

City of San Antonio



Meeting Minutes City Council Special Meeting

Webex Meeting - No in-person public access to this meeting

Tuesday, April 14, 2020

1:00 PM

via Videoconference

To protect the health of the public and limit the potential spread of COVID 19, the City Council held this meeting via telephone conference call. These meeting standards are based upon the various suspended provisions of the Open Meetings Act issued by the Texas Governor in response to the COVID 19 crisis. These modified standards shall remain in place until further notice or until the state disaster declaration expires or is otherwise terminated by the Texas Governor. The meeting was available to the public at AT&T channel 99, Grande channel 20, Spectrum channel 21, digital antenna 16, www.sanantonio.gov/TVSA and www.Facebook.com/COSAGOV or by calling (210) 207- 5555 (password 1111).

ROLL CALL

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 was established, the City Council shall consider the following item.

Mayor Nirenberg provided a summary of the City of San Antonio's Webex Council Meeting.

1. Briefing on the City's COVID-19 response and preparedness and updates on the COVID-19 Community Action Working Groups.

Metro Health Director Dawn Emerick described the six elements of the COVID-19 response:

1. COVID-19 hotline
2. Screening and testing
3. Case investigations contact tracing, surveillance, and analysis
4. Health alerts, education, and policy

5. Prevention and enforcement
6. Wraparound recovery response

Dr. Emerick outlined the Epidemiological Process and stated that once a positive test result for COVID-19 was received, the data was entered into several databases and an investigator was assigned to begin disease intervention. She noted that after the interview was completed, data entry occurred and the investigator performed the investigation utilizing the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) COVID-19 investigation form and the Metro Health contact tracing forms.

Dr. Emerick stated that the investigation would be finalized and all data entered and the case sent to an Immunization Supervisor who would create a contact file. She noted that a nurse would then notify medium-risk contacts of their potential exposure.

Dr. Emerick stated that patients were tracked from symptom onset and a nurse would complete the 14-day follow up. She noted that if the patient recovered this was noted and if not, follow up would be conducted in seven days. She presented two hypothetical positive cases of COVID-19 and reviewed maps by zip code:

- Self-screening
- Hotline calls
- Positive cases
- Overlay

Fire Chief Charles Hood stated that data on suspected COVID-19 positive contacts by the San Antonio Fire Department (SAFD) were collected from Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Electronic Patient Care Reports. He added that the 320 plus COVID-19 positive cases had been identified since March 24, 2020 when tracking began. He reported that there were 200 COVID-19 positive cases transported from March 24, 2020 through April 13, 2020. He noted that efforts to protect SAFD Personnel included:

- Call screening procedures established at dispatch
- Temperature and symptom screening (3 times per day)
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) exceeding CDC recommendations
- Ambulance decontamination sites established
- Back-up testing process established through SAFD Wellness Center
- Automated exposure reporting process
- Information sharing with personnel and other agencies
- Protective measures for critical infrastructure
- Infection Care Facility for First Responders

Chief Hood stated that as part of the Surge Management Plan, Isolation Care Facilities (ICF) were identified where individuals would be housed for 14 days. He noted that 840 rooms had been identified for ICF, with 62 rooms secured and ready for use. He reported that another 778 rooms had been identified and were available and the mission for the facilities was different than that for Department of Human Services (DHS) Facilities. He reviewed the guidelines for the ICF and noted that there was one tenant in ICF.

Gordon Hartman stated that reports from the Working Groups were submitted last week and staff were working on the development of a website. He noted that the website would be available for all to see the members of the Working Groups and citizens could ask questions. He noted that the times and dates of Working Group meetings had been established. He requested that Working Group Co-Chairs send him an invitation to those meetings so that he could attend if possible. He stated that information would be distributed to the City Council on the progress of the Working Groups.

Councilmember Andrews-Sullivan reported for the Shelter Working Group and noted that a hotline for food and shelter assistance (210-207-1799) was launched and a number of hotels suites were available for those facing domestic violence. She stated that the Working Group partnered with the State Legislature on the way Property Tax would be handled for April and May 2020 and discussed moratoriums for rental evictions.

Councilmember Andrews-Sullivan reported that Risk Mitigation usually received approximately 57 calls per week and was now receiving 4,100 calls per week. She noted that a request to activate assistance from FEMA and the Disaster Management Team would be submitted and the Working Group was compiling a list of hotels and apartment complexes where individuals could live.

Councilmember Sandoval reported for the Business and Employment Working Group and noted that the Working Group identified the most urgent needs as access to small business loans, access to unemployment for employees, and relief for business expenses other than payroll. She stated that the Working Group would host a listening session for members of the community.

Councilmember Sandoval reported that the San Antonio Economic Development Foundation (SAEDF) continued to provide technical assistance for small business loans and partnered with the UTSA Small Business Center to provide access to small business loans. She stated that the UTSA Small Business Center planned to recruit student and private industry volunteers to provide additional technical assistance.

Councilmember Sandoval reported that the Economic Development Department would provide technical assistance videos for individuals seeking Unemployment. She stated that Alamo Workforce Solutions would provide technical assistance for businesses to file for Unemployment for a number of employees who were furloughed as requested by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC).

Councilmember Sandoval stated that the Working Group would ensure that measures were publicized. She noted that the Bexar County Tax Assessor would set-up payment plans for Property Tax for businesses and could waive delinquency fees but not interest. She added that waiving interests could be accomplished by the State and would be referred to the Advocacy Committee for further action.

Councilmember Sandoval reported that the disabled individuals and seniors could defer their Tax Payments and the Food Security and Shelter Working Group would be made aware of that in order to notify individuals of their eligibility. She requested that Mayor Nirenberg and Mr. Hartman

consider appointing an individual from the immigrant community to the Philanthropy Working Group or another Working Group. She added that a proposal for either the City or Bexar County to provide cash assistance to individuals who were not eligible for relief from the CARES Act would be forwarded to the Social Services Working Group.

Councilmember Treviño stated that subcommittees of the Social Services Working Group were created and the Working Group focused on current needs and long-term goals. He noted that the Working Group maintained an inventory of Social Service Organizations and administered a survey. He stated that the Working Group received updates on CPS, digital divide, homelessness, mental health, substance abuse, child abuse, hospitality industry, and senior services. He stated that updates would be incorporated into the Subcommittees.

Councilmember Pelaez reported that the five goals of the Federal and State Government Advocacy Working Group included: 1) Identify existing City and Bexar County revenue streams; 2) Identify newly established revenue streams; 3) Categorize all funds received; 4) Track revenue streams and their destination of allocation; and 5) Create a communication system between Working Groups.

Councilmember Pelaez reported that the U.S. Senate could potentially meet April 16, 2020 and the House of Representatives could potentially meet the first week of May 2020. He stated that the U.S. Department of Treasury announced that one half of the \$150 billion appropriation would be distributed within the next two weeks to cities and states.

Councilmember Pelaez stated that the U.S. Department of Transportation announced that the San Antonio International Airport (SAT) could receive \$40 million. Assistant City Manager Carlos Contreras noted that these funds were part of the \$10 billion Stimulus for Airports and the funds would be utilized to make up for lost revenue.

Councilmember Pelaez indicated that the Working Group identified sources of funding from several entities including the National Endowment of the Arts, U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Emergency Services Grant (ESG), and the Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) Grant. He added that staff created a dashboard to track Stimulus Funding.

Mayor Nirenberg requested an overview of emergency relief for organizations impacted by the Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT). Councilmember Pelaez stated that organizations could apply for funds from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). He noted that the awards ranged from \$50,000 to \$250,000 and the deadline for applications was April 22, 2020.

Mayor Nirenberg asked how the City's Risk Mitigation Fund compared with other cities. City Manager Walsh replied that a matrix would be compiled to include other cities and a memorandum would be submitted to the City Council regarding Risk Mitigation changes.

Mayor Nirenberg asked how many staff members were conducting contact investigations. Dr. Emerick reported that the number of staff conducting contact investigations ranged from 25 to 35. Mayor Nirenberg asked how long the average investigation would take. Dr. Emerick replied that the average investigation could take 14 days and sometimes longer, or until the individual

recovered.

Councilmember Perry asked if SAFD received the final results for suspected cases of COVID-19. Dr. Emerick reported that they did as part of the integrated data with SAFD and STRAC. Councilmember Perry stated that he wanted to ensure that landlords and the business community were represented in discussions on evictions.

Councilmember Courage asked how many COVID-19 tests were conducted each day by Metro Health. Dr. Emerick replied that an average of 350-400 COVID-19 tests were conducted each day. She stated that the number of tests administered by providers and hospitals could not be monitored on a daily basis but 8,000 COVID-19 tests have been conducted in the community thus far. Councilmember Courage spoke of the need for more testing and urged the Mayor to require data from providers and hospitals in the Declaration of Public Health Emergency. Councilmember Courage asked what public works projects could potentially be cut. Deputy City Manager Maria Villagómez replied that a list of those projects would be provided to the City Council.

Councilmember Pelaez stated that the Federal and State Government Advocacy Working Group could focus on assisting specific Art Organizations. He noted that these Non-Profit Organizations could access the Small Business Association (SBA) Loans and Emergency Economic Injury loans.

Councilmember Sandoval spoke of the need for widespread testing and contact tracing and the establishment of targets. She proposed that an action group be formed to include Health Professionals and Immunologists to assist in the next phase of the COVID-19 response and recovery.

Mayor Nirenberg stated that the City and Bexar County were guided by the Public Health Authorities in order to save lives and spoke of the need for health guidelines.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda asked if it were possible to establish a COVID-19 Response Team Liaison for every three or four City Council Offices to ensure that constituents received an accurate and consistent message. City Manager Walsh replied that staff would discuss assigning a Liaison to a subset of Councilmembers.

Councilmember Gonzales spoke of the gap in testing on the Southside and on the Westside. She asked of efforts to address the gap in the short-term. Dr. Emerick replied that staff were exploring ways to bring testing to those communities via mobile units. Councilmember Gonzales asked how the City's Budget would be affected if commercial businesses paid property taxes through a payment plan. Assistant City Manager Carlos Contreras replied that the Finance Department was studying that and he would provide that information when available.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked if the City was reaching out to CPS Energy, SAWS, VIA, and the School Districts. Mayor Nirenberg replied that he conducted telephone calls with the utilities and VIA every few days and met with the Superintendent Coalition of Region 20 on a regular basis.

Councilmember Viagran asked if an undocumented individual could be tested at Freeman

Coliseum. Dr. Emerick replied that they could. Councilmember Viagran asked if undocumented individuals could receive shelter if they tested positive for COVID-19. Assistant City Manager Colleen Bridger replied that proof of residency was not required for individuals seeking assistance from the City. She added that anything funded through the State or Federal Government could be different. Councilmember Viagran requested a timeline of actions taken by the City regarding nursing facilities.

Councilmember Andrews-Sullivan asked what would be provided to individuals in Isolation Care Facilities. Fire Chief Hood reported that the individuals received three meals per day along with personal hygiene supplies and cleaning supplies.

Councilmember Treviño expressed support for staff's recommendation to expand access to the Risk Mitigation Fund via the internet.

City Manager Walsh stated that the discussion on COVID-19 on April 16, 2020 would focus on an update on the Federal Stimulus Package, the Housing and Risk Mitigation Proposal, and an update on funds expended in response to COVID-19.

Mayor Nirenberg stated that lifting the restrictions and actions to address a second wave of COVID-19 (if necessary) would be guided by medical experts and the public health authorities.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further discussion, Mayor Nirenberg adjourned the meeting at 3:49 pm.

APPROVED

RON NIRENBERG
Mayor

Attest:

TINA J. FLORES
Acting City Clerk