeowners and small businesses which need the most assistance
- Supported property owners that experienced hardships, low-income households, senior citizens, and homeowners with disabilities to bring properties into compliance through the Compliance Assistance Fund and Internal Cleanup Process

Mr. Shannon reviewed the strengths of DSD through FY 2021 Budget equity commitments:

- Analyzing racial and economic data to ensure that most of the abatement assistance met the needs of low-income property owners and people of color
- Exploring different ways to reduce permitting fees and incentivize affordable housing development, in order to align with the City’s affordable housing goals
- Launch a thorough Department Equity Assessment which would result in the development of a 2-year Strategic Equity Plan

Mr. Shannon stated that the FY 2021 goals for DSD included:

- Completion of the BuildSA Project
- Commercial trade permit fee change
- Monitor and participate in the 87th Texas Legislative session
- Budget Equity Tool
- Restart City Code update processes

Councilmember Treviño requested discussions on prioritizing code violations so that violations not related to safety and health could be given six months rather than 30 days to bring their property into compliance. He asked for the same considerations for demolitions. Mr. Shannon stated that DSD was prioritizing code violations and demolitions. Councilmember Treviño asked what ACS could do to help to shelter pets of homeless individuals. Mr. Lefgren stated that ACS was working with the Department of Human Services and other organizations to provide services, and space at ACS was provided for individuals in need of temporary housing.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda requested the findings of the SASpeakUp Survey regarding ACS. Ms. Villagómez reported that based on the priorities of the public, ACS was ranked 8 in the top 10. Jeff

Coyle noted that open-ended comments submitted by citizens were distributed to Councilmembers on September 1, 2020.

Councilmember Viagran asked what the \$100,000 increase in the Budget for ACS would be utilized for. Mr. Lefgren stated that expenses had increased on two of their contracts and there were changes associated with updates of small contracts. Councilmember Viagran asked if there were a backlog of code enforcement cases in Municipal Court due to COVID-19. Mr. Shannon stated that staff was working with Municipal Court and hearings were held remotely to address the backlog. He stated that he would provide the number of cases affected.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked what the three positions being added by DSD would be utilized for. Mr. Shannon stated that the three positions would perform development traffic reviews. She asked why the target for graffiti abatement was reduced in the FY 2021 proposed Budget for DSD. Mr. Shannon stated that as the Budget was being developed, four vacancies in the Graffiti Team were frozen, which accounted for the reduction. He noted that DSD had four new team members supported by the HOT fund that would remain on staff for a year and would bring the number of graffiti abatements closer to the targeted goal in FY 2020.

Councilmember Andrews-Sullivan asked how ACS would reach residents without digital access. Mr. Lefgren stated that available funding would be utilized to reach residents on-site, through radio, and through billboards or other mechanisms.

Councilmember Courage asked what the balance was in the Enterprise Fund. Mr. Shannon replied that \$7.3 million was projected for the fund which would cover operational expenses for three months. He added that \$2 million of that would be utilized in the FY 2021 proposed Budget.

Councilmember Andrews-Sullivan requested a breakdown by Council District of the number of ACS calls, pickups, and locations. Mr. Lefgren stated that he would provide that information. She asked how issues of dogs not at the reported location were handled. Mr. Lefgren stated that ACS staff worked with residents to identify the patterns of the animals. Councilmember Andrews-Sullivan asked of the status of residential permits placed on hold. Mr. Shannon replied that residential permits were not placed on hold, but two weeks after the building closed, there were challenges with homeowners and small contractors filling out forms with the assistance of DSD staff.

Councilmember Gonzales asked if funding was available for programs to provide training and fence repair to pet owners. Dr. Lefgren stated that ACS staff worked with Municipal Court to assist pet owners without resources. Councilmember Gonzales asked if there were any policy changes that could be made to reduce demolitions. Mr. Shannon stated that demolitions were utilized as a last resort and had to ensue, but staff would try to find new solutions.

Councilmember Pelaez recognized ACS for its work to increase the live release rate and all of its accomplishments.

Councilmember Perry asked how the decrease in sales of permits for residential and commercial properties aligned with the Budget. Mr. Shannon replied that 37 positions were frozen, operational expenses would be reduced, and \$2 million from the Enterprise Fund would be utilized to mitigate the revenue loss.

Councilmember Sandoval asked when the results of the review of SAPD calls would be available to

discern which calls could be distributed to Code Compliance or ACS. City Manager Walsh reported that the results would be available by April of 2021.

Mayor Nirenberg requested the number of animals picked up and euthanized. Mr. Lefgren reported that the euthanasia rate was expected to be 900 by the end of the year, and the number of dead animals picked up by the Solid Waste Management Department was expected to be 20,000.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mayor Nirenberg recessed the meeting at 4:07 pm to discuss the following items:

- A.** Economic development negotiations pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 551.087 (economic development).
- B.** The purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 551.072 (real property).
- C.** Legal issues related to collective bargaining pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 551.071 (consultation with attorney).
- D.** Legal issues related to litigation involving the City pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 551.071 (consultation with attorney).
- E.** Discuss legal issues relating to COVID-19 preparedness pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 551.071 (consultation with attorney)].

Mayor Nirenberg reconvened the meeting at 4:34 pm and announced that no action was taken.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further discussion, Mayor Nirenberg adjourned the meeting at 4:35 pm.

APPROVED

RON NIRENBERG
Mayor

Attest:

TINA J. FLORES
Acting City Clerk