

# City of San Antonio



## Meeting Minutes City Council Special Meeting

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

**Tuesday, April 21, 2020**

**1:00 PM**

**via Teleconference**

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. Once a quorum was established, the City Council shall consider the following item. 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](http://www.sanantonio.gov/TVSA) and [www.Facebook.com/COSAGOV](http://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.

City Manager Walsh thanked the Mayor and the Council for their resiliency, support and guidance.

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

Fire Chief Hood reported 28 suspected COVID-19 contacts and 17 COVID-19 transports for April 20, 2020. He stated that SAFD made 568 suspected COVID-19 contacts and 326 COVID-19 transports since tracking began on March 24, 2020. He added that two decontamination sites were opened, one at the old SAFD Station 32, and one at the downtown YMCA. He noted that paramedics and regional EMS units could decontaminate at either site.

Fire Chief Hood reported that Fire Station 14 had 6 Firefighters that tested positive for COVID-19. He stated that 40 personnel worked at that station were exposed over an 8-day period. He added that 41 personnel were on a 14-day quarantine period since last exposure. He reported that the station was professionally cleaned and units were strategically deployed to other stations. He noted that the station would not be re-opened until the end of the 14-day quarantine period.

Fire Chief Hood reported on isolation care for the community. He stated that COVID-19 isolation care facilities had been established with 62 rooms secured and ready, and another 778 rooms were available. He added that a nursing home unit was established with four patients checked-in, and an additional 96 nursing home beds were available. He stated that public streets would be swept weekly instead of quarterly. He reported that the Mobile Integrated Healthcare (MIH) Unit tested 99 people for COVID-19 last week, with 11 samples collected. He stated that the MIH unit provided testing directly to individuals who were non-ambulatory and could not be transported to a testing site, including Haven for Hope where two samples were collected. He concluded his report by stating that the SAFD COVID-19 Prevention Team and Metro Health visited 1,128 businesses to provide COVID-19 education, training, and outreach support.

Dr. Dawn Emerick, Director, Metro Health, provided a COVID-19 Dashboard Report. She reported of a total of 1,029 confirmed COVID-19 cases, with a total of 276 recovered, and 39 deaths. She stated that the Dashboard provided transparent, real-time key indicators with a displayed epicurve that illustrated the cumulative cases by date.

Dr. Emerick presented a graphic illustration of the clinical symptoms and comorbidities of COVID-19 cases. She stated that the most commonly reported symptoms continued to be fever and cough, half of all cases reported of headaches, and 8% of cases had no signs or symptoms. She reported that 465 of all cases had at least 1 comorbid condition, with hypertension (55%) and diabetes (40%) the most frequently reported comorbidities.

Dr. Emerick presented an outline of the complex and intricate epidemiological process. She highlighted various COVID-19 testing entry points: 1) Self-screening tool provided on the City's COVID-19 website, 2) Registration for the pre-approved Freeman drive-through site on the City's COVID-19 website; 3) Area hospitals; 4) Primary care providers and urgent care clinics; and 5) MIH Units. She reported that 2,694 tested individuals had undergone contact tracing and 1,568 were in quarantine as a result. She added that patients being treated for COVID-19 in their homes received daily phone calls from Metro Health and MIH to ensure isolation and to closely monitor home-bound patients in an effort to prevent progression of the disease before potential hospitalization. She emphasized that the actions of Metro Health and MIH were above and beyond the COVID-19 responses in place by peer cities in Texas.

Dr. Emerick presented an illustration of all testing sites available within a 5-mile radius within each Zip Code of Bexar County. She reported on local specimen collection capacity: 1) Local hospitals: 500+/- per day; 2) Freeman drive-through site: 400+/- per day; 3) Urgent care systems: 100+/- per day; and 4) Private providers: Information to be provided. She reported that 32% of all positive specimens were identified by private providers. She stated that the overall specimens collected in the community were 1,250+/- tests daily. She added that there was a planned expansion of a second site on the South Side of the City and negotiations were in progress to integrate a South Side TexMed Clinic into the Freeman drive-thru site. She mentioned that a drive-through opportunity was in development with Walmart and an update would be provided. She added that there was a potential addition of three local military

installations that could serve as drive-through sites with each site collecting 200+/- tests daily and an update would be provided.

City Attorney Andy Segovia reported that the City issued its Second Addendum to the Fifth Emergency Declaration Order on April 17, 2020: 1) People 10 years or older were required to wear a mask or cloth face covering if out in closed-in public spaces; 2) Employers must provide a mask and training if social distancing could not be maintained; and 3) Exceptions included health, safety, and outdoor exercising.

City Attorney Segovia emphasized that masks were only required where it would be a challenge to maintain social distancing, or where it would be difficult to maintain six feet of someone. He clarified that the face covering could be a cloth such as a bandana or handkerchief, so long as the nose and mouth were covered. He stated that employers were required to provide masks and appropriate mask training for employees that were required to be work in close proximity to each other. City Attorney Segovia explained that there were exceptions for wearing the mask which included outdoor exercising and pumping gas. He reported that the Second Addendum also required food and household staple stores deemed as essential businesses to limit their customer occupancy to 25% of the Occupancy Rate as stated on their Certificate of Occupancy.

City Attorney Segovia reported that the Governor issued three separate Orders on April 17, 2020. He stated that Executive Order GA-15 allowed hospitals to schedule elective surgeries under the following provisions: 1) Elective surgeries should not deplete hospital capacity or personal protective equipment (PPE) needed in response to COVID-19; 2) hospitals must reserve at least 25% of their hospital beds for COVID-19 patients; 3) hospitals must not request PPE equipment from any public source or entity for the duration of the COVID-19 Disaster.

City Attorney Segovia reported that Executive Order GA-16 allowed for non-essential businesses to reopen but only for pick-up and delivery.

City Attorney Segovia reported that Executive Order GA-17 created a Strike Force tasked with advising Governor Abbott on ways to “Open Texas” in a safe and strategic way. He announced that Governor Abbott directed State Parks to reopen with the following requirements: 1) All visitors must wear masks while attending the parks and maintain social distancing; and 2) gathering of groups larger than five was prohibited. He added that Governor Abbott announced that schools would remain closed through the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year.

Gordon Hartman, Community Action Committee Coordinator, acknowledged the Philanthropic Working Group which consisted of 9 members that raised approximately \$6 million for COVID-19 Relief. He reported that the Philanthropic Working Group disbursed grants to over 100 Non-Profit Organizations in the City and Bexar County from 38 major contributors and many small contributions. He announced that the Philanthropic Working Group organized a telethon to be held on April 29-30, 2020 on local TV Channel WOAI to solicit funds from the public for COVID-19 relief efforts.

Mr. Hartman reported that the Working Groups completed two weeks of activities and worked aggressively in their areas of focus while ensuring that there was no overlap in their undertakings. He announced that the Working Groups launched a website, [www.sacovidaction.com](http://www.sacovidaction.com), to provide transparent reporting to the public. He stated that the website allowed for public engagement through comments, suggestions, and questions. He added that a Public Listening Session was in development and would be provided in Spanish to further ensure input was received throughout the community.

Councilmember Andrews-Sullivan presented a report from the Food and Shelter Working Group. She stated that the group coordinated hotel arrangements for homeless individuals from Haven for Hope. She reported that 312 rooms were available and 250 individuals were currently staying there. She added that outreach was ongoing to homeless individuals that chose to shelter around the courtyard for Haven for Hope, but many were reluctant to move into a room due to mental health issues, alcohol, or drug dependencies. She noted the concern for public safety with individuals under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or suffering withdrawals in the community. She reported that Councilmember Treviño, City Attorney's Office, and Local Justices of the Peace were working together to address the matter.

Councilmember Andrews-Sullivan reported that the San Antonio Food Bank would receive over 144 semi-truckloads of food. She noted that 70 truckloads of food inventory was needed by the Food Bank on a weekly basis. She added that the Food Bank was working with over 500 pantry partners and School Districts to continue to issue food community-wide.

Councilmember Andrews-Sullivan reported that San Antonio Area Foundation donated \$100,000 to the Risk Mitigation Fund (RMF). She added that a search for source funding to assist undocumented individuals through the RMF was underway. She stated that the San Antonio Housing Authority (SAHA) was working with VIA Metro to have buses located on SAHA properties to provide internet access to students. She noted that efforts were underway for Meals on Wheels to be provided to senior grandparents and the children they cared for while not in school.

Councilmember Sandoval reported the UTSA Small Business Development Center launched a COVID Business Recovery Accelerator (COBRA) funded through the CARES Act to provide counseling and resources to local small businesses. She stated that the CARES Act provided funding to the San Antonio Chamber of Commerce to assist local and women-owned minority businesses to apply for Small Business Administration (SBA) loans. She added that the San Antonio Economic Development Foundation (SAEDF) would reach out to local Chamber organizations to assist them with applying for CARES Act funding.

Councilmember Sandoval reported that Bexar County provided funding to the Lyft Fund for a loan and a grant. She stated that Bexar County was working with the Medical Manufacturers Alliance of South Texas to connect medical manufacturers with healthcare providers in need of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). She added that the City was providing assistance with SBA loan applications and employment applications, and was engaging with hard-to-reach populations. She announced that organizations like Lyft Fund and Workforce Solutions Alamo were in need of volunteers for answering phone calls through a virtual, remote system. She asked that interested persons contact her office or SAEDF directly. She stated that the Business & Employment Working Group would implement a Listening Session to connect with local businesses and employees.

Councilmember Treviño identified the Social Services Working Group's priorities as domestic violence, behavioral health, and asset funding. He stated that subgroups would work on evictions, legal aid, senior services, digital divide, education, and resources for undocumented residents. He reported that the Human Services, Metro Health, and Neighborhood Housing Services Department developed standardized screening and referral protocols, in coordination with domestic violence providers. He stated that the Working Group prepared a comprehensive list of resources and referral systems regarding mental health, substance abuse, and child abuse. He noted that Bexar County also maintained a list of resources. He added that the Working Group was working to expand and centralize the information to make referral systems and resources available community wide.

Councilmember Treviño reported of familial, legacy issues that created vulnerabilities during the COVID-19 Disaster, such as the increased risk for child abuse and domestic violence. He emphasized that the Working Group's focus was on the high need for short-term responses, such as providing mental health resources in areas hardest hit by COVID-19 Disaster that were experiencing issues such as substance abuse.

Councilmember Treviño reported that the City was doing a tremendous job in continuing to provide senior centers with food, especially centers that closed due to the COVID-19 Disaster. He added that the National Restaurant Association and the Philanthropy Working Group partnered to promote mental health resource access specifically for food service workers.

Councilmember Pelaez stated that the Federal and State Government Advocacy Working Group maintained a Stimulus Package Funding Dashboard Tracker. He reported that \$307 million from the Federal Education Stabilization Fund was allocated to the State for Public and Private Charter Schools and institutions of higher learning. He added that Stinson Municipal Airport received \$30,000 and Kelly Field received \$20,000. He noted that 16 local art organizations were identified as eligible to apply for competitive grants through the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Working Group would provide assistance with the application process.

Councilmember Pelaez reported that staff were engaged with the National League of Cities and the U.S. Conference of Mayors to ensure the City's COVID-19 response and funding efforts were at full capacity among peer cities. He announced that \$150 billion in additional funding was appropriated for State and local relief; \$100 billion in additional funding was appropriated for the Paycheck Protection Program; and an additional \$100 billion was appropriated for direct aid to hospitals. He stated that local Chambers sent letters to Congress and the Small Business Administration to extend eligibility to non-profit entities. He confirmed that the CARES Act provided funding for Homeless Veterans Programs, particularly for the Veterans Administration, and for tele-health for Veterans.

Mayor Nirenberg thanked the Councilmembers for their Working Group Reports. He stated that the Health Transition Team would provide Reports on Public Health Conditions and issue guidelines to City Council next week. He added that an Economic Transition Team would soon convene to provide sector-specific best practices to manage the reopening of certain businesses in a safe manner, guided by the recommendations of the Public Health Team. He asked Dr. Emerick when the City would reach its peak of COVID-19 cases, based on the available data and current rates of infection. Dr. Emerick replied that the City could potentially reach its peak of COVID-19 cases between mid-May and June. She added that a downward trend would be indicated by a 14-day decrease in reported infections. She stated that from an indicator perspective, COVID-19 would have to be managed like other infectious diseases.

Mayor Nirenberg affirmed that the City Council's collective position was to continue to be guided by the best health principles and guidance to protect the health and lives of the public.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda reported concern of a density of COVID-19 cases in and around Council District 6. She added that the expanded COVID-19 tracking detail by Zip Code was very helpful. She stated that the San Antonio Food Bank was in need of volunteers and asked for those interested to contact the Food Bank online at [www.safoodbank.org](http://www.safoodbank.org), or by telephone at (210) 831-8286.

Councilmember Sandoval stated that her staff would reach out to Councilmembers who expressed an interest regarding individual briefings from the Health Transition and the Economic Transition Team prior to the presentation of their reports to City Council next week. She asked what were the indicators

for the recent uptick of COVID-19 cases and requested further information. Dr. Emerick reported that the recent uptick of cases was detected by mobile phone tracking through a public access system provided by Google Health; she added that further information would be provided. Councilmember Sandoval asked how many times isolation facilities were offered to COVID-19 patients. Dr. Emerick said she would provide the information.

Councilmember Pelaez referenced a 2010 World Health Organization Report on research ethics during a pandemic. He stated that the City's most important responsibilities during the pandemic was the reporting of COVID-19 statistics, the City's responses and efforts to protect the public, and the reporting of risks to the public. He noted that the City's daily tracking and reporting of COVID-19 cases and the City's COVID-19 response efforts was excellent.

Councilmember Courage noted that nearly all of the 2 million residents of Bexar County had not been tested for the virus. He asked if there was a mechanism to determine to what extent the virus existed and was increasing or declining within the general population. Dr. Emerick stated that the next phase of testing would be to continue to test as many people as possible for the virus; and then to encourage those in close contact with those that test positive to get tested. She noted that the entire country was struggling to obtain the proper amount of tests and supplies. She reported that her team was working on assessing the capacity and ratio of test supplies and lab ability, and the exploration of antibodies.

Councilmember Courage requested that the Federal and State Government Advocacy Working Group continue to reach out to elected officials to obtain additional testing supplies. He suggested that the Business and Employment Working Group develop a plan to start gradually opening businesses with caution. He added that a better understanding of the economic impact to local industries was needed in order to formulate an efficient Economic Recovery Plan. City Manager Walsh replied that the City was working closely with the Governor's office to provide a clear demonstration of the City's need for additional tests and testing supplies. He noted that other major cities and counties were also in the same position.

Councilmember Perry requested that total number of people tested and the number of positives be provided on the COVID-19 Dashboard. He asked which Walmart location would be a testing location. Dr. Emerick replied the information would be added to the COVID-19 Dashboard and the Walmart located on W. Military Drive was scheduled to become a testing site.

Councilmember Treviño expressed concern for people who were fearful and vulnerable and asked for community outreach to provide reassurance. Dr. Emerick reported that many staff members were engaging with marginal communities on a daily basis. She noted that the City's Chief Equity Officer was an appointed advisor to the COVID-19 Health Transition Team. She added that an appointed member of the COVID-19 Health Transition Team was solely responsible for engaging with individuals and marginal communities that did not have a voice. She emphasized that a core principle of COVID-19 Health Transition Team was to ensure the commitment to equity would be carried over into the implementation phase. Jeff Coyle, Director of Government and Public Affairs, added that staff made a conscious effort to provide proactive communications with vulnerable populations. Mr. Coyle noted that staff emphasized the message to the public that the Food Bank and all City Services were available to everyone regardless of their status in the United States.

Councilmember Andrews-Sullivan reported of an issue with overflow of items at donation collection stations and asked for assistance with cleanup and potential risks. She asked on the status of the fencing-in of dumpsters. Dr. Emerick reported that studies showed the virus could live on surfaces for a

few hours or days, depending on the type of surface. She stated that she would research the matter and provide further information. Assistant City Manager David McCary asked to be provided with the locations of overflowing donation stations to coordinate cleanup efforts. Fire Chief Hood reported a decrease in the amount of videos and social media reporting of an overflow at donation stations which could be an indication that some clean-up had already taken place. He stated that he would provide further information.

Councilmember Viagran asked of the number of COVID-19 tests performed in Bexar County and if there was a backlog of individuals in need of testing that were non-ambulatory or could not be transported to a testing site. She asked if any of the 276 individuals that recovered from the virus had tested positive again, and if any had donated plasma. Dr. Emerick reported that 12,811 COVID-19 tests were performed and she was not aware of individuals in need of testing; she stated she would ask for data about patients retesting positive for the virus and for data on COVID-19 patients that have donated plasma.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia referenced the [www.sacovidaction.com](http://www.sacovidaction.com) website and expressed concern for residents that do not have access to the internet. She asked how emailed comments to the site were managed. She made a recommendation for drop-down menus to be added to the website to provide the public the option to direct their emails to the appropriate Federal, State, or local Agencies or Groups. She suggested that the website be linked to the City's Webpage. Mayor Nirenberg stated that a phone number would be added to the COVID-19 website. He replied that emails to the website were directed to Gordon Hartman, Community Action Committee Coordinator for the COVID-19 Working Groups, who would forward emails to the appropriate Working Group. City Manager Walsh stated that the City's Website would be updated to provide a link to the [www.sacovidaction.com](http://www.sacovidaction.com) website.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia noted that 3 patients of the 276 recovered cases had donated plasma. She asked of efforts made by Metro Health to encourage additional recovered patients to donate plasma. Dr. Emerick stated that Metro Health made contact with patients when they called the hotline or during the case management phase; she added that she would consult with her team and provide the information.

Councilmember Gonzales expressed concern about the heat waves experienced in San Antonio during the summer months and the devastating impact it could have on the home-bound; she asked that the heat be considered a factor when determining the re-opening of senior centers and community centers. She asked how meals were funded for school children during the summer months. City Manager Walsh stated that most of the City's \$82 million summer programs were suspended, but that recommendations would be developed to address heat conditions and summer meals.

Councilmember Gonzales asked for clarification regarding the need for a Health Transition Team and an Economic Transition Team, in lieu of one team with combined efforts. Mayor Nirenberg stated that a clear set of guidance from health authorities and medical experts needed to be established first in order to address public health concerns. He added that the second step would be to interpret medical expert guidance for business experts to develop a sector-based, best practices operational plan.

Councilmember Gonzales asked of the number of individuals who were screened for COVID-19 testing, but failed to show up for their appointment. Dr. Emerick stated that she would provide the information.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further discussion, Mayor Nirenberg adjourned the meeting at 3:24 pm.

APPROVED

RON NIRENBERG  
Mayor

Attest:

TINA J. FLORES  
Acting City Clerk

DRAFT