

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS
COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2021
10:00 AM
VIDEOCONFERENCE**

Members Present:	Councilmember Manny Pelaez, <i>Co-Chair, District 8</i> Commissioner Justin Rodriguez, <i>Co-Chair, Bexar County Commissioner's Court, Precinct 2</i> Councilmember Rebecca Viagran, <i>District 3</i> Councilmember Adriana Rocha Garcia, <i>District 4</i> Councilmember Clayton Perry, <i>District 10</i> Commissioner Trish DeBerry, <i>Bexar County Commissioner's Court, Precinct 3</i>
Staff Present:	Carlos Contreras, <i>Assistant City Manager</i> ; Camila Kunau, <i>Assistant City Attorney</i> ; Chelsea Mikulencak, <i>Assistant City Attorney</i> ; Jeff Coyle, <i>Director, Government & Public Affairs</i> ; Gen. Juan Ayala, <i>Director, Military & Veteran Affairs</i> ; Alejandra Lopez, <i>Director, Economic Development Department</i> ; Sally Basurto, <i>Assistant Director, Government & Public Affairs</i> ; Patrick Steck, <i>Assistant Human Resources Director, Neighborhood Housing Services Department</i> ; Christine Wright, <i>State Relations Manager, Government & Public Affairs</i> ; Berta Rodriguez, <i>Census Administrator, Government & Public Affairs</i> ; Nancy Cano, <i>Office of the City Clerk</i>
Others Present:	Dr. Sean Maika, <i>NEISD Superintendent</i> ; Pedro Martinez, <i>SAISD Superintendent</i> ; Melissa Shannon, <i>Director, Governmental Affairs, Bexar County</i> ; Kevin Kelly, <i>Lead Attorney, Government & Regulatory Affairs Group, Clark Hill, PC</i> ; Lead Lauren Lipin, <i>Attorney, Government & Regulatory Affairs Group, Clark Hill, PC</i> ; Baltazar R. ("Walter") Serna, Jr. <i>Attorney, Serna & Serna, San Antonio</i> ; Henry Bonilla, <i>The Normandy Group</i> ; Ron Eritano, <i>The Normandy Group</i> ; Lauren Hillary Lily, <i>Director of Legislative Affairs, San Antonio Independent School District</i> ; Katie Vela, <i>Executive Director, South Alamo Regional Alliance for the Homeless</i> ; Eric Samuels, <i>President & CEO, Texas Homeless Network</i> ; Nick Thompson, <i>Statewide Initiatives Manager, Texas Homeless Network</i> ; Julia Grizzard, <i>Southwest Stratagem LLC</i>

Call to Order

Co-Chairman Pelaez called the meeting to order.

1. Approval of the minutes from the December 9, 2020 meeting of the Intergovernmental Relations Committee.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia moved to approve the minutes from the December 9, 2020 meeting of the Intergovernmental Relations Committee. Councilmember Viagran seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

2. South Alamo Regional Alliance for the Homeless' Federal and State Legislative Priorities

Katie Vela reported that SARAH was the federally designated Continuum of Care (CoC) lead agency for San Antonio and Bexar County that worked in collaboration with the Department of Housing and Urban Development to assist in providing funding, planning and coordination with local City partners.

Eric Samuels reported that THN was a non-profit organization that helped communities plan to prevent and end homelessness, coordinated local and national advocacy efforts, data collection and research, and served as the host agency for the Balance of State Continuum of Care (CoC). He explained that the Balance of State CoC provided services to areas of the state outside of metropolitan areas with their own local CoCs.

Rick Thompson reported that the THN had three major priorities for the 87th Legislature, as follows:

- Strengthen Texas' Homeless Crisis Response Systems, or CoCs – Data-driven solutions to prevent or divert households out of homelessness
- Expand affordable housing opportunities – Development and rehabilitation of more affordable housing
- Targeted, Intersectional Assistance – Recognizing disparities affecting vulnerable populations experiencing homelessness or housing insecurities

Mr. Thompson reported that THN would seek an income protection tool from the Legislature to prevent housing and voucher discrimination for vulnerable residents, including the LGBTQIA community, during the COVID-19 Pandemic and beyond. He explained that targeted assistance intersected with the criminal justice and health care systems. He added that diversion programs, trauma-informed peace officer training, expanded health care access, fee waivers for birth certificates for the homeless, and racial justice-oriented Bills were Legislative Priorities for THN.

Ms. Vela reported that SARAH applied for Federal funding as a collaborative applicant on behalf of San Antonio. She added that SARAH submitted Federal reports on local homelessness in San Antonio and Bexar County to HUD that were used to evaluate progress and funding levels for the next year. She referenced Homelink, which was a Coordinated Entry (CE) process to ensure vulnerable residents that experienced a housing crisis had fair and equal access to the database system and were quickly identified, assessed, referred, and connected to housing assistance. She added that San Antonio's FY2020 CoC Funding was \$10.3 million and was up 17% since 2016.

Commissioner Rodriguez asked if Federal funds appropriated directly to Haven for Hope impacted the amount of funding received by SARAH. Mr. Samuels stated that funding was appropriated annually for Haven for Hope by the Texas Department of Housing & Community Affairs (TDHCA) and given the current COVID-19 challenges, a five to ten percent reduction be likely.

Councilmember Viagran asked what the timeline was for the CoC to apply for Federal funding. Ms. Vela reported that last year's competition was delayed; currently funded agencies were

automatically renewed this year due to COVID-19; and the next round of competition would occur in the summer with contract start dates in Spring 2022.

Councilmember Perry requested performance metrics for THN and SARA that tracked yearly goals and results. He expressed concern for the continuum of increased spending and asked of the goal amount needed to achieve a reduction in homelessness. Ms. Vela stated she would provide the performance metrics data.

Councilmember Viagran asked the local School District Superintendents present in the meeting how were their school districts managed challenges with digital divide issues, broadband access, and remote learning equipment.

SAISD Superintendent Pedro Martinez stated that each SAISD student had multiple remote learning devices such as iPads and Chromebooks, broadband access, and that SAISD received overwhelming support from the City and community. He noted that it was possible to eliminate the digital divide and the question remained how the monthly \$10 internet access fees would be maintained by the families once the COVID-19 Pandemic was over.

NEISD Superintendent Dr. Sean Maika stated that reliable, high speed internet was as essential as water and electricity in today's world. He referenced the State's IMA Instructional Materials Allotment Program and noted the possibility that the State would fund it to provide electronic devices to students going forward.

Julia Grizzard stated that one of the top priorities was to close the digital divide and work with State counterparts to push and support Legislation that did just that. She added that school districts recognized the ongoing costs of remote learning devices as part of the ongoing cost of education and of being part of an increasing present online world.

SAISD Superintendent Martinez reported that SAISD, Edgewood ISD, and the Southside School Districts and their local communities had the highest COVID-19 positivity rates, the highest number of COVID-19 cases, and the highest COVID-19 death rates than other areas of the City. He stated that contact tracing indicated that most COVID-19 transmission was family-related and community-related, but transmission was not really seen at the school level. He noted that it was now more expensive than ever to keep schools open. He reported that Federal funding packages allowed States to keep more of the funds; in turn, the States reduced School District funding relied upon for special education and poverty funding due to there being less children on campus during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Chairman Pelaez proposed that the Committee draft a letter in support of the School Districts and in recognition of the funding crises they faced. He requested that Walter Serna and the Federal Consulting Team provide guidance with the draft letter and invited the superintendents to work closely with staff on the City's Legislative Agenda in partnership for the entire region.

Chairman Pelaez left the meeting at this time.

3. Federal Update on:

- **Administration Actions & Cabinet**
- **COVID Relief Package**
- **Infrastructure Plan**

Sally Basurto reported that President Biden signed over 40 executive actions in the first two weeks of his term that included the COVID-19 Pandemic, immigration, healthcare, and climate change. She stated that a COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force was established to provide specific recommendations on the inequalities in specific communities that would cover ethnicity, disabilities, and other information that would be provided directly to the President.

Ms. Basurto reported that the President's Executive Order (EO) directed the Department of Defense and Homeland Security to accelerate the manufacturing and delivery of vaccines and equipment to meet the shortfalls and to launch the first phase of the Federal Pharmacy Program. She added that the Executive Order further directed the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to begin opening the first 100 Federally supported community vaccination centers across the country. She stated that City staff launched discussions with the State's Regional FEMA Administrator to express the City's strong interest to participate in the vaccination community centers. She noted that Mayor Nirenberg updated the City's Emergency Order to reflect the Presidential EO directive to require that face masks be worn at all times on certain modes of public transportation such as airports, airlines, and buses.

Ms. Basurto reported that the Presidential EO would preserve and fortify the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Program and DACA participants would be allowed to continue submitting and renewing applications. She added that in 2019, \$3.6 billion in funding was diverted from the military account that included \$18 million as part of a Joint Base San Antonio (JBSA) for the construction of the Camp Bullis Dining Hall which has now been halted.

Ms. Basurto reported that President Biden unveiled a \$1.9 billion entitled, "American Rescue Plan – COVID-19 Relief" which would provide \$1,400 in direct payments to individual taxpayers that earned less than \$75,000 annually, an enhancement of \$400 in weekly unemployment benefits, and \$3 billion for nutrition through the SNAP Benefits Program, including a 15% increase in SNAP benefits.

Ms. Basurto reported that the American Rescue Plan would provide the following additional funding:

- State and Local Governments: \$350 billion
- Community Vaccination Centers: \$20 billion
- COVID-19 testing: \$50 billion
- Child Care Development Block Grant: \$38 billion
- Rental Assistance: \$30 billion
- Homelessness: \$5 billion
- Safely Reopen Schools \$170 billion
- Small Business Grants: \$25 billion
- Airports: \$8 billion
- Public Transit: \$30 billion

- Substance Abuse/Mental Health: \$4 billion

Ms. Basurto reported that Congress would utilize the Budget Reconciliation Resolution to ensure that the American Rescue Plan was passed quickly. She provided a detailed outline of the budget reconciliation process. She reported that after the Relief Plan is passed, the Administration would shift its focus to the Infrastructure Bill, and the City would continue to coordinate with Federal Agency advocates in a proactive approach to take advantage of funding under the nine priority themes of the President's Build Back Better Plan, as follows: 16 local micromobility and multimodal transportation projects, three airport and parks projects, four housing projects, five broadband projects, 5g projects for streetlights, and renovation projects for the Ella Austin Community Center and the Alameda Theater.

Commissioner Rodriguez noted that the City and County would continue to discuss collaborative efforts on common projects to push through the Infrastructure Bill.

Councilmember Viagran stated that the Brooks City Base/S. New Braunfels St. area was a critical funding recommendation under the micromobility and multimodal transportation category and would alleviate congestion in the area, provide connectivity to the green belt and bike lanes, and the VIA Transit Center.

Assistant City Manager Carlos Contreras noted that the proposed list of projects was preliminary and was generated as a starting point. He stated that any proposed projects submitted to the Federal government would include discussions and input of City, County, and regional partners and the projects selected would be of benefit to the entire region or a specific entity within the community.

Commissioner DeBerry noted that the City and the County had many shovel-ready projects and that it was urgent that a collaborative, finalized list was prepared for submittal as quickly as possible as the process was very competitive.

Walter Serna reported that each Congressional Office had its own appropriations deadline and application forms to submit for the year-long process; and if filing jointly, the City and County would need to collaborate and align joint proposed projects.

Sally Basurto noted that Senator Cuellar's office had a March 2021 deadline for Appropriations funding applications.

4. State Update on:

- **87th Session Protocol**
- **Issues/Bills of Interest**

Mr. Coyle reported that Legislative Session was in its fourth week, the State's base budget had been filed, and Bills had yet to be referred to committees for hearings. He stated that Governor Abbott gave his State of the State Address last week that outlined the following Emergency Items:

- Expanding broadband access
- Reform the bail bond system

- Penalize cities that defunded the police
- Uphold election integrity
- Civil liability protections

Mr. Coyle highlighted three items on the Governor's Budget that directly aligned with the City's list of prioritized State Legislative Agenda Items, as follows:

- Department of State Health Services (DSHS) IT Structure: Support to improve Infectious Disease IT and laboratory infrastructure
- Stated Hospitals: Request continued investment to improve State's mental health infrastructure
- Broadband: Increase access to low income communities and underserved areas

Mr. Coyle reported that three of the City's four Police Accountability Bills were filed, as follows:

- HB 1087: Authorize the Police Chief to discipline officers within 180 days of discovering misconduct
- HB 1561: Create opportunities to encourage new officers to live in the City in which they serve
- HB 1563: Allow the release of conduct violations held by a law enforcement agency
- HB Pending: Limiting an arbitrator to reduce discipline, as determined by the Police Chief

Mr. Coyle reported that all State agencies were directed to reduce their budgets by 5% for the next biennium due to State Budget shortfalls and MetroHealth recommended that the Department of State Health Services be exempted from the 5% cut during the midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic. He added that City staff forwarded the recommendation to Representative Ina Minjarez for continued advocacy for the exemption.

Commissioner DeBerry requested that a joint letter be drafted to advocate for a vaccine super site to be located in San Antonio and called for aggressive lobbying efforts. Mr. Coyle reported that City staff held a teleconference with the Regional FEMA Director this week to discuss a local major vaccine hub station. He added that Bexar County had the highest social vulnerability index score of all major cities in Texas and such data was forwarded to the Regional FEMA Director to advocate for the State's decision.

Commissioner Rodriguez stated that a follow up discussion would be held to plan the draft letter calling for a vaccine super site in the City.

Adjourn

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 12:10 pm.

***Councilmember Manny Pelaez,
Co-Chairman***

***County Commissioner Justin Rodriguez,
Co-Chairman***

Respectfully Submitted,

Nancy Cano, Office of the City Clerk