

City of San Antonio



City Council Special Session

No in-person access for this meeting

Wednesday, September 9, 2020

2:00 PM

Videoconference

ROLL CALL

City Clerk Tina 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

1. Staff presentation on initiatives, programs and policies included in FY 2021 Proposed Budget. [Erik Walsh, City Manager; Scott Huizenga, Director, Management and Budget]

Ana Bradshaw, COVID-19 Financial & Performance Liaison, updated the Mayor and City Council on the ongoing COVID-19 Community Recovery & Resiliency Plan and the City's emergency response. She noted that the presentation was an extension of the ongoing monitoring and reporting efforts. She reiterated that the total funding allocated toward the City's response and community recovery effort was \$493.5 million. She stated that Legislative negotiations on an additional COVID-19 Relief Bill have been stalled since August 2020. She noted that lawmakers returned from recess this week and negotiations were expected to resume. She outlined the following five Pillars:

Workforce Development

Ms. Bradshaw stated that the outreach and enrollment efforts were launched on August 31, 2020 with a goal of serving up to 10,000 residents from targeted areas by September 2021. She noted that the Budget included \$44.1 million for participant stipends and \$450 would be provided directly to the participant in addition to the childcare and wraparound services that were available.

Digital Inclusion

Ms. Bradshaw stated that the Connected Beyond the Classroom initiative was moving forward. She mentioned that it would include both tactical and strategic efforts in order to build an equitable and long-term solution. She noted that both long term and short-term solutions would be implemented to address the immediate needs across the community.

Small Business Support

Ms. Bradshaw reiterated that the City was awarded the first two rounds of Microbusiness Grants with a

third round scheduled to be awarded by the end of September 2020. She noted that as of September 4, 2020, nearly \$27 million in grants had been awarded to local small businesses, non-profits, and members of the arts community.

Housing Security

Ms. Bradshaw noted that the Case Management Portal was scheduled to complete the first phase to City departments and should be fully implemented by mid-2022. She stated that the Financial Housing Counseling and Family Resource Center had assisted over 700 households with housing assistance, and 883 clients with financial counseling and benefits navigation. She provided a breakdown of the assistance given to clients and households as well as budgetary information. She mentioned that the largest portion of the Housing Security Pillar was allocated to the Emergency Housing Assistance Program. She outlined the Centers for Disease Control's (CDC) Eviction Moratorium enforcement.

Health Implementation Plan

Ms. Bradshaw reported that Texas Health Trace was fully implemented and automatically connected with the State electronic lab reporting. She stated that a \$4 million contract was issued with the UT Health School of Public Health to fund 200 case investigators and 200 contract tracers.

Ms. Bradshaw noted the three key challenges moving forward: (1) No immediate plan for providing additional federal funding to cities; (2) Emergency Housing Assistance funds will be exhausted in early October 2020; and (3) the need to fund the ongoing health response to the pandemic after December 30, 2020 when the Coronavirus Relief Fund expires.

Ms. Bradshaw provided the following recommendations: (1) Allocate an additional \$21.9 million to fund palliative systems along with making some modifications to the program eligibility; (2) relocate \$10 million within the Coronavirus Relief Fund; and (3) request an additional \$1 million in funding from the San Antonio Housing Trust. She noted that the recommendations would require City Council approval of an item to be considered on the September 17, 2020 City Council agenda.

Mayor Nirenberg stated that he was concerned about changing the eligibility criteria which could prevent some individuals from receiving assistance. He asked staff to speak to the possibility of extending assistance well beyond what was currently offered. He noted that it was important to make sure that the City had the opportunity to deliver assistance to everyone who applied, regardless of their circumstances and eligibility.

Councilmember Andrews-Sullivan requested an update of the matrix system for the National Nonpayment of Rental History. She requested a breakdown of the businesses that had received funds from the Small Business Grants to be categorized by Council District. Staff stated that they would provide that information. Councilmember Andrews-Sullivan mentioned she was comfortable with moving the \$10 million but requested a monthly report in order to identify potential savings.

Councilmember Courage asked how many more small businesses could be assisted with the remaining funds based on the average award. Director of Economic Development Alex Lopez stated that 709 businesses were estimated to be funded with remaining funds. Councilmember Courage requested a breakdown of funding allocations. He noted that many people need help, but it should be given to those with the absolute greatest need.

Councilmember Trevino stated in response to the eligibility requirement based on the Area Median Income (AMI), that no one should be excluded and the most vulnerable should be prioritized. He noted his concern about evictions, and he was glad to see the Right to Council Program being utilized. He asked when planning would start for possible Phase 4 and 5. City Manager Walsh stated that staff would need to monitor the situation and possible additional federal funds to best determine how to distribute and fund all programs among the entire health response to the pandemic.

Ms. Bradshaw stated that the City was working with ITSD on the development of a dashboard with both financial and performance related data that would roll out with the financial report that to be presented later in the month.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked if the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) grant was still available, and if it could be shared with the school districts that were in need. Ms. Bradshaw stated that the PPE grants that have been received have been largely specific to PPE for first responders. Councilmember Rocha Garcia noted her concern about the average age (39) of residents receiving workforce development literature information. Veronica Soto, Director of Neighborhood and Housing Services, reiterated that the average age was 39 but the number was skewed to account for children. She stated that additional demographic information would be provided.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked what kind of financial counseling was offered to residents. Ms. Soto stated that her department partners with other City departments and they are assisted by housing navigators who help families figure out what programs are available. She noted that the Department of Human Services also has financial counselors who assist with additional benefits navigation.

Councilmember Gonzales asked if the funds that were being discussed were all CARES Act funds. Deputy City Manager Maria Villagomez stated that the funds being discussed were CARES Act funds and additional grants received. She noted that a detailed budget by line item and funding source would be distributed to the City Council prior to their vote to adopt the Fiscal Year 2021 Budget. Councilmember Gonzales stated it was important to have clarity about where the dollars were being spent prior to the pivotal City budget adoption vote.

Councilmember Perry stated that he supported what the City Staff proposed. He mentioned that a sliding scale based on AMI would extend the life of the program. He asked staff to look at the scale to see its potential impact to the budget. He requested more money to assist small businesses, specifically property owners who have tenants that are not paying rent at the moment.

Councilmember Viagran stated that it was known that there were not enough funds to address the great need in the community and noted that staff was doing their best with the resources available. She inquired of the funds for the Digital Inclusion pillar. ITSD Director Craig Hopkins stated that the digital inclusion pillar encompassed two things, the building of the private LTE network using City assets and the negotiation with cable providers for students to utilize their existing infrastructure at a reduced rate.

Councilmember Viagran noted the importance of workforce development and training within our own community. She suggested using those who have been furloughed or are out of work to receive training to become contact tracers as to be able to assist with workforce development and the health of the community simultaneously.

Councilmember Sandoval thanked City Manager Walsh and City Staff regarding securing funds for 2021 to continue providing needed assistance to the community through the five pillars of the health

response to the pandemic. She noted that there were many competing priorities and COVID-19 had created a lot of emergencies. She expressed that Housing Security was a priority. She mentioned that the Metro Health Department had roughly 75% of their workforce dedicated to COVID-19 response and noted that had created a backlog of things that the department would normally be completing if not for the pandemic. She noted her concern for the lack of funding that was needed to manage the pandemic into 2021 and beyond. She stated her support for Councilmember Viagran's suggestion regarding merging workforce development with the need for additional contact tracers within the community.

Councilmember Pelaez noted his support regarding merging workforce development with the need for additional contact tracers within our own community. He noted that these skills could translate into future job opportunities. He stated that the City needed to rely on the resources they had and not the resources they wish they had. He mentioned that uplifting workforce development would in turn uplift small businesses, and small businesses would benefit workers that need jobs.

Mayor Nirenberg stated his support for Councilmember Perry's suggestion regarding the gradient sliding scale in light of the fact that these funds were dwindling. City Manager Walsh stated that he appreciated all the feedback provided by the City Council today as he wanted to ensure all objectives were achieved. He requested that the Mayor and City Councilmembers provide all requested budget amendments to his office by the end of the week by close of business.

RECESSED

Mayor Nirenberg stated the Executive Session posted for today would be continued until Thursday, September 10, 2020. There being no further discussion, he recessed the meeting at 3:57 pm. He reconvened the meeting on Thursday, September 10, 2020 at 9:48 am.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mayor Nirenberg recessed the meeting at 9:48 am 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).

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Nirenberg reconvened the meeting at 11:49 am and noted that no action was taken in Executive Session. There being no further discussion, he adjourned the meeting at 11:49 am.

APPROVED

RON NIRENBERG

Mayor

Attest:

TINA J. FLORES

City Clerk

DRAFT