

**CULTURE & NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES
COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2020
2:00 PM
VIDEOCONFERENCE**

Members Present:	Councilmember Roberto Treviño, <i>Chair, District 1</i> Councilmember Jada Andrews-Sullivan, <i>District 2</i> Councilmember Rebecca Viagran, <i>District 3</i> Councilmember John Courage, <i>District 9</i> Councilmember Clayton Perry, <i>District 10</i>
Staff Present:	Lori Houston, <i>Assistant City Manager</i> ; Jameene Williams, <i>Assistant City Attorney</i> ; Debbie Racca-Sittre, <i>Director, Department of Arts and Culture</i> ; Veronica Soto, <i>Director, Neighborhood & Housing Services</i> ; Melissa Ramirez, <i>Assistant Director, Land Development, Development Services Department</i> ; Edward Gonzales, <i>Assistant Director, Neighborhood & Housing Services Department</i> ; Patrick Steck, <i>Interim Assistant Director, Human Services Department</i> ; Diana Hidalgo, <i>Cultural Affairs Administrator, Department of Arts and Culture</i> ; Ian Benavidez, <i>Housing Administrator, Neighborhood & Housing Services Department</i> ; Nancy Cano, <i>Office of the City Clerk</i>
Others Present:	None

Call to Order

Chairman Treviño called the meeting to order.

Public Comment

Written Testimony

None

Live Testimony

Rose Hill stated that when more than one neighborhood association (NA) was allowed, it created confusion, division, and potential legal problems. She noted that many NAs worked behind the scenes to educate on neighborhood safety and community improvements. She added that to be a registered NA meant that NAs were in a partnership with the City and noted that many NA leaders had undergone training through the City’s Leadership Academy Program. She reported that she represented 31 neighborhoods in Council District 2 and called for the City to leave the NA Registry the way it was.

1. Approval of the minutes from the October 5, 2020 Culture & Neighborhood Services Council Committee Meeting.

Councilmember Courage moved to approve the Minutes from the October 5, 2020 Culture & Neighborhood Services Council Committee Meeting. Councilmember Andrews-Sullivan seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Briefing and Possible Action on the Proposed Renters Commission Survey and Focus Group Feedback. [Lori Houston, Assistant City Manager; Verónica R. Soto, FAICP, Neighborhood and Housing Services Department Director]

Ian Benavidez reported that a Council Consideration Request (CCR) was sponsored by Councilmember Treviño on June 19, 2019 requesting a discussion of the creation of a Renters' Commission that would advise the City Council on matters related to rental housing and other matters that impacted renters and landlords. He stated that a survey was released through SASpeakUp to gather information from the community on September 14, 2020 and stakeholder focus group meetings were held in early October 2020 to discuss the issues and makeup of a commission or similar group.

Mr. Benavidez reported that as of October 27, 2020, the survey received 3,623 responses with 1,649 responses from renters, 1,510 from homeowners, and 836 from property owner/landlords. He stated that the survey found that 53% were not familiar with current rental issues and policies; 43% were unsure if renters were sufficiently represented on boards and commissions; and 41% did not feel sufficiently represented. He added that survey results indicated general support for a renters commission that included a mix of renters and property owners; 12% were for a renters only commission; 85% preferred an expanded representation (29% for both renters and landlords); 56% were for various combinations of renters and other housing professionals); and 3% were neutral or had no opinion.

Mr. Benavidez stated that the focus groups found that both renters and landlords were not properly educated on their rights and responsibilities which stressed the need for education and training programs. He noted that the survey closed last week and a formal recommendation based on the final results would be presented to the Committee in December 2020 or January 2021.

Councilmember Andrews-Sullivan noted that Council District 2 had a large population of renters and voiced her concern that they were not well represented in the survey feedback received. She requested further outreach. Mr. Benavidez replied that the highest outreach response for each Council District was "No answer" and staff would make sure that all Council Districts were represented.

Councilmember Courage requested further detailed demographic information on renters and noted that different renters had different needs. Mr. Benavidez stated that he would provide detailed demographic information as soon as the survey results were completed.

Councilmember Viagran asked of the percentage of renters in Council Districts 1-6 and asked if those with no responses could be identified by zip code. She asked if rental rates were provided in the responses. She requested further data on focus group members. Mr. Benavidez stated that he would provide additional data. He replied that residents were asked for their income and rental rates would be requested for if additional outreach was conducted in the future.

Councilmember Perry asked of the distribution of apartments throughout the City and if the majority of apartments were located in Council Districts 7-10. He noted that that the City had a total of 88 Boards and Commissions with 878 seats and 106 current vacancies and expressed concern for the addition of another commission, instead of combining a renters commission within a current board. Mr. Benavidez noted that the key takeaway from the survey was that 45% of respondents were renters, with a majority of responses received from Council Districts 7-10. He said he would provide additional information on all of the organizations that participated in the survey.

Chairman Treviño stated that his staff had designed several other renters commission models based on existing Boards and Commissions and reiterated that the intent of the policy was to improve the quality of life for renters and their families.

3. Briefing on the Neighborhood Association & Community Organization Registration Policy.
[Lori Houston, Assistant City Manager; Verónica R. Soto, Director, Neighborhood and Housing Services]

Barbara Ankamah reported that the Neighborhood Association Registry (NA Registry) was established by Chapter 35-408 of the Unified Development Code (UDC) and per the UDC, the Development Services Department (DSD) notified property owners and registered neighborhood associations (NAs) within 200 feet of any property site that was pursuing a zoning change or development permit which required a public hearing. She reported that 402 NAs and HOAs were registered and 45 community organizations were registered. She outlined several issues shared by multiple departments, officials, and associations, as follows:

- Overlapping boundaries: 16 of 402 registered NAs shared boundaries.
- Internal administrative policy: Allowed boundary overlap with consent from both administrations.
- Notifications only sent to registered NAs.
- Residents could sign up on contact list to get information on zoning and planning cases, however they were not notified in targeted mailouts.
- Elected officers may not live within an association's geographic boundaries.
- Registration implies an official recognition or endorsement by the City.
- NAs stated that there was a lack of acknowledgement from City departments if they were not the registered association.

Ms. Ankamah reported that changes were underway to implement a user-friendly registration process with enhanced information accessibility. She indicated that updates to the web-based application would include biannual association updates, a bylaws archive, and neighborhood mapping capability. She added that the NA registry would be reconfigured to allow anyone to receive notices and would be renamed to allow users to understand it as a communication tool.

Ms. Ankamah reported that briefings, community input sessions, and a survey would be held in November 2020 and December 2020 with all findings and proposed amendments to the Administrative Policy to be presented to the Committee in January 2021.

Councilmember Perry expressed concern that two NAs could have competing interests and not agree to shared boundaries which caused division among neighborhoods. He noted that improvements were needed to the current NA Registry System. Verónica Soto replied that updates to the system were needed to appropriately reflect that the Neighborhood and Housing Services Department was now responsible for the NA registration process.

Councilmember Courage asked if the current system would be burdened if an additional 1,000 NAs or individuals were added to it. He noted that the objective of this discussion was to expand communications and disclosures through the NA Registry system, and that overlapping boundaries or which groups would be recognized or not were not the issues at hand. Ms. Ankamah replied that the system would not be burdened by the increase of names. Ms. Ramirez noted that the City's cost for issuing notices would potentially increase because the City would be required to notify multiple registered neighborhood associations within overlapping boundaries.

Councilmember Viagran stated that amendments to the NA Registry were needed because individuals or NAs should not be able to annex other adjacent properties or NAs without their knowledge or consent by percentage, and noted that many residents were purposefully not notified nor encouraged to participate.

Councilmember Andrews-Sullivan requested a list of NAs registered on the NextDoor Application that were also registered on the NA Registry. She asked why texting was not used as a communication tool. Ms. Ankamah replied that she would provide the NextDoor Application information and noted that texting was already being used. Ms. Ramirez added that constant contact information was expanded and was available to residents to receive specific requested notifications regarding planning, zoning, or zoning agenda items and at least 402 registered residents received requested notifications.

4. Briefing on the Housing Security Pillar Strategy Update: (1) Covid-19 Emergency Housing Assistance Program (EHAP) and discussion on proposed amendments and program evaluation; (2) Briefing and discussion by Department of Human Services on the cash assistance program. [Lori Houston, Assistant City Manager; Verónica R. Soto, Director, Neighborhood and Housing Services]

Verónica Soto reported that over 19,600 EHAP applications with an Average Median Income (AMI) of 30% had been received to date. She noted that the average household received \$2,808 in assisted funds and 85.5% were renters. She stated that total EHAP assistance approved to date was \$55.2 million with \$45.6 million allocated for rents and mortgages; \$3.9 million allocated for CPS; \$600,000 allocated for SAWS; \$200,000 allocated for Internet and \$4.9 million allocated for cash assistance. She stated that the total EHAP budget was \$76.6 million.

Ms. Soto reported that Phase 3 funding of \$24.1 million started in October 2020 and was still in progress, with \$6 million remaining of the \$10 million in Coronavirus Relief Funds that had to be used by December 31, 2020. She added that \$5.7 million in Community Development Block Grant funds remained of the \$5.8 million budget, and \$7.9 million from the General Fund and San Antonio Housing Trust Fund remained of the \$8.2 million budget. She reviewed EHAP funds disbursed by Council District.

Ms. Soto presented the following proposed amendments:

- Increase AMI limit to 100%
- Assist college students or parents of students that have rental leases
- Expansion of eligibility for college students – allowing parents to be primary lease holders
- Recommend income eligibility to remain unchanged – continue to assist residents with less than 80% AMI

Ms. Soto stated that the expanded eligibility for college students would allow for either the student or parent names to be on the lease (not just student) and documentation of college enrollment would be required. She reported that the City Auditor conducted an audit of the Risk Mitigation Fund and COVID-19 EHAP Program and made the determination of no findings, and applications were appropriately approved or denied, and the accounting of funds was accurate and appropriate. She added that the San Antonio Housing Commission (SAHC) requested an evaluation of the EHAP Program and noted that a survey would be distributed to EHAP applicants, landlords, and administrative partners in November 2020 as part of the process with results posted in December 2020. She noted that a formal Risk Mitigation evaluation process would be established in collaboration with SAHC.

Ms. Soto reported that the Texas Eviction Diversion Program (TEDP) was created by order of Governor Abbott on September 25, 2020 and was administered by the Texas Supreme Court which established court-mandated rules for eviction cases. She noted that the City received \$600,000 for emergency rental assistance and administration of the pilot program. She stated that households must have a court-ordered eviction, landlords and tenants must agree to participate in the program, and COVID-19 impacted clients could receive up to 6 months of assistance, with 5 months of back-rent. She mentioned that the eviction filing would remain confidential during and after the abatement period. She reported on Eviction Court

outcomes as follows: 864 cases dismissed (27%), 584 cases reset (34%), 1,093 Default Judgments (18%), 631 Judgements for Plaintiffs (20%), and 11 Jury requests (.35%).

Patrick Steck reported that the COVID-19 Recovery Housing Security Pillar received \$4 million in CARES Act funds in partnership with the Family Independent Initiative (FII) which was a national nonprofit organization that worked with families in poverty to invest in and help them build social and financial assets. He stated that \$2 million was expended and provided \$500 direct cash assistance to nearly 4,000 families that earned below 150% of the federal poverty level and that were affected by COVID-19. He highlighted that this emergency fund was separate from the EHAP fund and was targeted to participants and clients in the Department of Housing Services (DHS) Programs, delegate agency programs, immigrant services networks, and the faith-based communities. He noted that the highest number of applications were received from areas on the equity map Atlas with very high equity scores and half of the recipients earned under 50% of the poverty level, or \$13,000 a year for a family of 4. He added that 63% of the recipients were Hispanic and 30% were African Americans. He noted that the program opened on October 19, 2020 and closed on October 22, 2020, and served 3,920 households.

Mr. Steck reported that \$2 million was allocated to the two-year UpTogether program which was in progress and provided \$1,000 in initial cash assistance from the City's Coronavirus Relief Fund to 1,000 households to help lift families out of poverty through peer networking, ongoing support from FII, and additional cash assistance funded by private philanthropy.

Councilmember Viagran asked of the number of student participants in EHAP. She requested further data on student apartments by Council District. Mr. Steck stated that the program did not track students participants specifically but that all EHAP participants were required to provide income qualifications and the recommendation was to qualify participants with parents who signed their rental leases. He noted that Colleges and Universities were assisting students that lived on campus but were unable to assist students that rented through private developers and landlords.

Councilmember Andrews-Sullivan requested data on aged-out foster youths, seniors, and homeless individuals enrolled in EHAP.

Councilmember Courage stated that the greatest priority was to keep families in their homes and noted that the families of students were eligible for subsidized funding and could apply for EHAP funds.

Chairman Treviño requested the reinstatement of 100% AMI eligibility and noted that over 500 families with 80% AMI were left without assistance. He noted that the reduction of award amounts did not wholly cure rent debt and backrents would continue to accrue until the eviction moratorium was lifted which would leave families in the same situation. He expressed concern that many school districts, school counselors, and local Colleges and Universities were unaware of the EHAP and requested that staff reach out to them and provide the information. He acknowledged Isabella Gutierrez Salinas, a local student, for her outstanding efforts in assisting other students with resource information and support. He requested that the dashboard be updated and circulated to the Committee in advance of the meetings.

Chairman Treviño asked if undocumented residents would be eligible for the next round of cash assistance grants. He noted that local Courts were sealing eviction records and asked if sealing eviction records permanently could be implemented in the TDEP pilot program. Mr. Steck replied that \$600,000 in TEDP funds were administered to residents that had an eviction on record and that rental payments were distributed directly to the landlord and that no residency questions were asked on the form. Mr. Steck replied that after the TDEP pilot program was concluded, data would be shared with the State and requests to seal eviction records would be included.

Councilmember Courage moved to approve Item 4. Councilmember Viagran seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Briefing and Overview of the Arts Agency Funding Guidelines and discussion on timeline and next steps to update the Guidelines for the FY22-24 Funding Cycle. [Lori Houston, Assistant City Manager; Debbie Racca-Sittre, Director, Department of Arts & Culture]

Chairman Treviño stated that Item 5 would be tabled at this time. Assistant City Manager Lori Houston stated that individual briefings would be provided to each Committee Member for Item 5.

Adjourn

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 4:37 pm.

Roberto Treviño, Chair

Respectfully Submitted,

Nancy Cano, Office of the City Clerk