



**EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCIL  
MINUTES**

**REGULAR MEETING  
Wednesday, November 9, 2016**

The Early Childhood Council convened in a regular meeting on Wednesday, November 9, 2016 in the Boards and Commissions room at City Hall, located at 301 West 2<sup>nd</sup> Street.

Board Members in Attendance: Chair Larry Elsner, Vice Chair Monica Sanchez and Commissioners Garry Brown, Kyle Holder, Aletha Huston, Roscoe Overton, Rhonda Paver, Jacquie Porter, Brook Son, and Sebastian Wren.

Board Members not in attendance: N/A

Staff in Attendance: Health and Human Services Department (HHSD) staff – Laura Williamson.

Chair Larry Elsner called the Board Meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

1. INTRODUCTIONS: Members of the audience introduced themselves to the Council members.
2. DISCLOSURE OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST: None
3. CITIZEN COMMUNICATION: No speakers present.
4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:
  - a) Member Brown motioned to approve the October 12, 2016 Regular Meeting Minutes, Member Porter seconded. Minutes were approved with a 9-0- vote with Member Brook off the dais.
5. PRESENTATIONS – Julia Campbell, Austin Parks and Recreation Department – Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights
  - Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights will likely be on a Council agenda in January for potential adoption of the plan
  - Children are not currently spending enough time outside
    - Studies have shown that kids who have regular interaction with nature are healthier, happier, and smarter
  - Austin was one of six cities to receive a \$25,000 Planning Grant from the National League of Cities and the Nature Network to connect children to nature
    - The City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department dedicated an additional \$25,000 in funding to assist in the planning effort
    - The combined total funding resulted in a 6 month effort to develop a plan to get more kids connected to nature more equitably
  - Participants in the planning process included:
    - 10 City departments
    - 40 organizations
    - 75 individuals

- Core Planning Team included:
  - 38 members from 10 City departments, Austin Independent School District, representation from the nonprofit sector, and healthcare providers
  - 2 meetings per month, 9 meetings total
- 6 Working Groups included: Data Collection, Health, Community Engagement, Nonprofits, Education, Policy
  - Each group met monthly for a combined total of 24 meetings
- Planning process highlights:
  - GIS mapping model provided a “Nature Equity Score” for every zip code in Austin
  - 90 organizations completed an in-depth survey regarding nature based programming in Austin
  - Over 800 children and adults completed a community survey about personal barriers and access to nature
  - A Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights resolution was created to be presented to City Council
- Implementation Key Strategies:
  - Green School Parks: Partnership with AISD campuses that have existing joint-use agreements with Parks and Recreation to create enriched green school yards for daily access to nature for students
  - Public Awareness and Marketing Campaign
  - Park & Program Activation: Create comprehensive nature based program directory and program alignment
  - Interdepartmental Communication & Master Plan Tracking: Participation in CodeNEXT and identification of department Master Plans and major initiative goals that align with the children in nature mission
- Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights Resolution
  - Purpose: A means to express the core tenants of the Cities Connecting Children to Nature project and the vision for Austin’s children
  - Goal: Bring awareness and attention to the issue of children’s health and development as it relates to nature connection
  - Support from the Early Childhood Council would convey that City leadership believes that access to natural spaces is a priority for all children in Austin and that the City government needs to help ensure children have opportunities to interact with natural environments
- Next steps:
  - Select pilot elementary school and begin planning process for green school park project
  - Schedule Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights for January City Council meeting
  - Begin hiring for the Implementation Plan Manager
  - Reform Implementation Leadership Team
- Discussion regarding whether the City will eventually have to fund the program
  - Still undetermined, but Department may request an FTE after grant funds have been expended
- Pilot school selection process didn’t include traditional application due to timeline and burdens of schools associated with applying
  - Looked at greatest needs areas and identified Barrington, Wooldridge, and Cook as potential options
    - Barrington and Wooldridge have expressed interest in participating, Cook would rather hold off for now due to recent staff turnover
  - Pilot project will include 2 other school as control groups, with the intent to expand the program to those schools at a later time
- Safety impacts ability to use open green space; discussion around safety precautions taken as part of program
  - No direct plans as part of program, but considered significant safety work done as part

- of the Restore Rundberg efforts in the area
- Cross departmental efforts with Austin Police Department
- Hoping to bring trainings for how to engage activity for children 0-5 years old
  - Current focus on elementary schools, trying to begin with low-hanging fruit where some resources currently exist
- Austin is 1 of 6 cities in initiative, experts will help develop metrics to measure impact
  - First time this type of project has been done on a City level rather than through organizations
- Member Sanchez motions for the Early Childhood Council to endorse the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights
- Member Holder seconds the motion
- Motion passes 10-0

6. WORK GROUP REPORTS AND POSSIBLE ACTIONS –

- a) Executive Work Group – Board Retreat Update
- b) 2017 Calendar Dates for Early Childhood Council meetings – (Possible Action Item: Approval of 2017 meeting dates/location of the Early Childhood Council)
  - Member Huston motions to pass the proposed 2017 calendar
  - Member Brown seconds
  - Motion passes 10-0
- c) Policy Work Group update
  - Meeting conducted to discuss focus
    - Policy goals:
      - Help ECC educate the City Council and public on the importance of early childhood education
      - Stability for children in relation to childcare, school, housing, and jobs
      - Helping educate the community at large and Council about the return on investment for early childhood investments
    - Strategies:
      - Present information in small, manageable chunks rather than large white paper(s)
      - Releasing information about Council districts as part of informal releases
    - Concerns, consideration, and timing:
      - Prioritizing part of work group efforts
      - AISD budget and the impact redistribution of funds has on ability to provide services and programs locally
        - Will look for possible connections between City and School District for potential funding partnership opportunities
- d) Public Engagement Work Group update
  - Group has not met, but is working to set up a meeting
- e) Cross Systems Work Group update
  - Ambitious range of groups considering connections with, with primary focus on housing, reentry, and the Austin Police Department
    - Identified other options including
      - New Community Schools initiative
      - Whole health community
      - Childcare providers
      - Mayor's office
    - Could be overlap between the Cross Systems and Policy Work Group
      - Need to ensure work is targeted and doesn't overlap or duplicate efforts
    - Hope to connect with other groups in more focused way
      - Building on conversation with Chief Acevedo that began at October meeting
        - Could identify mutual interests

- Connecting with housing and City’s approach to housing
      - Emphasize needs for families with children
  - Want to talk with general group to gauge whether targeted focus or broad approach is better
    - Discussion regarding focus on two areas including:
      - How to engage with housing systems
      - Engaging further with the Austin Police Department
    - Even with specific focus, is ideal for work groups to be somewhat open as issues come up throughout the year

7. STAFF BRIEFING AND POSSIBLE ACTIONS –

- a) None

8. SUCCESS BY 6 UPDATE – Alison Bentley

- a) Success by 6 Stakeholder Meeting Update

9. RELATED GROUPS –

- a) Austin Association for the Education of Young Children
  - None
- b) Child Care Licensing
  - None
- c) Child Incorporated
  - None
- d) E3 Alliance
  - Upcoming Dallas conference, will look at how cities can be involved
  - Data is showing that school readiness last year drops and correlates with drop in State investments in Health and Human Services
  - Correlation between children entering pre-k with evaluations and readiness level for kindergarten
    - If scores improve during pre-k, students are 7-10 times more likely to be ready for kindergarten
- e) Workforce Solutions
  - None
- f) Extend-A-Care
  - Asked by members if current childcare enrollment freeze is impacting their clients
    - They have openings but it’s difficult to get children enrolled with freeze in place

10. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS –

- a) Greater Austin Community Schools Coalition presentation
- b) Impact of childcare enrollment freeze

**ADJOURNMENT** –Meeting adjourned at 10:17 a.m. without objection.