

City of San Antonio



City Council Special Session

No in-person access for this meeting

Tuesday, August 18, 2020

2:00 PM

Videoconference

ROLL CALL

The City Council convened in a Special Meeting. Acting 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. Human Services Department and Delegate Agencies

Melody Woosley stated that the Department of Human Services (DHS) worked to improve the quality of life for vulnerable residents to ensure that they had the opportunity to achieve the City's vision of prosperity for all. She noted that the DHS's work focused on the following four long-term goals:

1. Children and youth: safe, healthy, ready to succeed
2. Individuals and families: secure, stable, strong
3. Seniors: healthy, engaged, and independent
4. Homelessness: rare, brief, and non-recurring

Ms. Woosley indicated that delegate agencies, Faith-Based Initiatives, and Behavioral Health Initiatives supported direct services provided by DHS and maximized the department's impact. She noted that DHS was committed to advancing equity to more effectively impact communities of color and low-income residents. She reviewed the following FY 2020 Budget Equity Tool accomplishments:

- Developed building blocks for transparency and assessing equity-driven strategies
- Targeted investments to areas of highest need based on data
- Utilized the Equity Action Tool to allocate COVID-19 resources and participated in COVID Equity Action Team

- Formed a department Equity Action Team

Ms. Woosley reviewed the following FY 2021 Budget equity commitments:

- Collect and evaluate equity-driven data to inform decisions
- Prioritize resources and target services to impact communities of color
- Support community engagement and input to improve services
- Provide leadership opportunities to program participants
- Incorporate equity approach to door-to-door engagement strategy

Ms. Woosley stated that on March 13, 2020, DHS closed all public-facing facilities. She reported that in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, DHS realigned its in-person services to include senior services, homeless services, and the Financial Housing Recovery Center. She noted that all other services such as Head Start, CCS, NXT Level, VITA, utility assistance, and financial counseling transitioned to virtual or telephone-based assistance.

Ms. Woosley reported that the DHS FY 2021 proposed Budget was \$185 million which included \$41.4 million from the General Fund and \$144 million from annual Federal grants and CARES Act funding for COVID-19 response and recovery. She stated that the proposed Budget increased by \$9 million from FY 2020 and included 379 positions which increased by 6 General Fund positions from FY 2020 to increase homeless outreach.

Ms. Woosley reported that DHS provided a continuum of early care and education programs which served over 21,000 children, ages 0-12, daily. She indicated that \$130 million was allocated to support Head Start, Early Head Start, child care services, the Ambassador Program, NXT level, SAEP/Café College, and delegate agencies.

Ms. Woosley stated that the key priorities for family strengthening were financial security, and domestic violence intervention and prevention. She noted \$12 million was allocated to programs which reduced domestic violence and stabilized and improved the financial security of San Antonio residents by providing an emergency safety net, connections to public benefits, and financial security.

Ms. Woosley reported that \$1.1 million was allocated to support nine domestic violence prevention and intervention programs and to address the priorities of the Domestic Violence Strategic Plan. She indicated that three Financial Empowerment Centers transitioned to Financial Housing and Recovery Centers in partnership with the Neighborhood Housing Services Department (NHSD) and the Family Service Association. She stated that this expanded financial counseling to include emergency housing assistance, housing counseling, public benefits navigation, connections to small business assistance, and workforce training. She reviewed the utility assistance program, VITA, and referrals to benefits connection.

Ms. Woosley stated that DHS would continue to operate 10 comprehensive Senior Centers and 42 part-time Nutrition Sites. She noted that two new Senior Centers would open in 2022 and at that time it was estimated that 95% of the City's seniors would live within five miles of a comprehensive Senior Center. She indicated that it was anticipated that almost 30,000 seniors would be served this year. She reported that food services to provide center-based meals for pick up and home delivery meal options were conducted at the Senior Centers. She reported that the comprehensive Senior Centers were converted to serve as hub sites for meal distribution, cooling centers, and food commodity distributions. She noted that partners worked to provide virtual programming and services that seniors could access

from their homes.

Ms. Woosley reported that the Budget included \$20.7 million to address homelessness which was an increase of \$7.7 million and did not include costs incurred by SAPD, the Public Works Department, and SAFD for the homeless. She indicated that the Emergency Solutions Grant CARES Act funding provided an opportunity to strategically respond to COVID-19 and to reduce homelessness. She stated that the COVID-19 Community Recovery and Resiliency Plan housing pillar, in alignment with existing initiatives and the Homeless Strategic Plan, provided a framework to effectively address homelessness over the next two years by: 1) Expanding outreach; 2) Improving access to shelter; and 3) Ensuring provider coordination. She noted that DHS would continue to operate and manage the Homeless Connections Hotline and would continue to provide homeless resource hubs. She indicated that \$6 million from the COVID-19 Community Recover and Resiliency Plan (Plan) would provide three to 24 months of rental, utility, and intensive case management assistance for approximately 1,000 individuals and families.

Ms. Woosley stated that the annual point in time count, which was held in January 2020, showed that the homeless population had increased before the COVID-19 Pandemic. She reported that the point in time count for 2019 was 2,872 and had increased to 2,932 in 2020. She indicated that funding supported 11 Homeless Outreach Teams and stipends for 11 Social Work Interns to create 10 District Homeless Outreach Teams, plus one additional team for the downtown area. She noted that the Homeless Outreach Teams would serve as liaisons to each Council District to provide intensive outreach and case management services to connect to the City's estimated 1,300 unsheltered homeless.

Ms. Woosley stated that DHS would partner with SAPD, and the Office of the City Clerk to improve and expand rapid identification recovery. She reported that the City Manager's proposed FY 2021 Budget included \$6 million to improve provider services to individuals with mental health and substance abuse disorders through SAPD, Metro Health, SAFD, and DHS. She indicated that DHS co-sponsored the Pathway to Hope Annual Conference which would focus on the impact of COVID-19 and mental health this year.

Ms. Woosley reported that the FY 2021 DHS key priorities included:

- Financial counseling and recovery
- Strategic Plan roll-out
- Expanded outreach
- Data informed decision making
- Nutritional security and wellness
- Reducing barriers to college and careers

Ms. Woosley stated that the priorities were centered around embedding equity in programs and prioritizing resources to impact communities of color. She noted that consolidated funding for human and workforce development services was a combined process that involved DHS and the Economic Development Department (EDD). She indicated that the funding maximized the department's ability to impact the quality of life for residents, focusing on communities in need and supporting the key priorities of DHS and EDD. She stated that this year, delegate agencies assisted in helping local families through the health, safety, and economic challenges faced by the community. She reported that delegate agencies adjusted their services and programs to meet the new restrictions through revised service delivery models or new technology.

Ms. Woosley reported that due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the consolidated funding Request for Proposals (RFPs) process was postponed for FY 2021 and FY 2022 and the RFP would be issued in spring of 2021. She indicated that recommendations would be based on performance of the agencies in FY 2019 and FY 2020, alignment with the Plan, and service delivery adjustments.

Ms. Woosley stated that the proposed FY 2021 Budget included \$24.3 million for human workforce development services agencies. She reported that \$5.7 million was allocated for children and youth success; \$1.9 million was allocated for strengthening families; \$10.7 million was allocated for ending homelessness; \$1.1 million was allocated for senior independence; and \$2.9 million was allocated for workforce development. She noted that funding recommendations included a reserve of \$1.5 million to be awarded in FY 2021 to support programs and agencies who provided enhanced or increased services aligned with the Plan. She reported that an additional \$500,000 was allocated for the Mental Health and Wellness Initiative to address gaps in the local mental health system and to address unforeseen needs. She indicated that FY 2021 funding recommendations included an increase of \$377,000 which was related to an increase in grant funding. She stated that recommendations included 56 agencies and 86 DHS programs. She added that the FY 2021 proposed Budget did not include funding for two programs as the result of performance concerns in FY 2019 and FY 2021.

B. Public Health Department

Assistant City Manager Colleen Bridger stated that Metro Health had three divisions: Communicable Disease; Community Health, and Environmental Health and Operations. She noted that a fourth division was included in the City Manager's Budget focusing on violence prevention. She reported that the strategic planning process identified four priorities which included adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and trauma informed care, violence prevention, nutrition, and access to care.

Dr. Bridger reported that the FY 2021 proposed Budget for Metro Health was \$76 million. She noted that this amount included \$31.5 in CARES Act related grants, \$10.5 million for environmental health and operations, \$23.1 million for community health, and \$11.2 million for communicable disease. She stated that approximately 60% of the Operating Budget came from grants and the department had seen a decrease in Medicaid Waiver funding. She reminded the City Council that the Medicaid Waiver funding would continue to decrease and would end in 2022. She added that the Medicaid Waiver funding represented approximately \$8 million of the department's \$25 million in grants.

Dr. Bridger stated that the \$3.6 million increase in the General Fund Budget was for the creation of the Violence Prevention Division and for healthy corner stores. She noted that funding for COVID-19 for FY 2021 was \$31.5 million and the majority of that funding must be spent by the end of December 2020. She reported that the recommended Budget for the Violence Prevention Division was \$8.9 million and the following focus areas were identified the Budget:

1. Gun violence prevention and intervention
2. Domestic violence prevention and response
3. Child and youth violence prevention

Dr. Bridger indicated that the Budget included delegate agency funding for domestic violence.

Dr. Bridger reported that the Healthy Corner Stores Initiative was piloted in Council District 3 through a partnership with the University of the Incarnate Word. She indicated that an expansion of the initiative of \$120,000 would include the creation of three stores in Council Districts 1, 2, 4, and 7 and continue

the work in Council District 3. She noted that these areas were a food desert, which was a census tract with low income with residents that lived more than a mile from the nearest supermarket.

Dr. Bridger stated that due to the fact that no large gatherings could be held due to COVID-19, funding for Síclovía (\$95,000) was decreased in the FY 2021 proposed Budget. She noted that Síclovía would be smaller and neighborhood-based. She indicated that two pilot events would be held from March to September 2021.

Dr. Bridger reviewed the following accomplishments from the FY 2020 Budget Equity Tool:

1. Advanced racial equity initiatives through the Office of Health Equity and the Racial & Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) grant
2. Established an Equity Training Team
3. Launched the Department Equity Assessment

Dr. Bridger presented the following FY 2021 Budget equity commitments:

1. Embed equity in COVID-19 response and recovery prioritizing the most marginalized populations
2. Complete Department Equity Assessment and develop an Equity Action Plan
3. Improve the inclusion of Black/African-American and other communities of color to help inform anti-racist public health policies
4. Address racial health disparities through cross-departmental collaborations

Dr. Bridger reported that Councilmember Andrews-Sullivan and Councilmember Sandoval submitted a Resolution recognizing racism as a public health crisis in June 2020 which was supported by a number of Council District offices. She indicated that the Resolution was brought before the Governance Council Committee and then to the Community Health and Equity Council Committee on August 7, 2020. She stated that it was included in the Budget presentation by Metro Health and would be brought before the City Council on August 20, 2020 for consideration.

Mayor Nirenberg stated that he was pleased that the Resolution was brought forward.

Councilmember Andrews-Sullivan stated that the community and community activists supported the Resolution. She noted that 81 cities had adopted a Resolution declaring racism as a public health crisis. She asked if the family strengthening tool assisted families with meals and getting services virtually. Ms. Woosley stated that in March 2020, DHS switched from in-person to virtual services and individuals who could not access technology were met with in person. She added that staff would refer individuals with no access to technology to locations where it was available. Councilmember Andrews-Sullivan requested survey data for seniors by Council District. She asked if virtual appointments for mental health care were available for the homeless and individuals receiving assistance from Haven for Hope. Dr. Bridger replied that they were engaged in telepsychiatry.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked where the staff at Senior Centers were working. Ms. Woosley stated that they were still working at the Senior Centers to distribute meals. She added that a number of Senior Center staff were quarantined and the Parks and Recreation Department were providing staff to fill in.

Councilmember Gonzales asked how much had been spent on housing individuals in hotels. Ms.

Woosley stated that the hotels were paid \$50.00 per night per person. She noted that there was security, and meal distribution costs and indicated that the costs to date were approximately \$2 million. She added that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was paying for the hotels for the first two months and staff were working with FEMA to extend that for as long as possible.

Councilmember Treviño asked how much funding was included in the DHS Budget for immigrants, undocumented individuals, and the refugee population. Ms. Woosley stated that there was no specific Budget for those populations but all DHS programs, to some extent, served those populations.

Councilmember Sandoval asked how many Metro Health Staff were deployed to COVID-19 versus their regular job duties. Dr. Bridger responded that 75% of the Metro Health Staff were deployed to COVID-19. She noted that if the case numbers continued to be low, staff would transition to their regular duties beginning with the Asthma Program on September 1, 2020. She added that additional staff would transition to their regular duties if the case numbers remained low. Councilmember Sandoval requested that preparation for immunizations, the flu, and COVID-19 be discussed at either a Committee meeting or at the City Council B session.

Councilmember Viagran asked how many positions in Metro Health were funded by the CARES Act grant. Dr. Bridger replied that 89 temporary positions were funded by CARES Act-related grants.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda asked if members of the Homeless Outreach Team would provide 24-hour service in response to calls by citizens. Ms. Woosley stated that they would not provide 24-hour service but would provide emergency services on weekends and evenings. Councilmember Cabello Havrda asked what the hours were for the Homeless Outreach Team. Ms. Woosley stated that staff were working on the schedule and would provide it to City Council once completed. She added that delegate agency partners could provide services.

Councilmember Pelaez spoke in support of Faith-Based Initiatives. He asked for the status of the mobile showers. Ms. Woosley reported that there was a shower initiative at Christian Assistance Ministries which provided showers and the mobile shower purchased by the City was scheduled for delivery in mid to late August 2020.

Councilmember Courage requested an update to include the number of individuals at Haven for Hope, the number of individuals progressing through Haven for Hope, the number of individuals in the Haven for Hope courtyard, and the number of individuals living on the streets.

Councilmember Perry expressed concern regarding the amount of funding devoted to homelessness and the costs of cleaning up encampments for individuals and businesses. He cautioned against duplication of efforts by delegate agencies.

Mayor Nirenberg thanked Metro Health Staff for their efforts in keeping the community safe. He stated that he did not want the Resolution declaring racism as a public health crisis to be a symbolic act. He indicated that some of the greatest health disparities in the City pointed back to the red lining policies of many generations ago. Mayor Nirenberg asked how outcomes related to the Budget Equity Tool would be communicated to the City Council. City Manager Walsh reported that equity was incorporated into the work plans of the departments and into basic elements. Mayor Nirenberg requested that staff work with the Office of Equity to identify outcomes. He expressed interest in the American Gateways Program. Ms. Woosley reported that the FY 2021 proposed Budget included \$150,000 for legal services which would go through the American Gateways Program and through RAICES for immigrants.

Councilmember Viagran expressed support for opening a healthy corner store in Council District 6 in the Edgewood area.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further discussion, Mayor Nirenberg adjourned the meeting at 4:44 pm.

APPROVED

RON NIRENBERG
Mayor

Attest:

TINA J. FLORES
Acting City Clerk