



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number: 19-8462

Agenda Item Number: 3.

Agenda Date: 11/14/2019

In Control: Governance Committee

DEPARTMENT: Economic Development

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Alejandra Lopez

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: City-wide

SUBJECT: Creation of a Small Business Advisory Commission

SUMMARY:

On October 19, 2019, a Council Consideration Request (CCR) was submitted by Councilmember Adriana Rocha-Garcia regarding the creation of a new Small Business Advisory Commission to advise on policy issues that may affect small businesses.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Small businesses represent 97% of the businesses in San Antonio. This population is a driving force within the local economy and their challenges and capacity for growth differs substantially from larger companies. The Economic Development Department (EDD) provides a variety of resources and services to support small businesses, including a Loan Interest Buydown Program in collaboration with LiftFund which makes capital more accessible to small businesses, technical assistance through City's Mentor Protégé Program and LaunchSA, and the Small Business Development Fee Waiver Program, approved by City Council in 2018. Most significantly, our support for small businesses in our community has been through our procurement practices.

For over 30 years, the entity now referred to as the Small Business Advocacy Committee (SBAC) has advised the Mayor, City Council and staff on business issues related to the effectiveness of the Small Business Economic Development Advocacy (SBEDA) Program and its previous iterations. The SBAC meets on a monthly basis and consists of 11 district-specific members appointed by the Mayor and City Council. The by-laws of the SBAC are specific and focused on recommending modifications to the SBEDA Ordinance and procurement procedures to promote the participation of small, minority and women-owned businesses on City

contracts.

The CCR acknowledges the specific focus of the SBAC and calls for the creation of a Small Business Advisory Commission through which small businesses may provide feedback on City policies. The CCR further recommends the majority of the commission consist of small business owners, appointed by the Mayor and City Council for two-year terms. Two positions on the proposed 11-member commission would be reserved for non-profit organizations, with two additional positions reserved for business organizations.

ISSUE:

Small businesses currently have multiple opportunities to engage and provide feedback on City policies, initiatives, and procedures, including speaking at issue-specific boards and commissions. In addition, departments gather input from the public on policy initiatives through the SA SpeakUp program, which includes a variety of options such as grassroots outreach through online and in-person surveys, public meetings, pop-up meetings and informational booths at existing community-wide events, telephone town hall meetings, live audience polling at meetings, text message promotion of surveys and events, and hardcopy comment cards.

While a variety of feedback options currently exist, it is important to engage small business owners in evaluating the creation of the proposed commission, along with seeking their feedback on current engagement practices. The SBAC and other business organizations representing and serving small businesses should also be engaged.

ALTERNATIVES:

City Council could choose to expand the role of the SBAC beyond its current charge. This option will require City Council action and may result in less focus and attention on the SBEDA Program and addressing the barriers experienced by small, minority and women-owned businesses bidding on City contracts.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This item is for briefing purposes.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends engaging with local small business owners to review current feedback opportunities, along with the potential creation of this commission. Staff further recommends the feedback gathered, recommended next steps and associated fiscal impact be presented to the Economic and Workforce Development Committee no later than March 2020.