

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS
COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2020
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 Kevin Wolff, <i>Bexar County Commissioner’s Court, Precinct 3</i>
Staff Present:	Carlos Contreras, <i>Assistant City Manager</i> ; Ray Rodriguez, <i>Deputy City Attorney</i> ; Camila Kunau, <i>Assistant City Attorney</i> ; Christopher Monestier, <i>Deputy Chief, San Antonio Fire Department</i> ; Jeff Coyle, <i>Director, Government & Public Affairs</i> ; Sally Basurto, <i>Assistant Director, Government & Public Affairs</i> ; Christine Wright, <i>State Relations Manager, Government & Public Affairs</i> ; Nancy Cano, <i>Office of the City Clerk</i>
Others Present:	Melissa Shannon, <i>Director, Governmental Affairs, Bexar County</i> ; Rudy Rodriguez, <i>President, CRG Community Resource Group</i> ; Donovan Burton, <i>Vice President, Water Resources & Governmental Relations, SAWS</i> ; Dan Crowley, <i>Governmental Relations/Regional and Federal Affairs, SAWS</i> ; Suzanne Scott, <i>General Manager, San Antonio River Authority</i> ; Brian Mast, <i>Governmental Affairs Manager, San Antonio River Authority</i> ; Bryon Gipson, <i>Intergovernmental Affairs & External Relations Coordinator, SAWS</i> ; Lauren Mandel, <i>Chief of Staff, Bexar County Commissioner’s Court, Precinct 3</i> ; Baltazar R. (“Walter”) Serna, Jr. <i>Attorney, Serna & Serna, San Antonio</i>

Call to Order

Co-Chairman Pelaez called the meeting to order.

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

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

Point of Personal Privilege

Co-Chairman Pelaez requested that Co-Chairman Rodriguez provide an update of the early voting status for Bexar County. Co-Chairman Rodriguez reported that there was significant early voter turnout at 47 voting sites located throughout Bexar County, with 34,000 in-person votes received on the first day of early voting. He added that the total of 41,000 mail-in ballots received to date already exceeded the total number of mail-in ballots received for the 2016 election. He anticipated record-breaking numbers for the Presidential Election.

2. Community Partner Legislative Priorities:

a. San Antonio River Authority Westside Creeks [Suzanne Scott, General Manager, SARA]

Suzanne Scott stated that the San Antonio River Authority (SARA) worked in collaboration with the City and Bexar County for many years on the Westside Creeks Ecosystem Restoration Project that included Alazan Creek, Apache Creek, Martinez Creek, San Pedro Creek, and Zaramora Creek. She reported that over \$25 million had been invested in Howard Peak Greenway Trails Project to develop 11.6 miles of trails to date. She noted that portions of the trails were funded by both the City and the County for Phases 1 and 2 of the linear trail network. She reported that Phase 3 consisted of the overlapping sections of the San Pedro Creek Project and parts of the Westside Creeks Project and was a Federal funded initiative.

Ms. Scott reported that the Phase 3 Federal Project sections would undergo ecosystem restoration in an ecofriendly manner that still provided flood protection and in a more stable manner than the original project authorized in 1954 for flood control purposes only. She stated that a variety of restoration techniques would be used on the 14 miles of creeks, depending on flood carrying capacity of each creek, which was the primary function of the creeks. She added that native vegetation, channels, structures, and habitat development were also included in the project improvements and would be implemented in a multi-step process.

Ms. Scott reported that SARA was working on the Energy & Water Appropriations Bill to obtain \$7,000,000 in additional funding allocated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers specifically for ecosystem restoration projects that were modifications to address degraded conditions due to prior flood protection work. She highlighted the important designation of the Bill language and stated that SARA was trying to keep all funding strategies open. She reported that the House version of the Bill was \$2 million and the Senate had not yet completed their version of the Bill. She noted that SARA competed with other projects across the nation that would fit the narrow definition of the Bill and was working diligently with their delegate agencies to obtain the \$2.34 million needed to initiate Phase 3.

Councilmember Viagran requested a count of the number of people who used the Westside Creek Trail system. Ms. Scott stated that SARA maintained counters for Mission Reach Trails but not for linear trails. Assistant City Manager Carlos Contreras said he would provide the information.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia requested an itemized breakdown of upcoming projects to include location, funding amounts, and start and completion dates. She asked how the projects were prioritized. Ms. Scott stated that the City set the prioritized timelines for the Westside Creeks, the trail network, and the Howard Peak Greenway, all of which had been funded over the years. She added that the projects were completed in phases and were prioritized by sections that could be completed the earliest. She noted that the Phase 3 timeline was based on complexity and funding.

Commissioner Rodriguez asked if matched funding was required for the \$2.34 million in funding needed to initiate Phase 3. Ms. Scott affirmed that a local match requirement was needed.

b. San Antonio Water System [Donovan Burton, VP Water Resources & Governmental Relations, SAWS]

Donovan Burton reported that providing assistance to low income utility customers impacted by COVID-19 was the primary focus of the SAWS Legislative Agenda. He stated that SAWS experienced a 500% increase in the number of customers eligible for disconnection over the past six months. He noted that 30,000 customers were unable to pay their bill due to COVID-19, which resulted in a \$10 million negative impact to SAWS. He added that SAWS recognized the financial challenges of their customers and stopped the disconnection process for non-payment at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. He reported that SAWS was working with Federal Legislators to see how SAWS could provide funding for its customers and was waiting to see if Congress would pass further funding initiatives.

Mr. Burton reported that SAWS was working on a tax-exempt conservation initiative that would provide tax exemption for water conservation rebates similar to electric utilities rebates. He stated that customers would receive rebates when they implemented water conservation efforts within their homes.

Mr. Burton reported that SAWS was working with Congress on a national infrastructure investment to obtain continued funding for \$2.6 billion in SAWS Capital Projects projected over the next five years.

Mr. Burton reported that new lead and copper rules for potable water were established by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). He stated that the EPA required all communities take inventories of their lead lines and test samples of all schools and daycare centers to make sure lead is not present in lead service lines. He confirmed that SAWS did not have any lead lines in its primary source system and would implement a large outreach program to educate schools, daycares, and the community on the required inventory process.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked if SAWS had adjusted eligibility requirements for its Uplift Hardship Program. Mr. Burton stated that SAWS had increased its program funding substantially for FY 2020 due to COVID-19, and would increase funding again for FY 2021. He added that SAWS offered up to 15 assistance programs to assist various communities and address individual customer issues.

Councilmember Perry reported that one area of focus on the City's Legislative Agenda was the issue of protecting customer information for utility disconnections. He noted that individuals or organizations accessed the listings and used the information available to the public to target vulnerable residents for other services, such as selling their homes at low value and high interest loan offers. He reported that CPS Energy had started an automated metering process that would also generate data that could be obtained by third parties. He recommended collaborative efforts with SAWS to protect the privacy of its customers and requested a meeting with SAWS for a further briefing. Jeff Coyle explained that CPS Energy had protection in State law as a power utility and was not obligated to provide customer disconnection listings, but SAWS did not have the same protection. He confirmed that the Mayor wanted to work with SAWS to support litigation that would keep SAWS customer information private.

3. Bexar County River and Creek Program [Melissa Shannon, Director of Governmental Affairs, Bexar County]

Commissioner Rodriguez reported that Bexar County Commissioner's Court passed a Resolution on October 6, 2020 to implement the Bexar County River and Creek Program, collaborate with SARA to present a prioritized list for implementation, and determine viable funding options no later than April 2021.

At this time, the Intergovernmental Relations Council Committee meeting was adjourned, and the Intergovernmental Relations COSA Subcommittee convened to consider the following items:

1. Federal Representation Services Contract Renewals. [Jeff Coyle, Director, Government & Public Affairs]

Sally Basurto reported that the City's current Federal Consultants Team (Team) had been working together for 16 months on on-going advocacy activities for the City. She stated that in February 2020, the Team joined City Leaders and staff to form the largest SA-to-DC group to date, and advocated on Capital Hill in an extraordinary, active Legislative Session. She reported that while focusing efforts on the very competitive Legislative appropriations process, the City was faced with the challenges of handling the Lackland AFD evacuees issue and formulating an emergent response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ms. Basurto reported that the Team worked extraordinarily well together to convey the needs and challenges of the City due to COVID-19 through appropriate messaging in Washington, D.C. and with Federal agency representatives and national advocacy organizations.

Ms. Basurto reported that City Council approved three initial contracts for Clark Hill, The Normandy Group, and Walter Serna, effective June 2019 through December 2020, with a renewal two-year term for January 2021 through December 2022. She noted that the contract terms aligned with the congressional sessions.

Ms. Basurto reported that the Team led the way in coordinating and developing data appropriations language for Federal grants and funding opportunities for the City. She highlighted the City's Federal funding successes and noted that San Antonio received \$270,000,000 in Coronavirus Relief Funding and \$107,000,000 in CARES Act/COVID-19 Funding. She outlined additional funding successes as follows: Migrant Resource Center Funding: \$624,000; Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) Grant Award: \$3,500,000; COPS Hiring Grant Award: \$3,125,000. She reported that the Team was very instrumental in preparing and advocating for all the successful funding submissions.

Ms. Basurto reported that the City and the Team worked heavily on the appropriations process to ensure that local military bases were included in the House Bill. She noted how highly competitive the process was and highlighted the City's FY 2021 Appropriation Submissions:

- Training Simulator: \$19.5 million
- Military Training Dormitory: \$36 million
- F-16 Training Center: \$10.8 million
- Community Development Block Grant: \$3.52 billion

- Centers for Diseases and Prevention Control Data Report – Specific language successfully added for the benefit of Local and State governments and submissions of applications

Councilmember Perry asked how the City could become more integrated with the military presence at the Pentagon level and asked what was the military component of the Team that could lobby for the City’s military installations. Jeff Coyle reported that Henry Bonilla and Kevin Kelly had close connections and past experience within Congress. He added that General Juan Ayala, Director, Office of Military & Veteran Affairs, was the City’s main liaison with the Pentagon, worked closely with JBSA Leadership, and attended high-level Pentagon meetings.

Councilmember Viagran requested more detailed, frequent communications from the Team. She asked if the three consulting teams worked independently. Mr. Coyle confirmed that the Federal consultants absolutely operated as one team in biweekly calls with staff and Federal lobbyists. He noted that staff planned on expanding the scope of work for the Normandy Group with a focus on federal aviation reauthorization for the planned expansion of the San Antonio Airport. He reported that staff received day-to-day updates from the Team on House Votes, Senate Votes, and Subcommittee votes; thereafter, the Committee was with provided with two regular weekly updates filtered for substantive developments only. He added that he could provide the Committee with more frequent updates from the Team.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked if there were overlapping constituencies that the City could leverage and requested further collaboration with other agencies for the benefit of the community that could also lower consulting expenses. She requested more detailed reports. Mr. Coyle reported that staff had approached SAWS, CPS Energy, SARA, Port San Antonio, and Brooks City-Base in the past to pool resources and build one Federal consulting team and only Brooks City-Base expressed interest. He stated that the partners wanted focused efforts on their particular interests and were unsure how responsive a consolidated team would be to each agency’s specific needs. He explained that an intergovernmental roundtable was developed instead and partner agencies meet in a monthly gathering to discuss government affairs and common initiatives. Assistant City Manager Carlos Contreras highlighted that unlike other partners, the City chose to build an internal Office of Military Affairs and was the only partner that had a dedicated and robust intergovernmental affairs path. He emphasized that all partnering agencies had very different initiatives.

Councilmember Perry requested a detailed summary of FY 2020 SA-to-DC trip to include action items, attendees, meetings, and agencies, Federal officials, and representatives met with. Mr. Coyle reported that staff presented a post-trip recap and noted that other partner agencies in attendance did not. He stated that one of the goals from the trip was to develop more separate intergovernmental trips for City leaders and staff only at other times of the year.

Chairman Pelaez made the recommendation for a dashboard to track prioritized Legislative agenda items, timelines, and status updates. He voiced his concern for an untimely decision not to renew the contracts and to release another Request for Proposal (RFP) solicitation during COVID-19. He noted that another RFP could create a disservice and impact the momentum of engagements and negotiations for the second round of stimulus funding that the City and the Team established within the House and the Senate, the White House and Capital Hill.

Chairman Pelaez noted the consensus of the Committee to order a second meeting very soon to render a final decision on an extension of the Team contracts.

2. Bexar County Emergency Services District No. 2 Request to Incur Debt. [Jeff Coyle, Director, Government & Public Affairs]

Mr. Coyle reported that the Committee was provided with a written report that addressed the Committee's follow-up questions from the last meeting and noted there were no further questions.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia moved to recommend and forward Item 2 to City Council for consideration. Councilmember Viagran seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

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*