

**State of Texas
County of Bexar
City of San Antonio**



**Meeting Minutes
City Council Special Meeting**

City Hall Complex
105 Main Plaza
San Antonio, Texas 78205

Thursday, March 26, 2020

9:00 AM

Municipal Plaza Building

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

1. The Invocation was delivered by Pastor Courtney Evans, Sr. of God's Property Christian Community Church, guest of Mayor Nirenberg.
2. Mayor Nirenberg led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

Acting City Clerk Flores read the caption and supplemental posting language for Item 4.

2020-03-26-0217

3. Briefing and possible action on the City's response and preparedness for COVID 19.

Supplemental posting language added to the Agenda.

Ordinance extending the Declaration of Public Health Emergency issued on Monday, March 23, 2020 by Mayor Ron Nirenberg until 11:59 pm on Thursday, April 9, 2020 to continue active preparedness and response for COVID-19 contingencies.

Mayor Nirenberg called upon the individuals registered to speak.

Jack M. Finger stated that City Council should ease the restrictions placed on citizens once COVID-19 conditions were determined to be safe. He stated that the City should consider cutting ties with Wuhan, China if it was a sister city.

Molly Wright stated that the courtyard at Haven for Hope was not safe for the homeless. She requested that downtown parks be opened.

Fire Chief Hood stated that on January 17, 2020, planning began in response to COVID-19 patients that would arrive at JBSA Lackland. He noted the establishment of a regional Emergency Operations Center (EOC) that was comprised of 60 representatives from the Bexar County Emergency Management, Texas Health and Human Services, Metro Health, UT Health and others. He highlighted the EOC administrative objectives:

- Safety and wellness
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) management
- Communications
- Testing
- Data integration and analysis
- Surge management
- Fortify Incident Command System (ICS) structure

Fire Chief Hood stated that a Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) inventory for every law enforcement agency, fire department, and hospital in the region was being conducted. He added that the amount of PPE utilized for the region was also inventoried. He added that PPE was delivered to hospitals through the South Texas Regional Advisory Council (STRAC) from the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS). He noted that the San Antonio Fire Department (SAFD) conserved the use of PPE by dispatching only one first responder to non-critical calls.

Fire Chief Hood stated that a COVID-19 testing location was established at the Freeman Coliseum and was a template for other organizations to model. He noted that a Labor Management Letter was distributed to members of the San Antonio Professional Firefighters Association (SAPFFA) Local 624 outlining the actions that would be taken to ensure that Firefighters were safe. He stated that the same information was distributed to Fire Departments throughout the state and the country and every shift within SAFD by WebEx. Fire Chief Hood noted that the information was disseminated to the public through the Joint Information Center (JIC). He stated that the EOC had an operations team, a logistics team, and a planning team working to ensure that plans and contingencies for managing a surge were available. He reported that the Incident Command System (ICS) structure included:

- Unified command

- Operations
- Logistics
- Planning
- Finance

Dr. Dawn Emerick, Director of the San Antonio Metro Health District, reported that there were currently under 50,000 cases of COVID-19 in the United States with the total number of deaths at 600. She stated that there were 84 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Bexar County which included 36 travel-related; 12 close contact; 27 community transmission; and 9 cases under investigation. She noted that there were 3 deaths in Bexar County. Dr. Emerick provided an update on the Lackland Air Force Base cohorts and noted that no evacuees remained at Lackland. She reviewed the number of calls received by the COVID-19 hotline and the nature of their inquiries. She reported that an online COVID-19 self-screening tool was launched on the City's website. She presented a data visualization map which contained information for individuals who were accessing the site. She stated that a COVID-19 Testing Task Force was created and testing sites were established at the Freeman Coliseum, Texas Med Clinics, and CommuniCare Health Center. She noted that the following labs were processing the COVID-19 tests:

- Quest Diagnostics
- LabCorp
- Clinical Pathology Laboratories
- UHS/UT Health
- Methodist Health System
- Baptist Health System

Dr. Emerick reported that approximately 750 tests had been conducted at the Freeman Coliseum. She added that the site had the capacity to conduct 350 tests per day. She stated that the Data Visualization Project was part of the Unified Command and Metro Health, Information Technology Services Department (ITSD), and STRAC were components of the Unified Command. She added that the data was updated daily and that it would be utilized to make informed policy decisions and predictive modeling.

Jeff Coyle announced that a \$2 trillion dollar Stimulus Package was passed by the Senate last night and would be brought before the House of Representatives within the next 48 hours. He stated the distribution of funds would be allocated as follows:

- Industries: \$500 billion
- Small businesses: \$350 billion
- Hospitals: \$100 billion
- State and Local Governments: \$150 billion

Mr. Coyle reviewed the first and second Federal COVID-19 stimulus responses which were the Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act, and the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, respectively. He stated that the current Stimulus Package was

intended to address the larger economic impacts of the crisis. He noted that the majority of the funding to be allocated to the City would be designated through the following existing grant programs, many of which were based on population: 1) Community Development Block Grant (\$5 billion); 2) Emergency Solutions Grant (\$4 billion); 3) Economic Development Administration (\$1.5 billion); and 4) Transit Systems (\$25 billion).

Mr. Coyle stated that the City focused on two major areas by directing the lobby team efforts in Washington, D.C. and the National League of Cities on the State and Local Stabilization Fund (\$150 billion), and Airports Funding (\$10 billion).

Mr. Coyle reported that the Governor declared a State of Disaster for all 254 counties in Texas which would allow the State to utilize all available resources to manage the Disaster, activate the State's Emergency Management Plan, and empower the Attorney General to pursue cases of price gouging. He add that the Governor issued the following Emergency Orders: 1) Limit public gatherings; avoid restaurants and bars; 2) Expand hospital and staffing capacity; and 3) Establish daily reporting requirements. He reported that the Governor had issued waivers of State Law and announced distribution of Federal funding to include an initial allotment of \$36.9 million and \$996,725 to the San Antonio Metropolitan Health District. He added that the State Comptroller announced short-term payment agreements and had waived interest and penalties on February Sales Tax.

Assistant City Manager Carlos Contreras stated that a study by the Brookings Institute identified industry sectors that would be affected most by the COVID-19 crisis: 1) Mining, oil, and gas; 2) Transportation; 3) Employment services; and 4) Travel, leisure, and hospitality. He noted that the City was listed in the top quintile of the Index because 18% of the metro area jobs were in vulnerable industry sectors. He reported that from March 8-14, 2020 there were 19,968 Unemployment Insurance claims in the State of Texas which was 60% increase over the prior year. He stated that from March 15-21, 2020 there were 150,000 Unemployment Insurance claims.

Mr. Contreras reported that staff partnered with the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to provide information on the City's website for the unemployed. He stated that the Federal Stimulus Package would include an increase in Unemployment Insurance Benefits of \$600 per week for individuals filing for Unemployment Insurance in addition to their State Level benefits until June 30, 2020. He added that the Federal Stimulus Package would provide 13 weeks of Emergency Unemployment Insurance for individuals who remain unemployed after exhausting their benefits and would provide up to 39 weeks of Unemployment Insurance for individuals who were not otherwise eligible for regular Unemployment Compensation, such as the self-employed.

Mr. Contreras reported that on March 17, 2020, the Governor waived the requirement for individuals to wait a week before filing for Unemployment Benefits and the requirement to seek employment in order to continue to receive Unemployment Benefits. He stated that TWC partnered with employers to encourage their enrollment in the Shared Work Program which would allow employers with a decrease in business to reduce employee hours in order to allow them to receive Unemployment Benefits to supplement the wages they would have otherwise

received.

Mr. Contreras reported that Workforce Solutions Alamo (WSA) added resources to enable staff to work remotely and the City was offering technical assistance to businesses and employees that required assistance with processing applications or obtaining Unemployment Benefits. He reported that the Federal Stimulus Package allocated a \$367 billion Loan Program for small businesses that pledged to not lay-off workers. He stated that the loans were available through June 30, 2020 and would be forgiven if the small business continued to pay their workers during the Disaster.

Mr. Contreras noted that loans were available from the Small Business Association (SBA) with terms of up to 30 years and a fixed rate of 3.75% (2.75% for non-profits). He indicated that the SBA, the UTSA Small Business Development Center, and LiftFund's Women Business Center would provide application assistance.

Mr. Contreras stated that City Council appropriated \$250,000 in FY 2019 to buy down loans for small businesses and approximately \$120,000 of that funding had been utilized. He noted that staff proposed to redirect the balance of approximately \$130,000 to assist small businesses while they were awaiting Federal funding to bridge the gap. He stated that the loans were limited to a maximum of \$15,000 for Hospitality and Retail Businesses with 10 employees or less. He indicated that payments would be deferred for 60 days.

Mr. Contreras reported that the Maestro Entrepreneur Center was hosting weekly seminars for small businesses regarding issues related to COVID-19. He added that LaunchSA increased their digital content and resources to assist entrepreneurs by identifying mentors to work with them.

Mr. Contreras stated that the City was accepting requests for rental and utility assistance. He added that the San Antonio Housing Trust (SAHT) appropriated an additional \$1 million for rental assistance and was exploring other funding sources and partnerships to leverage additional resources. He noted that Bexar County had suspended evictions for 30 days and CPS Energy and SAWS were suspending disconnections until further notice.

Mr. Contreras stated that Fannie Mae and Freddy Mac were suspending foreclosures and evictions for those with single family mortgages for at least 60 days, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) authorized the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) to implement a foreclosure and eviction moratorium for homeowners with FHA insured mortgages for the next 60 days.

Deputy City Manager Maria Villagómez stated that the Nation has seen a rapid, deep decline in economic activity. She noted that Dr. Nivin from St. Mary's University indicated that the recovery could take approximately 90 days and as the City recovers a decrease in spending from normal levels would be seen.

Deputy City Manager Villagomez reported that the Unemployment Rate for March 2020 was expected to be 12%-14%. She stated that \$2.8 million was authorized for the response to the

Disaster through March 21, 2020 of which \$1.2 million was authorized for personnel costs and \$1.6 million was authorized for supplies and medical staff. She stated that the City was notified of the availability of \$2.1 million from a Department of State Health Services Grant which would enable the City to recover some of their expenses. She stated that the City would seek reimbursement from the Federal Government but would likely be responsible for approximately 25% of the costs.

Deputy City Manager Villagómez reviewed the following preliminary impacts to the FY 2020 Budget:

FUND	FY 2020 IMPACT
Airport	\$12 to \$22 million
Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT)	\$29 to \$44 million
Convention Center and Alamodome	\$12.4 to \$17 million
General Fund revenues	\$57 to \$75 million
TOTAL	\$110 to \$158 million

Deputy City Manager Villagómez stated that future updates would be provided to City Council and staff would review spending reduction alternatives for immediate implementation.

City Attorney Andy Segovia stated that on March 23, 2020, the Mayor issued the Fifth Declaration of the Emergency Order and Bexar County issued the “Stay Home Work Safe” Order. He noted that the City and Bexar County aligned efforts with other Texas cities. He stated that today, the City Council would consider the extension of the Emergency Order through April 9, 2020. He noted that the extension would require individuals to stay at home unless they met the following exemptions:

- Maintaining health/safety of yourself, family, and pets
- Acquiring necessary provisions such as food, medicine, household products
- Exercising outdoors with a six-foot social distance
- Engaging in an exempt business or exempt activity with social distancing

City Attorney Segovia stated that the City was addressing questions from the public via Town Hall Meeting, 3-1-1, and the FAQs on the City’s website. He noted that staff were partnering with the Government and Public Affairs Department to educate the community on what the Emergency Order required.

City Manager Erik Walsh reported that he directed departments to categorize spending into response, recovery, and basic operations. He stated that staff would continue to work on the recovery period. He added that informational door hangers would be distributed throughout the City providing information on the Emergency Order.

Mayor Nirenberg stated that the recovery timeline was dependent on slowing the spread of COVID-19 by limiting exposure. He spoke of a statewide collaboration among Mayors, Cities, County Officials and Courts within major urban areas in a coordinated effort to limit exposure and slow the spread of disease.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda asked if a referral was required for testing. Dr. Emerick replied that a referral for testing was required. Councilmember Cabello Havrda asked how long it would take to get the results from testing. Dr. Emerick replied that it depended on which lab was utilized with private labs providing the results in three or four days; Metro Health providing results in 24 hours; and University Health System providing results the same day.

Councilmember Perry stated that he supported having more than one meeting per week. He asked if Metro Health could include the number of individuals that were tested and received a negative result. Dr. Emerick replied that data had been requested from laboratories. Councilmember Perry requested that FY 2020 Budget data be included in the staff presentation.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked what the City was doing to ensure that individuals without insurance or money were able to see a Healthcare Provider and have access to testing. Dr. Emerick reported that individuals would be provided access to a Healthcare Provider if they meet that criteria.

Councilmember Viagran asked if the Texas Center for Infectious Disease (TCID) could be utilized for surge capacity. Dr. Emerick reported that was part of the plan, but the City would have to ask for the State's permission. Councilmember Viagran requested a list of how the City was assisting residents.

Councilmember Andrews-Sullivan asked how the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) would manage the surge in unemployment applications. City Manager Walsh reported that TWC had experienced a high volume of traffic on its website. He added that TWC requested assistance from cities in answering unemployment questions and that TWC would provide content to be included on the city websites.

Councilmember Treviño asked if hotels could delay payment of the HOT and if so, would fines be incurred. Mr. Contreras replied that HOT was remitted to the State and collected at the State level. He added that the State was considering a short-term payment plan for taxes. Councilmember Treviño announced that the Bexar County Appraisal District's Board would delay sending tax notices out until April 18, 2020. He asked if the anticipated unemployment rate accounted for undocumented workers. Dr. Nivin replied that he had not seen any data to allow for that calculation but he would explore that.

Councilmember Pelaez asked if employees of essential businesses required a permit to travel to and from work. Mr. Segovia replied that no such permit was required.

Councilmember Courage asked for data on the amount of students provided with school meals. Mr. Walsh replied that the information would be requested from the school districts. Councilmember Courage asked of the revenue projections for CPS Energy and SAWS. Ms. Villagómez replied that no such projections had been made but that a decrease in revenue was to be expected for both utilities. Councilmember Courage requested that projections for revenues from the utilities be included in the financial forecast.

Councilmember Gonzales asked if Metro Health was mapping the community spread of COVID-19. Dr. Bridger replied that community spread had not been mapped. Councilmember Gonzales asked if informational materials were included with food that was distributed. John Peterek replied that the Food Bank inserted fliers in the boxes of food which were distributed. Mr. Coyle added that informational door hangers were delivered to 30,000 households in the 20 most vulnerable zip codes located within Council Districts 2, 3, 4, and 5.

Councilmember Sandoval spoke of the Communications Work Group and invited Councilmembers to send their staff members to the meetings. She requested information on utilization of WIC Centers following the Emergency Order. She asked how many hospital beds were available in the region. Chief Hood stated that he would provide the information.

Mayor Nirenberg asked that Councilmembers not in attendance, to signal their vote on any action item by raising their hand.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda moved to approve Item 4. Councilmember Andrews-Sullivan seconded the motion. The motion prevailed by the following vote:

AYE: 11 - Mayor Nirenberg, Treviño, Andrews-Sullivan, Viagran, Rocha Garcia, Gonzales, Cabello Havrda, Sandoval, Pelaez, Courage and Perry.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further discussion, Mayor Nirenberg adjourned the meeting at 1:55 pm.

APPROVED

RON NIRENBERG
MAYOR

Attest:

TINA J. FLORES
Acting City Clerk