

COPS/Metro session draws virtual crowd of 600 to quiz San Antonio candidates

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More than 600 San Antonio community members tuned in to a virtual accountability session where city politicians and candidates addressed police reform, workforce development, education and February's power outages.

Communities Organized for Public Service and the Metro Alliance, or COPS/Metro, hosted the session Sunday in the runup for the city election May 1. Early voting starts Monday.

Nearly 40 incumbents and challengers running for mayor, city council and San Antonio Independent School District board seats joined the conversation.

One notable absence was mayoral candidate Greg Brockhouse, who'd agreed to participate on April 5, but sent an e-mail declining the opportunity hours before the Zoom-based panel began, organizers said.

In a later interview, Brockhouse said COPS/Metro mischaracterized his commitment to attend and provided a copy of an email exchange March 30 in which he told organizers he had an appointment Sunday afternoon that he wasn't sure he could break. The emails set up the April 5 conversation in which the group said he affirmed he was planning to be there.



San Antonio Mayor Ron Nirenberg listens to candidates speaks during a COPS/Metro accountability session in 2019. The candidates were asked to answer yes or no to questions about housing, immigration and economic issues, including wages.

Carlos Javier Sanchez / Contributor

Mayor Ron Nirenberg attended the session and voiced his support of the COPS/Metro agenda, saying of police reform efforts, “I am not silent on this agenda as we’re currently bargaining, and I will not be silent if we have a contract that falls short.”

Sonia Rodriguez, a COPS/Metro leader from Saint Margaret Mary’s Catholic Church, found Brockhouse’s absence disappointing.

“It was quite a surprise to find out this morning, at around ... nine o’clock, that he had a previous commitment,” she said, adding that the candidate’s actions spoke “loud and clear - we got it.”

Regarding workforce development, Nirenberg noted his collaboration with COPS/Metro on developing the SA Ready to Work program to be paid for with the 1/8-cent sales tax that San Antonio voters approved in November.

“It is our greatest generational opportunity to turn back cycles of generational poverty and turn this once low-wage town into one that is equitable for all people,” he said.

Nirenberg also voiced support for an independent investigation into February’s mass power outages and plans to make recommendations to help ensure a similar situation doesn’t occur again.



San Antonio City Council member and mayoral candidate Greg Brockhouse takes a moment to think during a COPS/Metro accountability session two years ago. Brockhouse didn’t attend a similar session on Sunday. Carlos Javier Sanchez / Contributor

The mayor also said, “It was one of the great honors of my life to lead the development and ratification of an affordable housing framework that is comprehensive and compassionate, and we will also lead the way as we currently are underway with implementation of that framework.”

When letting them know on Sunday morning that he couldn’t be at the accountability session, Brockhouse said, according to an email he provided, “I appreciated our talk last week and am thankful for the invitation. My positions stand on all items as a yes, with the exception of Prop B, which I am a No and will be voting against.”

According to COPS/Metro, five people in addition to Brockhouse didn’t participate after previously agreeing to do so.

They included District 2 councilwoman Jada Andrews-Sullivan, District 10 councilman Clayton Perry, District 2 council candidate Chris Dawkins, District 2 council candidate Kristi Villanueva and SAISD District 3 candidate Leticia Ozuna.

“We've heard from the candidates, and yes, we've even heard from those who didn't show up,” said Jerry Dailey, Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church pastor and COPS/Metro leader. “But more important than that, I hope and pray that the candidates heard from us.

“I hope that they heard from our track record, that we speak truth to power.”

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Yolanda Turner, a COPS/Metro leader from Macedonia Missionary Baptist, said she was disappointed that incumbent office-holders were among the no-shows.

COPS/Metro will use the candidates answers from the session to develop a “report card” to help educate voters.

“We're big believers in making this democracy work, and it works when people are educated on the issues and they vote,” Rodriguez said. “Our job is to make sure we get every single person that we can to the polls.”



San Antonio City Council member and mayoral candidate Greg Brockhouse takes a moment to think during a COPS/Metro accountability session two years ago. Running for mayor again, Brockhouse didn't attend a similar session on Sunday. Carlos Javier Sanchez / Contributor

“We will do whatever we can to fight the kinds of voter suppression that is going on not just in Texas, but in so many states throughout the country.”

Turner agreed that getting people to vote is critical for democracy.

“That's the only voice we've got, and every voice needs to be heard,” she said. “That's the voice that we need to hear - we the people - and so that's my thing, voter education and getting those voters to the polls.”

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