

CITY OF ALAMO HEIGHTS
CITY COUNCIL
June 13, 2024

A workshop of the City Council of the City of Alamo Heights, Texas was held at the Council Chambers, located at 6116 Broadway, San Antonio, Texas, at 8:30 a.m. on Thursday, June 13, 2024. A teleconference was held via Zoom.

Present and composing a quorum were:

Mayor Bobby Rosenthal
Councilmember Lawson Jessee
Councilmember Karl P. Baker
Councilmember John Savage

Also attending were:

City Manager Buddy Kuhn
Assistant City Manager Phil Laney
Assistant to City Manager Jennifer Reyna
City Secretary Elsa T. Robles
Director of Finance Robert Galindo
Human Resources Manager Brenda Jimenez
Police Chief Rick Pruitt
Fire Chief Michael Gdovin
Community Development Services Director Lety Hernandez
Public Works Director Frank Orta
Deputy Police Chief Cindy Pruitt

Absent was:

Mayor Pro Tem Lynda Billa Burke
Councilmember Blake M. Bonner

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Mayor Bobby Rosenthal opened the meeting at 8:35 a.m.

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Item # 1 Mayor Rosenthal read the following caption.

Discuss the Strategic Action Plan for FY 25

City Manager Buddy Kuhn welcomed City Council and stated associates from TBG Partners would be presenting an update on the Broadway/Ogden and Pool Improvements project. He explained this would help them determine if they were going in the right direction and give them an opportunity to alter plans before moving forward.

Ms. Samantha Whitney addressed the Council and stated their team was excited to present a 50% schematic design for the pool area and for Broadway and Ogden Lane. She noted priority is the Broadway and Ogden Lane project. She introduced the team working on the projects: Elaine Kearney, Chris Jackson, Matt Yager of TBG Partners and Jeremy Doege, Ravali Kosaraju of WGI.

Ms. Whitney stated both projects are organized around the key principles of pedestrian safety, especially at Broadway and Ogden Lane, which is a vehicular intersection, and making

sure it is realigned to address pedestrian safety. With both projects, the team was tasked to find ways to connect the community to nature through connectivity, through activity, and making it clear how these places relate to one another, additionally, incorporate beautification and identity. Both projects are an opportunity to bring the public realm of Alamo Heights up to that level and standard of beauty and charm. She explained there are major centers of gravity in the area of the city, like Merit Coffee/shopping center, and nearby recreation area, ball fields, and pool. To tie all this together, the team sees transforming the space in front of Merit Coffee and intersection of Broadway/Ogden Lane as a public patio space for Alamo Heights. She reviewed a schematic of what they envisioned.

Mr. Jeremy Doege spoke about traffic at the project intersection. He stated he worked with city staff to determine how to address traffic control. He noted discussions were held regarding a signalized intersection to address safety concerns; however, the pedestrian/vehicular counts at this location did not warrant a signalized intersection. Instead, they propose to install a pedestrian hybrid beacon. He commented the goal was to reduce the width of Broadway at this intersection to close the gap on the distance/time pedestrians have to cross the street. To do this, they propose creating an island of refuge. Mr. Doege confirmed the total cost for the proposed project is \$200,000. He added it includes the beacons, push buttons, flat work, demolitions of the islands, and electrical components.

Councilmember Lawson Jessee stated his concern was enabling children to be able to cross Broadway at Ogden by establishing a protected crossing and red light. He shared other locations that have unsafe yellow pedestrian crossings. Ms. Ravali Kosaraju explained the proposed beacon sequence.

Council discussed moving the bus stop in the area and the opportunity to install another bus stop to reflect the City's charm. Mr. Doege stated they had not reached out to VIA but stated in past experience, they have found VIA is open to working with the cities.

Mr. Kuhn stated he did not think there was an issue with moving the bus stops or working with VIA, but advised there are concrete pads required at all bus stops. He shared, as part of the lower Broadway project, TxDOT is putting in and redoing all the concrete bus pads south of the City. He commented, with changing the desired scope, phasing the project might be a better option because of time constraints.

Mr. Kuhn noted moving the bus stop would require studies and time. Staff would not get an answer within a month or two, but perhaps if VIA committed to moving it, then TBG/WGI would be able to design the project with that in mind. He reminded Council the city would be competing with many other projects VIA may have.

Councilmember Jessee suggested staff reach out to the Alamo Heights ISD to get them on board. Mr. Kuhn stated it was a good idea because the project may affect school traffic flow.

Councilmember Baker suggested asking the AHISD for access to the fields on weekends via a gated entrance. Mr. Kuhn stated he could mention that; however, they need to keep in mind the ISD is concerned with school security.

Mr. Chris Jackson presented a sun and shade study at Broadway and Ogden Ln. He noted there is mature canopy that could be preserved/enhanced and turned into a plaza to allow people

to enjoy. The idea is to create a community patio. The area would tie into surrounding businesses, schools and could be blocked off for weekend events, etc. He stated there was an opportunity to do iconic signage or gateway celebrating Alamo Heights.

Other components that could be integrated are water features for white noise, large fans that could hang from trellises to enhance the microclimate, adjacent planting areas, and rain gardens. For security, a wrought iron fence could be installed as a boundary to help keep children safe at the plaza. The idea is to have connectivity to the community including the pool area. By installing proper bike racks, trash cans, and all of the infrastructure that would make this area a comfortable place for people to visit.

Councilmember Jesse liked the idea of a fountain, but suggested they keep it simple because it will be hard to maintain. He agreed with fencing to protect children from wandering into the street while visiting the plaza.

Councilmember Baker stated his concern was having good lighting in public spaces after dark. He suggested speaking to the businesses (Merit Coffee and Bike World) in the area about the design of the space to incorporate any ideas they may have. He added it would be good to be able to collaborate with them.

Ms. Whitney commented they incorporated soft warm lighting in the trees, integrated firefly lights, and down lights from the shades/trellises into the budget for the project. She discussed wayfinding and naming the public space "The Patio" because Alamo Heights is a residential community, and the name has a residential reference. The public space itself should feel like that with potted plants, and having an attitude of hospitality really feels authentic to what Alamo Heights is.

Council discussed additional details they would like to incorporate into Broadway/Ogden project. Mr. Kuhn stated it sounded like Council wanted to pursue the development a little bit further south, moving the bus pad, etc. and noted it made more sense to make it a broader project. In the interest of time, he suggested shifting the focus and spending more of the funds on the pool project and slowing down the Broadway/Ogden project.

Council discussed moving forward with the project and the impact on the design schedule. Mr. Kuhn stated staff would have to look at any conflicts with city utilities/manholes that may need to be moved for the project. He was concerned with the design and scope changing. Rushing through could lead to potential mistakes or not capturing Council's vision. He cautioned about added costs. Council asked staff to keep studying the Broadway/Ogden projections with added goals to try to get it started soon.

Mr. Matt Yager addressed the Council. He presented plans for the pool area project. The goal is to create a pedestrian path to link the Monarch Garden and the Purple Martin Birdhouses to the Alamo Heights Dog Park and work in the parking lots. They propose to add more trees in for shade and create a planting buffer between Viesca and the parking lot. To address safety concerns, they propose to reduce Viesca to a continuous 24' wide street to improve the predictability of traffic flow. He added shrinking the road will free up space for the parking lot and will allow for two drop offs, one along Viesca for the pool, and one in the parking lot for the baseball fields. In addition, they propose to provide a brick paver speed table at the pool entrance

to designate the pool entrance. He discussed increasing parking spaces from 260 with 5 ADA to 309 with 8 ADA parking spots.

Council discussed sodding and irrigating the empty field toward the east of the pool for a recreational area or applying artificial turf. Mr. Yager advised it was best to use a sod and irrigation system because artificial turf can become extremely hot and may need additional maintenance.

Mayor Rosenthal asked what the timeline looked like moving forward. Mr. Yager broke down the timeline and stated after finalizing design and documentation, it would leave about two months to get through the bid process and get a contractor on board before the deadline of December 31st.

Mayor Rosenthal stated he had no problem holding special meetings to finalize the project scope. Mr. Kuhn in the interest of time, staff will proceed along this timeline. Staff will work on contacting VIA, AHISD, and business owners. Council's consensus was to continue to focus on the Broadway and Ogden Ln improvements.

After a brief break, Community Development Services Department Director Lety Hernandez presented the FY24 SAP summary for her department. During the current fiscal year, the department fully implemented the My Government Online (MGO) software. She stated the department is still utilizing Incode for some projects; however, applicants are able to renew and see any information online. Additionally, the department is moving forward to adding the MapLink software to allow public access to property zoning information online.

Ms. Hernandez commented the department is reviewing commercial multifamily district zoning regulations, including residential, to clarify inconsistencies that were caused by previous revisions. Staff is also revising the current schedule of development fees.

To help community preservation, the department is reviewing Chapter 17 of the Code of Ordinances regarding subdivisions and researching what other cities are doing to maintain the look and feel of neighborhoods.

Ms. Hernandez stated the department is striving to provide better service. She noted goals for the upcoming fiscal year include reduction in turnaround time for staff review and response, assisting applicants with code compliant solutions to reduce board cases, lastly proactively identify and address code compliance and building related issues.

Council and staff discussed historical districts in the city and options given by Ms. Kelly Little. Mr. Kuhn advised Council needs to consider the community's opinion on this initiative and pointed out that only some residents attended the last Council meeting when this subject was discussed. He stated more research, and more citizen input is needed before diving into a project to establish this.

Councilmember Lawson Jessee discussed the need for contractors to contact the city's inspector. Mr. Kuhn explained the inspector works in other cities and does not provide his personal number. People need to call city staff who will relay messages to the inspector.

Councilmember Jessee asked for clarity on the permitting process. A discussion was held on the city's procedures for permit applications and turnaround time. Staff also discussed establishing a better process for residents requesting water wells.

Police Chief Rick Pruitt presented a summary of the Police Department's FY 2023-2024 initiatives. He stated the department successfully prepared for their Fourth Accreditation Inspection and which was officially received on December 6, 2023. He added AHPD developed a standard operating procedure to provide Narcan treatments for opioid overdoses while they wait for EMS to arrive. Records are kept each time it is used. Officers have been trained by the AH Fire Department and all police vehicles are supplied.

Police Chief Pruitt spoke about community engagement programs. He stated this was a collaboration between AHPD and Cambridge Elementary School; however, instead of creating new events for the school, they were going to get involved in the events the school already has.

Police Chief Pruitt stated the department has an agreement with SAPD Tactical who have unlimited resources available for emergency situations. AHPD trains regularly on all aspects of the tactical response and in-service school threat scenarios are also practiced. He continued to speak about FY24 SAP Capital Improvements. He noted 23 Body Worn Cameras were replaced, and the redaction software was updated. One 2016 Ford police interceptor was also replaced.

For FY25 SAP Initiatives, Police Chief Pruitt stated the department will implement a mapping and tracking GPS program to locate officers and patrol vehicles for added safety. Another initiative is exploring device location applications for radio system/mobile video equipment for officers who exit their vehicles. Additionally, the department will update the Emergency Operations Plan. Internally they established a new forward command for police and fire and will collaborate with non-sworn police personnel (analyst, public works, communications operators) on their responsibilities.

Police Chief Pruitt continued with FY25 Initiatives. The department will work on establishing mapping for road closures, evacuation/shelter in place areas. They will focus on contingency planning for the high school campus construction and off-campus parking. He stated they are exploring options for officer safety during searches for individuals who are lost or evading arrest and for weapons or explosive devices. Two options are the use of K-9s or drones.

Police Chief Pruitt stated they continue to work with the Alamo Heights ISD (AHISD) to provide SRO coverage to five campuses. Coverage was provided with three SROs to those campuses for the school year 2023-2024; however, only one is returning the next school year. He stated recruitment for other SROs are through advertisements to replace the two vacant SRO positions. He added he would be presenting three applicants to the AHISD for consideration.

FY25 SAP Capital Improvements include the replacement of nine mobile video cameras with Axon equipment for the quoted price of \$117,863. To offset this cost, the department will delay the purchase of two police SUV units & equipment (\$108,480). They also request to replace two mobile data computers for patrol vehicles for the quoted price of \$13,536.

Police Chief Pruitt reviewed the 5 Year SAP Priorities which include studying on-going police reforms; adjust operations/policies/training as mandated; maintain Texas Commission on Law Enforcement and TPCA accreditation standards, developing a progressive approach to

resolving current and anticipated on-street parking issues; high school on-street parking increase, evaluate entry level police field training for inexperienced officers entering police service directly from the academy, and evaluate AHPD police preparedness for response to critical, life-threatening situations.

Council and staff discussed the feasibility of utilizing drones in the city. Mr. Kuhn stated staff had studied this a few years ago and discovered that there are several parameters in play. Being so close to the airport there is licensing and pilot certification required by the FAA. He added they can be expensive but agreed it could be used by police and fire departments.

Mr. Kuhn shared staff is considering purchasing an ATV for police and fire to use. He added they are still researching to find options, but it can be purchased with funds from this fiscal year's budget.

Fire Chief Michael Gdovin reported on the Fire Department's FY 2022-2023 SAP initiatives summary. He stated they focused on the Behavioral Health Unit and recognized there are patients who are not physically injured but need to go to a facility for mental help. He stated the department updated sixteen of the twenty-three Emergency Management Annexes in Texas, All Hazards Planning Systems Program, renewed the Texas Department of State Health Services Continuing Education Program, renewed the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendment (CLIA) Program, and continued to develop EMS ultrasound technology.

Fire Chief Gdovin shared FY24-25 Fire Department initiatives. Staff will continue tree trimming in the right-of-way, continue on-going compliance progress with Texas Fire Chiefs Association Best Practices recognition program. They will promote "Civilian Response to Active Shooter/Active Attack Events" training, continue specifications for new fire apparatus, and conduct a City staff Emergency Management Drill.

Other FY24-25 initiatives are continued Tactical Emergency Casualty Care training, implementing an EMS Behavioral Health Unit, continuing specifications for new ambulance, developing additional C.I.S.M. team members, obtaining grant assistance for CISM wellness, and evaluating staff wages/benefits for recruitment and retention efforts.

Fire Chief Gdovin noted the department seeks to renew DEA registration, Texas Department of State Health Services Continuing Education Program, Clinical laboratory Improvement Amendments waiver, Controlled Substance registration certificate, and AHEMS Provider license as part of the FY24-25 Initiatives.

Fire Chief Gdovin reviewed the 5-Year Fire Capital Replacement plan to fund the purchase of an F250 crew cab 4x4, 10 Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA), and a Quint 105' ladder truck. The 5-Year EMS Capital Replacement plan includes funding for 1 stretcher, 4 cardiac monitors, 9 Automated External Defibrillator (AED), 2 more stretchers, and an ambulance chassis and Frazer ambulance module. He added like the police department, fire truck purchases were pushed back.

Assistant City Manager Phillip Laney presented the Public Works Department FY23-24 initiatives including Utilities. He identified the streets that are on target for the Street Maintenance Program (SMP) this fiscal year. He stated Public Works completed the pedestrian

improvements in the city and reviewed pedestrian projects in progress to the west of Townsend to address foot traffic during the school season.

Mr. Laney shared FY23-24 Utility initiatives. TCEQ compliance for water/sewer separation (4 X 2) requirement – install water mains (contract) & service runs (City forces) along Wildrose, Cloverleaf & Rosemary (Phases 1 & 2 of 3) are complete. The city revised plans for the remaining improvements by using city staff to install water mains (Phase 1) & service runs (Phase 2) concurrently on Claywell, E Oakview, E Edgewood & half of Elmview. This phase will start soon. There are continuing improvements at Well #5, updating systems and electrical components to ensure it is in good working condition.

Public Works FY25 Initiatives will focus on the continued SMP to revitalize city streets. Staff proposes water meter replacements with digital AMI meters as recommended after a FY2023 study, an estimated cost of \$3.9M to \$6.2M.

Additional initiatives include the reconditioning of the two City Hall water towers with a total estimated cost of \$800,000 split over two years. The purchase of a 9-Yard Dump Truck for Utilities - \$140,000 and a 12-Yard Dump Truck – \$140,000. There are maintenance priorities to develop & utilize the Asset Management Program to determine infrastructure improvement priorities for alley reconstruction – portion south of Wildrose, Cloverleaf & Rosemary (3 block sections total), continued Street Maintenance Program (SMP) and a capital purchase to replace a Garbage Truck with Grappler Truck – \$250,000.

Utilities FY24-25 SAP initiatives will focus resolve the TCEQ non-compliance issues, water meter change outs, water tower maintenance, and work with partners on lower Broadway water and sewer utility connections. Capital purchase requests include replacements of a Backhoe - \$145,000, Pothole Patch Truck - \$250,000, Skid Loader - \$120,000, and two 1-Ton Pickups - \$135,000.

Mr. Laney continued to review FY24 SAP Initiatives for Utilities. To promote water resiliency efforts, staff proposes a well overhaul at Well #5 at Evans & Penny. This includes replacing column pipe, pump drive motor, electrical soft start, and replacing well house/repaint. The estimated cost is \$160,000.

Mr. Kuhn presented a recap of FY24 SAP Initiatives for the Austin Hwy/Lower Broadway Project. There are continuing efforts to coordinate with TxDOT, Bexar County, S.A.R.A., City of San Antonio, and MPO. He shared TxDOT had acquired a new district engineer. He and staff attended stakeholder meetings in May 2024. The possible start date for the project is still being determined. Mr. Kuhn noted the next meeting is June 26, 2024.

Mr. Kuhn discussed the \$2,136,537 received in federal funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). He reminded Council there are restrictions on how the money can be spent. He stated as of March 2023, the remaining ARPA Funds including interest is \$1,556,444. The funds must be obligated on eligible projects by December 31, 2024 and spent by December 31, 2026. Mr. Kuhn warned Council, there is a possibility federal legislation will claw back unspent funds.

Mr. Kuhn briefly spoke on the FY24-25 projects which include the Beautification and Crosswalk upgrade at Ogden and Broadway, and the AH Pool parking lot. He stated as they heard earlier in the workshop, TBG will continue with the project design work as requested by Council.

As part of the FY25 Initiatives, Mr. Kuhn advised a COLA for all employees is being evaluated based on market conditions and inflation. Currently the baseline is at 3% for FY25, but additional research is needed. He will work with Councilmember John Savage to determine a feasible amount based on projections and budget availability. Additional increases are being considered for Public Works. Employee insurance proposals will be available by September 2024. He added the TMRS rate would remain unchanged for 2025 at 17.25%.

Mr. Kuhn stated he wanted to expand on the proposal to increase wages for the Public Works department. It was discovered there were discrepancies, and low wages in the department. He shared the department had lost 23 employees since 2020, many were due to a lack of competitive wages. Staff proposes to reduce positions and maintain the same level of service. Mr. Kuhn stated this equates to about \$75,000 savings that can be allocated back into the general fund for salaries increases in the department.

To address wages in Utilities, staff proposes in-house installations of water mains & services runs for TCEQ 4 X 2 compliance estimated to save about \$1M in the Utilities Fund, \$93,000 of the savings can be redirected to wage increases. With the proposed wage increases, all non-leadership positions will be at or above adjusted market wages for FY 2025. Council discussed proposed increases and agreed it was needed to retain good talented employees.

Additional FY25 SAP initiatives are establishing a crosswalk at Cloverleaf/N. New Braunfels, adding a pedestrian/bike path at Alamo Heights Blvd, installing a roundabout at AH Blvd and Inslee Ave., adding four sided crosswalks at existing two-way streets, and the continuation of grant funds for community organizations. Council agreed to continuing grant funding but suggested there be a deadline to use the funds or forfeit them.

Mr. Kuhn continued reviewing ideas for FY25 initiatives which include additional electronic speed signs, the continuation of Grace/McEwan Consulting for assistance with TxDOT on the Broadway corridor project, hosting a Volunteer Appreciation Dinner as in the previous year, and increasing solid waste tipping fees.

Mr. Kuhn noted he would elaborate later on the proposed solid waste fee increase. He continued to highlight additional initiatives such as hiring a consultant to assist with the revitalization of the business district and adjacent Multi-Family district, and funding for additional stops signs requested by residents. Council briefly discussed concerns with multi-family districts but did not see the need to hire a consultant at this time.

Mr. Kuhn reviewed the City's 5-Year SAP priorities, City hall was completed in late 2014 and staff will need to make plans for ongoing maintenance as needed. He identified increased expenses in recent years for air conditioning repairs. In addition, the SMP goal of \$1,000,000/year will continue. The dedicated sales tax is renewed by voter approval every 4 years. The next sales tax election is in May 2025 along with the General Election.

Mr. Kuhn noted there would be limited Council projects in future years due to the pending Austin Hwy/Lower Broadway Project; however, some feasible projects ideas for neighborhood project are pocket parks, pedestrian lighting, and new water meters. Additionally, staff is exploring a project to enhance the city's website to incorporate ADA Accessibility enhancements under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Other staff goals are to keep property tax rates as low as possible. There was a reduction in the debt service rate from 5.9 cents to 5.7 cents. The original 2021 voter approved rate was 7 cents. Staff will continue with maximum transfers to the Capital Replacement Fund for capital equipment and strive to maintain S&P AAA Bond Rating.

Mr. Kuhn stated he wanted to discuss the proposed solid waste fee increase. He said solid waste fees have not been raised since 2009. Currently, trash is picked up three times a week for about 85 cents per pick up. Due to projections that property tax revenues are going to be significantly less this year, staff started exploring other avenues to increase income for the city. Mr. Kuhn reviewed the solid waste revenues and expenditures. Since FY 2019, annual Solid Waste expenses exceeded fee revenues by \$360,000 to \$570,000. In FY 2019, fees covered 45% of expenses; in FY 2024, fees cover less than 39%. He pointed out that the city pays to recycle that has increased about 624%, an increase from \$10.45 to \$75.71.

Council discussed options to raise the solid waste fees as proposed. They agreed it should be an increase of \$10.00 upfront with additional fee increases in the future. Mr. Kuhn stated staff would work on this plan and present a proposal at the budget workshop in July.

In closing Mr. Kuhn recapped noted tasks.

- Contact AHISD, Merit Coffee, Bike World, and VIA on the beautification project
- Contact Ms. Ann McGlone to discuss historical preservation in the city
- Complete ARB changes with Councilmember Jessee
- Request response from City Attorney regarding historical districts
- Formalize a process for well permits
- Look at adding additional speed signs
- Continue to study drones
- Golf cart usage in the city
- Continue working with COSA on crosswalks
- Painting the water towers
- COLA/Public Works wage increases


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With no further business to consider, the workshop ended at 1:05 p.m.

PASSED AND APPROVED THIS 8TH DAY OF JULY, 2024.


Elsa T. Robles, IRMC
City Secretary




Bobby Rosenthal
Mayor