



***PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION  
REGULAR CALLED MEETING  
MINUTES  
MONDAY AUGUST 7, 2023***

**The PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION convened in a REGULAR CALLED MEETING on August 7, 2023 at City Hall Building, Boards and Commissions Rm, 301 W. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, AUSTIN, TEXAS**

**Chair Ramirez called the Public Safety Commission Meeting to order at 4:04pm.**

**Board Members/Commissioners in Attendance:**

Nelly Ramirez, Chair	Tim Ruttan
Rebecca Bernhardt, Vice Chair	Kristy Orr
Cory Hall-Martin	John Kiracofe
Lauren Pena	David Holmes
Pierre Nguyen	

**Board Members/Commissioners in Attendance Remotely:**

Commissioner - Yasmine Smith

**Absent:** None

**Chair Ramirez**, once again reminded commissioners to follow the emailed instructions from the City Clerk's office regarding their email password, and the new reset protocol for Board & Commission email accounts. In addition to the emails reset, commissioners attending the meetings virtually, please remember to return your signed attendance sheet prior to the start of meeting. Commissioner Bernhardt announced an upcoming COA event "WE All Belong at The People's House on August 12, 2023, 6-10pm.

**PUBLIC COMMUNICATION:**

- Marshall Cothran signed up to speak on Item #5
- Chris Ziebell, M.D. signed up to speak on Item #5

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

1. **Chair Ramirez** called for the approval of the minutes for July 10, 2023 Regular Meeting. Minutes. **Commissioner Orr** motioned to vote to approve the minutes and **Commissioner Ruttan** second. The minutes were approved with a correction of Commissioner Smith's misspelled name (corrected from Yasmin to Yasmine).

### **Vote for July 10, minutes**

**Yes:** 6 Commissioners Ramirez, Holmes, Ruttan, Orr, Smith, Hall-Martin and Bernhardt

**No:** Zero

**Abstain:** Commissioner Kiracofe

**Absent:** Zero

Commissioners Nguyen and Pena arrived late and missed the vote on the minutes.

## **2. STAFF BRIEFINGS:**

Chair Ramirez reminded the board the staff briefing is listed for the written responses to previous follow up questions from the commissioners. The responses are posted to the website as a part of the backup documents for each monthly meeting

## **3. DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS**

3. **Public Safety Quarterly Report – Austin Fire Department** (Sponsors: Commissioners Ramirez, Bernhardt) –

Speaker: Rob Vires, Chief of Staff, Austin Fire Department

Chief Vires began the quarterly presentation with an update on progress and maintenance of Fire Stations:

- Deferred Maintenance happening at Fire Stations #8, 23 and 25 and the expected completion date of March 2024.
- First Station 1 is being remolded
- New First Station #53 @ Goodnight Ranch and EMS will be included/located here as well
- Fire Station 51 a firefighter injury where a large ceiling fan fell and struck a fire fighter. -
- Steps are being taken to relocate the fans.
- Auto-Aid agreement with Travis County and Williamson County continues to benefit all residents in the counties that use the Auto Aid plan.
- Agencies currently not in the Automatic Aid plan are Pflugerville (ESD 2), Manor (ESD, 12), Round Rock, Sam Bass, and Jollyville
- Overdose Response – December 2021 all AFD personnel received hands on training for Naloxone administration and each unit received a stock of the medication. The total calls

where Narcan was given by Austin Fire Department was 158. Number of times Austin Fire assisted or administered Narcan was 101, and patient improvement cases was 113.

-Arsons Investigations –Austin Fire third quarter clearance rate was 48% compared to a National Clearance rate of 22/%. Austin Fire is proud of their clearance rate.

-AFD example of cleared incident was the May 29, 2023 a Fire Specialist was stabbed while trying to keep a suspect from being hit by passing traffic on IH 35. The suspect had been igniting multiple trash/grass fires. The case was cleared by arrest for Assault on a Public Servant and a citation for Violation of City Ordinance

**Chief Vires** continued with updates on Austin Fire Wildfire Division, Office of Fire Marshall and Special Events and the multiple components with this office that work to make Special Events safely prepared and with clearly marked exits are posted where necessary. Austin Fire uses a compliance engine that tracks compliance and non-compliance for all fire protection systems in commercial building. The Community Outreach continues on a more personal and community level. This programs provided free smoke alarms, and in home wellness checks on symptoms like blood pressure, heart rate and glucose levels are a few of their services from Community Outreach. There was information presented on AFD's Vacancies and recruiting efforts. The next Cadet class is scheduled in January 2024. The written test for cadet class of January 24, 2023 was offered on August 1, 2023, and 642 out of 1, 767 showed up for the written test. AFD does have a FEMA grant that helps the department to pay for fitness equipment. AFD works to keep a decent in house gym/workout place for their staff. The Labor Contract negotiations are continuing. Chief Vires opened he floor for questions.

- Are there other city of Austin departments who use/administer Narcan? Any data on the amounts and number of times? (Ruttan) Vires, currently we do not track
- Regarding fires in some of the homeless encampments, what is being done to prevent these fires? (Smith) Vires responded, fires are not permissible at anytime in the camps. If a fire is reported in the camp we have permission to go put it out. Lots of Outreach being done by Austin Fire Department to educate all citizens.
- Regarding the May 29<sup>th</sup> incident (stabbing of Firefighter), was any mental health assistance included in the response to the incident? (Smith)

Chief Vires, responded he doesn't if Mental Health was called when the incident happened.

Chief Vires concluded his presentation by commenting AFD strives for diversity in their recruiting efforts.

**4. Discussion and action to approve the creation of a working group regarding Homeland Security Emergency Management collaboration with public safety entities.** (Sponsors: Commissioners Nguyen and Ramirez)

**Chair Ramirez** invited Ken Snipes, Director of Homeland Security Emergency Management (HSEM) to begin his presentation to the commission.

**Director Snipes**, greeted the commissioners and began his presentation of responses to their questions that had been previously submitted to him on

- How does HSEM define its partnership with other public safety entities?
- How does HSEM strengthen collaboration among different public safety entities within and outside the city?
- How does HSEM ensure effective communication and coordination between various public safety agencies?
- How does HSEM leverage technology and data to enhance coordination and response efforts among different public safety agencies?
- How does HSEM actively involve other public safety entities in the development of emergency response plans, policies, and procedures?

**Director Snipes** responded to the all six questions; we (HSEM) have strong relationships with all public safety departments built on collaboration, support, and trust. We engage on a regular basis through training, engagement events, planning exercises and during emergencies. Also, we host a standard SPOC (Single Point of Contact) meetings with people around the city. In addition to the SPOC meetings, we hosted 10 POP UP Emergency Preparedness events this year to continue to inform/educate as many residents as possible on preparedness.

We (HSEM) do have relationships outside the City of Austin such as

- Big 5 Call (consists of Austin, Travis County, UT, Austin Community College and AISD)
  - this group originally started as a weather call
- CAPCOG (Capital Area Council of Governments) –Regional Coordination TEDM
- NGOs (Non-Governmental Organization) – Red Cross, Food Bank,

We have had one full scale event with CAPCOG this year and we also partner with Hays County.

There has been communication with BIG 5 to make sure all agencies are on the same page regarding the extreme heat this year. To ensure effective communication between the various groups, HSEM provides timely messaging and objective development, via EOC (Emergency Operations Center) Activations every 12 hrs operational update. The technology and data to support prompt emergency responses activities include use of Web EOC (Emergency Operations Center), Everbridge (Warns Central Texas) and STEAR (State of Texas Emergency Assistance Registry). In regards to the question on involving other public safety entities in the development of emergency response plans, policies and procedures; we involve departments and agencies that could be impacted by City of Austin’s emergency response policies, plans, and updates to those plans, and

any activation involving those plans that HSEM uses. We also use CRISP (Cybersecurity Risk Information Sharing Program). Director Snipes asked if there were any questions from the commissioners.

- Is there anything the Public Safety Commission could help you in going forward at HSEM? (Commissioner **Nguyen**) Response was currently we at HSEM are focused on the importance of preparedness and getting information to all people.
- The CERT program and bringing it back? (Commissioner **Bernhardt**) Response: We are looking to bring that program back.
- Explain/spell out some of the acronyms? (Commissioner **Ramirez**) Response: EOC – Emergency Operations Center), MOU (Memo of Understanding, CAPCOG (Capital Area Council of Governments)
- CRISP, is there any community engagement? (Commissioner **Smith**)
- Please explain what CRISP is? (**Ramirez**)
- Past two winter storms were there any MOU (Memo of Understanding) with other agencies to help the City of Austin with resources since previous two winter storms? (**Nguyen**)

**Commissioner Kiracofe** commented, Council Member Kelly’s office has recently hosted the CERT training for the community.

**4. Discussion and action on recommendation to City Council regarding FY 23-23 Proposed Budget impacts on public safety agencies. (Sponsors: Ruttan and Bernhardt)**

Two Speakers signed up:

- Marshall Corthan with Travis County Medical Society – spoke in support of keeping the City of Austin’s Medical Director’s office as is.
- Mark Ziebell, Emergency Physician – also spoke in favor/support of keeping the Medical Director’s office as is.

The three union reps (Robert (Bob) Nicks, Selena Xie and Thomas Villarreal) for the public safety departments shared comments on the most pressing needs for their respective departments, and the common need for all was more funding for salaries to support livable wages and help with recruiting more people to join their departments.

After much discussion, Chair Ramirez called for a vote on the draft recommendation that had been forwarded to the board. Commissioner Ruttan offered a friendly amendment to include that the office of the Medical Director not be changed until all stakeholders have an understanding of the reason for changing the position.

Vote on amendment:

Yes: 9

No: 0

Absent: 0

Abstain: Commissioner Smith

Friendly amendment approved.

Vote on Recommendation with Amendment

Yes: 9

No: 0

Absent: 0

Abstain: Commissioner Smith

Recommendation passes/approved



PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION  
RECOMMENDATIO No. 202300807-005

Date: August 7, 2023

Subject: Public Safety Budget Recommendation

Motioned by: Chair, Nelly Paulina Ramírez

Seconded by: Commissioner Timothy Ruttan

**Recommendation:** The Public Safety Commission recommends that the City Council take action to support the following budget items.

**Description of Recommendation to Council:**

The Austin Public Safety Commission is tasked with reviewing public safety agency budgets and providing recommendations to the Austin City Council. The Austin Fire Department, Austin Travis County EMS, and Austin Police Department provided backup materials and briefings at the June and August 2023 Public Safety Commission meetings on their FY23-24 forecasted budgets and unfunded budget priorities. The Public Safety Commission was also provided backup materials and a briefing on the 23-24 Community Investment Budget which urges investments in community health, affordability, sustainability, and safety for the FY23-24 budget and updates from labor union representatives and community advocates.

Therefore, The Public Safety Commission recommends that the City of Austin not restructure the Office of the Chief Medical Officer at this time in the current budget until further analysis of the

benefits and drawbacks of the move can be discussed with sufficient stakeholders and the following items be submitted to Austin City Council for consideration in the FY23-24 Fiscal Budget:

**Austin Fire Department**

Overtime usage stabilization (9 FTEs backfill for incr. leave usage, 8 FTEs & equip for squads)	\$1.8-3.6M
Staffing for two Ladders (32 FTEs & equip)	\$3.2M
Command Techs (9 FTEs to support BCs)	\$1.1M
Dispatchers (8 FTES, 2 per shift)	\$1.0M
Civilian support (5 FTEs)	\$336K
Total Operating	\$7.4M-\$9.2M
One-time funding: AEDs 130 @ \$2,100 ea. plus supplies	\$328K

DRAFT

**Austin Travis County EMS**

Recruiting Division – (11 FTEs, \$1,507,790 on-going, one-time \$40,000) Dedicated Recruiting staff to assist with year-round hiring processes for sworn positions	\$1.6M
Data Analytics - (2 FTEs, \$263,728 on-going, one-time \$10,000) FTEs to allow us to meet minimum program analytic requirements to ensure equity and efficiency in our service delivery.	\$264K
Collaborative Care Communications Center (C4) (10 FTEs \$1,131,865 on-going, one-time \$220,000) Expanding the program to 24-hour operations	\$1.35M
Unfunded Pilot Programs (5 FTEs \$944,000 on-going, one-time \$105,000) LakeMed, Airport Medic, Rainey St., CASTMED	\$1.05M
Total Operating	\$4.26M
Capital Improvement Plan (\$2,509,500 Medical Supplies; \$2,110,000 Vehicles) Fee assessment and In-Network engagements	\$4.66M
Total Debt	\$4.66M

**Austin Police Department**

Advertising Campaign for Sworn Recruiting	\$350K
Retention Bonus for Emergency Communication Division	\$501K
Advertising Campaign for Emergency Communication Div.	\$200K
4 Civilian FTEs for Open Records and Compliance with SB111	\$407K
Early Intervention System	\$750K
7 Civilian FTEs for Victim’s Services (contingent on losing VOCA funds)	\$770K
Total	\$2.97M

**Community Investment Budget**

EMS Wage Increase	\$14.7M
Domestic Abuse & Sexual Assault Victim services	\$1.2M
Office of Violence Prevention	\$500K
Inclement Weather Response	\$4.5M
Crisis Response	\$4M
Austin/Travis Co EMS Community Health Paramedics [\$1M]	\$1M
Resiliency Hubs [\$4.5M]	\$4.5M
Harm Reduction Services and Infrastructure [\$1M]	\$1M
Total for Public Safety programs	\$31.4M
Funding for programs across additional areas to support families and individuals across the city with inflation, housing & shelter, workforce development, stabilization, parks & libraries, inflation, food access, legal services, healthcare and more.	\$70.3M
Total	\$101.7M



**Rationale:** The Public Safety Commission believes the budget items listed in the recommendation are vital to operations of the public safety organizations and to a healthier and safer Austin.

**Vote:**

For: 9 (Commissioners Holmes, Kiracofe, Hall-Martin, Nguyen, Orr, Pena, Ramirez, Bernhardt, and Ruttan)

Against: 0

Abstain: 1 (Smith)

Absent: 0

Attest: *[Staff or board member can sign]*

*Future Agenda Items:*

Bike Lane Use - Commissioner Pena

Overtime discussion next month – (already scheduled)

Discussion on People with Disabilities and the Mayor’s Committee on Disabilities Joint Meeting (Ramirez)

Victims Services discussion if the added positions are not funded (Holmes)

Adjourned @ 5:53pm