

City Council Regular Meeting Transcript – 03/26/2020

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[2:08:17 PM]

>> Mayor Adler: What I'm looking at right now is a screen that has three of mfi colleagues across the top and one-third and the middle one-third I see three colleagues and the -- two colleagues and the city attorney. And then I'm seeing one of my colleagues in the bottom one-third. So I see one two three four five -- six colleagues on the screen and there are five colleagues on the dais. I'm going to call roll and as we call roll we'll check and see if we can hear you and we'll talk about what you're seeing and whether you're hearing from people. So first, councilmember harper-madison, can you hear us?

>> Harper-madison: Present and accounted for.

>> Mayor Adler: Are you seeing everybody?

>> Harper-madison: I see everybody with the exception of the folks who are in chambers right now.

>> Mayor Adler: So you see the six people that are up, but don't see the people in the chambers?

>> Harper-madison: I see the six people -- seven people including myself, but

[2:09:18 PM]

I cannot see chambers. I can sort of see the script going across the bottom, sort of.

>> Mayor Adler: Hold on a second. Let's see if we can get a chamber view.

>> Harper-madison: There we go. So councilmember harper-madison can't see the chamber.

>> Harper-madison: I see you now.

>> Mayor Adler: You do? Okay. I think maybe you're set. Mayor pro tem Garza, are you here?

>> Garza: I'm here.

>> Mayor Adler: Can you see everybody?

>> Garza: I can see everyone.

>> Mayor Adler: Okay. We can hear you fine. Can everybody on the screen hear the mayor pro tem when she spoke? Raise your hand if you hear her. Got it. Councilmember Renteria? I think your mic might be muted.

[2:10:21 PM]

>> Renteria: How about now?

[Laughter].

>> Mayor Adler: We got you now. All right. That sounds good. All right, councilmember Casar?

>> Casar: I'm here, can you guys hear me?

>> Mayor Adler: Everybody hear Greg? Good. I would assume people can hear. Councilmember Flannigan?

>> Flannigan: Everybody hear councilmember Flannigan?

>> Flannigan: I'm here.

>> Mayor Adler: Good. Councilmember pool. You set now? Councilmember Ellis? You there?

>> Ellis: I am here. Can you hear me?

>> Mayor Adler: We can hear you loud and clear. Councilmember tovo. You there?

>> Tovo: I am here. I can't see anyone for the most part, including the chambers. I have one visible square. Now I can see the chambers. But otherwise I can't see any of the individuals there. I can see like an a, and M, but I can't see any faces

[2:11:21 PM]

any longer. I could when we were setting up.

>> Mayor Adler: Okay. Hang on a second. Let us know if they comb back. So councilmember tovo doesn't have any faces on her screen. As long as you can see the chamber -- I think what they're saying, councilmember tovo, is they don't know why that's happened on your screen and it shouldn't happen if

everybody else is able to see it. So it's not a feed coming from us that creates that issue. They think it might be on your end. But at the very least you can hear everybody and you can participate audibly.

>> Tovo: I can.

>> Mayor Adler: If for

[2:12:22 PM]

whatever reason you're missing anything, interrupt, a detail you're missing because you're on audio as opposed to video. Is councilmember pool able to hear everybody?

>> Pool: [Inaudible].

>> Alter: I can't hear councilmember pool.

>> Mayor Adler: Her mic's not on.

>> Pool: Can you hear me now?

>> Mayor Adler: Yes, everybody can hear you now.

>> Pool: Great, thank you.

>> Mayor Adler: And councilmember kitchen.

>> Kitchen: Can y'all hear me? I'm here.

>> Mayor Adler: Yep, that worked. And then --

>> Alter: Can you do pool again?

>> Mayor Adler: Councilmember pool, would you say hi again?

>> Pool: Trying it again, can you hear me?

>> Mayor Adler: We're set. And then we have city attorney Ann Morgan joining us on the phone. And we have city manager Spencer Cronk also joining us.

>> Hi, everyone.

>> I'm here too.

[2:13:24 PM]

>> Mayor Adler: I'm sorry, I didn't get you.

>> Alter: That's okay.

>> Mayor Adler: Everybody hear councilmember alter? All right. So with that, I'm going to call into order here on Thursday, March 26th, 2020, Austin city council meeting taking place here and virtually. We have as we've just gone through, we have a quorum, everyone is present. Five people -- six people -- five people here and six people remoting in. And we're in city council chambers. It is 2:12 and we're going to begin the meeting. Soso colleagues, this is --

[2:14:24 PM]

colleagues, this is how we've talked about doing this. Before we start I want you to know that we have teleconferenced in the staff so they can speak to the agenda items. So if you want to hear from -- if you want to hear from staff, ask. We'll take questions from staff just like we normally do during the debate part of the process. We have some speakers on the phone that have signed up in advance. It's my intent to treat this as we do debate on the consent agenda in regular meetings. I'm going to call everybody. There are 28 people, two more signed in, so we have 30 people present. We will give everybody three minutes. We will go through the list and they'll have a chance to speak.

>> Hello? Hello?

>> Mayor Adler: After they've had a chance to --

>> Hello? Can you hear me?

>> Mayor Adler: So I need all the speakers right now

[2:15:25 PM]

to mute their phones or to hang on. We'll get to speakers in a second. Everyone is going to get three minutes. We're going to go through and call everybody by name. You can speak to anything on the agenda that you want to. After the last speaker speaks, then we're going to disconnect the speakers. Residents can continue to watch this meeting on the web at atxn.tv. You can go to Time Warner, channel 6 --

>> Can I please interject something?

>> Mayor Adler: Not yet, no. Grande communications on channel 6 or AT&T iverse customers on channel 9. After that I'm going to read the changes and corrections. We'll take a look at the consent agenda. We'll pass the things we can on consent. We'll handle item number 60, which is the Austin housing

[2:16:26 PM]

finance corporation meeting. We will then go to the zoning consent. Jerry is going to be here to help us facilitate that. And then we'll do any items that are in discussion that the council decides it wants to do as opposed to putting those off if they turn into discussion items. And then we have item 93, the covid-19 believing. I'm going to be here for as much of this as I can, but I've coordinated with mayor pro tem's office, I'm going to go on and off the dais. With that, we would then begin with the speakers and everyone will have three minutes. I'm going to call the speakers in the order that they signed up as if we were calling people in chambers. So we're going to begin with Cyrus reed. Is Mr. Reed on the phone?

>> Yes, I am. Can you hear me?

>> Mayor Adler: We can hear you well. Please go ahead, your three minutes.

>> Great. I'll be very brief.

[2:17:30 PM]

I'm here to speak on item 2, which is the . Austin generation plan. I was a member of the Austin generation plan working group. I'm also on the PUC, R, so I'm really here mainly to say that the group met for six months, we worked cooperatively with Austin energy. We came up with what we think are some good recommendations going forward in terms of committing ourselves to a no carbon future by 2035. And the continued shut down of the coal plants and some individual gas plants as well as continued improvements in energy efficiency, solar and local thermal storage. The plan went to the PUC and the rmc. There was unanimous consent on adding four additional items that I hope you will also consider.

[2:18:30 PM]

There was one difference of opinion on how we do an update to the plan. My local executive committee of Austin group believes that you should go ahead and do an update sooner rather than later. I'll leave that up to your guys' discretion, but I do believe it would make sense, assuming you're planning to adopt the plan and the four unanimous recommendations to have a future meeting where you discuss how we do an update to the plan. The planning process was not perfect. This is not to play the blame game. We're all collectively at fault in terms of we didn't do a better public process and making sure that all of the members of the community are heard at a time when most people have jobs

[indiscernible]. So I think that's something for a future discussion about how to make the

[2:19:31 PM]

process even better than it was. And with that I'll end my statement. And thank you for all you're doing during this obviously struggling time. I really appreciate the leadership of all the council on all the issues, not just this issue. Thank you.

>> Mayor Adler: Mr. Reed. Thank you. Is Carlos Leon here?

>> Sure am, mayor.

>> You have three minutes, sir.

>> You got it. March 26, 2020. First and foremost, gracias audios for letting me did he manned that Austin helps Austin credits get food and drink now to survive covid-19 measures until local, state and federal short-term and long-term assistance kicks in. Outside of grocery stores and construction, most non-salaried service workers are being starved out by severely reduced or

[2:20:33 PM]

nonexistent income. Because most church food pantries are wrongly closed because of the coronavirus. Staying fed and hydrated is a problem for many right now. Therefore direct the city manager to immediately reallocate nonessential funds to address this essential top priority now. Start by withdrawing items 26, 30, 44 and 45 now to use that combined \$2.1 million to get healthy food and water to those in need now. Purchase 30,000 H.E.B. Gift cards of \$70 each. Pick one H.E.B. Per district and tell the public March 29th you will be handing them out at the entrance of those h.e.b.'s, 3,000 cards per store, to those most in need from 8:00 A.M. Until you're out of cards. It will work because H.E.B. Already lines up customers six feet apart outside the

[2:21:35 PM]

store. Limit the number of customers inside and has one or more cops at the entrance to enforce the rule. You public servants cannot hide from us by wrongly teleconferencing council meetings and closing city hall to the public. Therefore, immediately reopen city hall to the public and return to in-person council meetings with social distancing like what H.E.B. Does to again basically work for us, members of the public, the right way, or risk being legally removed asap, then hounded the rest of your professional lives becau today's upside town totalitarian power grab against us will not be tolerated. Also abort item 51 now and forever because abortion should be curbed, not celebrated. Because it's the first degree murder of the most

[2:22:36 PM]

innocent human life beginning at conception. In Jesus name I pray, amen. Thank the lord. God bless Texas, the united States of America, constitutional law and truth. And above all, god's word.

>> Mayor Adler: Thank you. Is Paul Robbins here?

>> I am.

>> Mayor Adler: Mr. Robbins, you have three minutes as well.

>> Council, I am an intervenor in the Austin portion of the Texas gas service rate case. I'm asking for 10 minutes to make my case, which is likely a lot less time than the gas company will have. I realize that almost all your time is distracted by the pandemic. I thank you for your service in this difficult episode, however, when this is over

[2:23:37 PM]

we will have to recover and onerous utility rates do not make recovery easier. Am I coming through?

>> Mayor Adler: You are, Mr. Robbins. Mr. Robbins, item number 59 is not the hearing on the merits today, it only sets the public hearing for the merits for April 9th.

>> Okay.

>> Mayor Adler: So the action item today is just to set that on April 9th so people have notice so you will have an opportunity to address the merits on April 9th. Is that okay?

>> Are you asking me to curtail the rest of my speech, mayor?

>> Mayor Adler: No, it is your speech. You can use it however you want, I just want you to know that you didn't need to have 10 minutes today to speak on the merits because the only thing we're doing today is the setting.

>> Okay. Let me circle back to the speech. And thank you. There are at least four issues for you to consider.

[2:24:38 PM]

First Texas gas service does not have any substantial assistance program to help low income ratepayers. Austin energy usually spends about \$10 million a year. Last year the gas company sent about 78,000. Half of this came from individual charitable contributions. Putting a surcharge on the bill to create a half a-million-dollar a year program will increase the average residential rate by no more than one-sixth of one percent. Second, the gas company has no plan to adopt renewable energy. A surcharge similar to the one proposed for customer assistance to fund the 300,000-dollar renewable energy research fund to be given to credible laboratories would set a

[2:25:38 PM]

precedent around the country. The rates are regressive. The less you use the more you pay per unit. This hurts the poor and discourages energy efficiency. Austin energy's monthly fee is almost -- Austin, Texas gas service customers pay almost \$19 a month whether you use any fuel. San Antonio's gas utility is probably half this. Is half this. Adopting San Antonio's fee of \$9.55 a month will help flatten Austin's regressive gas rate. And fourth, I propose you create a second tier in the rate structure. Several councilmembers suggested that they wanted to see tiered rates in a November 2018 hearing, but

[2:26:42 PM]

the gas company has ignored this. Such a tier can be given to the top seven percent of ratepayers. If you raise that tier 15% it will lower rates for the rest of the customers.

>> Mayor Adler: Mr. Robbins, thank you.

>> Thank you.

>> Mayor Adler: Thank you. Is Bob Hendrix here?

>> Yes, I am. This is Bob Hendricks.

>> Mayor Adler: You have three minutes.

>> Thank you. I'm co-chair of Austin Sierra club's climate change committee and a member of the Austin executive committee which unanimously passed this resolution night before last. Quote, the Austin group of the Sierra club supports the Austin energy resource generation and climate protection plan through 2030. The Austin group also

[2:27:42 PM]

supports the resource management commission's recommendations to improve diverse and equitable involvement in future planning and to update this plan in 2023. In quote, I want to commend the work group and Austin energy for negotiating a plan to, one, keep Austin electric costs low and affordable. Two, to ensure an adequate supply of electricity with help from programs to increase energy efficiency. Three, to adopt procedures to ensure more diversity during the next planning process, and four, to cut carbon pollution not only by retiring the fossil fuel plan that create most of our carbon pollution within the next two and a half years, but to immediately implement the reach program to cut carbon pollution from our fossil fuel plants during the transition period before shutting them down. I'm especially

pleased with the innovative, unprecedented reach component which by adding our own internal price of carbon to our biggest source

[2:28:43 PM]

of carbon pollution, first the coal plant and later the gas plant, we will cut that pollution starting almost immediately long before the plants actually close. One estimate showed that reach would cut off an impressive 30% of carbon pollution from these plants. I commend the Austin energy staff for developing this reach component by picking up on a suggestion made and dismissed nearly a year ago by euc member Matt Weldon, the citizens climate lobby leader and Sierra club supporter. This plan is not perfect. I would like to close the sand hill gas plant in 2025, but Austin discovered we must complete two years of studies before we could know if we could do that and much less what it would cost. I prefer the expansion of the [indiscernible] By 2027. I disagreed with Austin energy's cost estimates for renewable energy and storage for 2030, which contrary to strong historical trends

[2:29:43 PM]

assumes increases, not decreases. They also zoom no tech no congress kel improvements. They assume that subsidies will continue but renewable energy will cease. All this would not affect any actions Austin energy would take during the next three years to reduce our carbon footprint. I believe that the plan continues to make Austin a climate leader and I urge the support of the council for this plan plus the rmc recommendations, thank you.

>> Mayor Adler: Thank you. Is Craig Basse here?

>> Yes, I am, mayor.

>> Mayor Adler: You have three minutes.

>> Thank you. Covid-19 has now been detected in every country on Earth. We are only in the beginning stages of what will be a long battle, but with every passing hour the feasibility and efficacy of our chosen

[2:30:43 PM]

strategies wane. Each day is exponential worse than its predecessor. Experts agree that the most effective way to slow the speed is extreme social distancing. Austinites must stay home as much as possible, prevent an overwhelming of the city's health care infrastructure. Lacking even basic necessities, our homeless brothers and sisters are at extreme risk of contracting the virus. Being in public for extended periods of time has bizarrely become punitive. Facing down such a daunting

task, why would we not take every chance to prevent the homeless population from expanding. In Texas one 55,000 unemployment claims were filed last week. A 10 fold increase from the previous week. Hundreds of thousands of austinians have seen their income shrink or in many cases completely disappear. I am one of them. Large swaths of the local economy have withered.

[2:31:45 PM]

Austin renters spent at least 30% of their income on housing. Much of our population has a crushing decision on April 1st. Do I pay my rent or feed myself and my family and face eviction. The council must Mott only support the 60 day delay delay on rent payments. The economic impact from even just the last week will reverberate for months if not longer. No matter what the city returns to normal, people will have been financially decimated. Many will not be able to pay their rent for the foreseeable future. By no fault of their own they will be forced to clamor for unemployment in what will surely be a shrunk job market. Experts also agree that the expert may come in waves. Even if we can eve our homes in may and June we will not be out of the woods. Eviction means they will return faster and stronger than they otherwise would. And make no mistake, evictions will be there the

[2:32:52 PM]

city must take steps to ensure that people who cannot pay their rent for any reason may not be Ed for the enshire duration of this crisis. This will get people killed. It is worth remembering that a single patient in south Korea infected over 1,000 people. If the council's goal is to stop the spread of this disease, anything less than full support for affected renters will prove ineffective, rule and dangerous. We cannot afford half measures that will lead to families being cast out into the street as the oppressive Texas summer takes hold. Austin has a chance to be the leader in this fight and to set the standard by which other municipal municipal municipalities are measured. Protect those who cannot. Thank you.

>> Mayor Adler: Thank you. Is Lily Paloma here?

>> Yes, I'm Lily.

>> Mayor Adler: You have three minutes, go ahead.

>> Hi. Thank you very much, mayor. I'm an Austin resident and I

[2:33:54 PM]

am urging city councilmembers to of course vote yes on item 90 that is extending the eviction suspension for an additional 60 days. But like the previous speaker, I do not view this as enough at all.

This is merely kicking the can down the road. If folks aren't able to pay their rent on April 1st, why would they be able too pay that rent, plus two three months back rent in two more months. We need a rent and utilities freeze now. We have a petition already. It has over 4,000 signatures, but let me tell you a little bit about why a rent and utility freeze -- which is an enormous measure to take, why it is necessary. I've already lost two of my three jobs. The third job that I still hold I only get 15 hours a week at. I will not be able to pay rent on April 1st. I don't see how I'm going to

[2:34:54 PM]

be rehired either to work with young children or to work in restaurants, which have been both of my jobs, in the coming months in the middle of this pandemic. So I truly don't understand the logic of pre-haven'ting evictions from the -- preventing evictions for the next 60 days if they don't have jobs 60 days down the line. If we can't pay in April we will not bible to pay in may and certainly not able to pay in June. We will have an eviction crisis on our hands in 60 days if we do not have an immediate rent and utilities freeze. When we're thinking about the long-term health of the Austin economy, obviously the long-term people as well, but in terms of the economy, without folks like myself, still in Austin when the pandemic is over, we will not be able to reopen all of the shops, bars, restaurants that bring

[2:35:55 PM]

people to Austin and bring austinites out spending their dollars locally. When folks like myself get evicted after 60 day freeze we will have to leave the city. We will have to seek shelter with family, with friends, likely outside of this place, and when, god willing, this pandemic does lift, we won't be gear -- won't be here to bring the city and the city's economy back to life. We need a rent and utility freeze immediately. An eviction freeze of course is necessary, but it is not nearly enough. We need a rent and utilities freeze because if we can't pay now, we will not be able to pay back rent for multiple months down the line. And a personal note once again, over half of the people I know in Austin have lost their jobs, have been fully laid off.

[Buzzer sounds]

[2:36:56 PM]

Folks like myself who are seeing one half of the three jobs that I once had two weeks ago, I'm not even counting in that figure. A final note about unemployment, many folks, myself included, are not eligible for unemployment. The restaurant I work at is under the table. I requested tax documents multiple times and did not leave them. I was looking for another job when this pandemic hit. If I am fired from this last job as well, I will have no resource to unemployment. I was driving for Lyft where I'm a

contractor. I have no recourse to unemployment. This eviction suspension for an additional 60 days is necessary, but for someone like myself would only delay when my eviction takes place. We need a rent and utility freeze immediately to ensure that austinians are here in this city to bring our city back to life once this pandemic is over.

>> Mayor Adler: Thank you.

>> Thank you very much.

[2:37:56 PM]

>> Mayor Adler: Thank you. Next speaker is Anthony blanco?

>> I'm here.

>> Mayor Adler: Go ahead. You have three minutes.

>> Hi. I'm a resident of Austin, Texas. I am speaking today in support of item 90 or the 60-day grace period on evictions, though I also feel compelled to tell you that this measure falls laughably short of what needs to be done. A lack of preparation and proper response to the covid-19 virus if allowed to spread unchecked and now many of us in Austin are out of work with no compensation or health care. And as an aside to this, we've been sitting at 119 confirmed cases of covid-19 for almost six days and I personally don't believe

[2:38:57 PM]

that those numbers could be accurate at all and I'm wondering what's happening to Travis county and Austin that they're unable to keep track of what's happening in their own city. I have friends in health care whose offices are shutting down. I know that local public clinic offerings are shutting down, I know that health care workers are being laid off. And in this period where we are going to overload our health care system that we have a system that does not allow for these viable health care workers to take care of the problems people need is disgusting. Delayed evictions are not enough. The previous caller is absolutely correct. We need a suspension of rent, an immediate suspension of rent, starting April 1st with a guarantee of no rent debt. This is for the common good.

[2:39:57 PM]

This is for the best interest of the people. This can begin by refusing to process evictions for nonpayment, but like I said, if we get to the point where it's two, three months down the line, people don't have the opportunity to do what they need to do to make money, they not only will have that

month's rent to be ready to go, but they won't have four months of back rent. It's immoral to consider anything less than a full suspension of rent for the next three months. I agree with their idea about shutting down the utility costs as well, freeze on utility payments as well. Anyone on the council thinking about voting against this measure, know that you are enabling predatory landlords to put us out in the street in the middle of a pandemic. Each person who dies in the street or is infected with covid-19 will be on your hands if this does not pass. Vote yes on item 90 because

[2:40:57 PM]

people have a good, long memory. Thank you very much.

>> Mayor Adler: Thank you, Mr. Blanco. Is Shane Johnson here?

>> Yes. Can you hear me?

>> Mayor Adler: You have three minutes, yes.

>> Thank you. So hi. Shane Johnson, I live in district 3 and I was appointed to the resource management commission by Greg Casar. First I want you to take the coronavirus serious with passion the stay home order and things like that. I agree with the last couple of speakers wholeheartedly. I'm calling in today to talk about the Austin energy resource plan update on the agenda for a vote today. I'm happy that council has listened to some concerns and decided to postpone the discussion of the really contentious issue of whether requiring a two year interim

[2:42:00 PM]

update or just have five-year updates. The main concern I want to highlight is passing the plan so quickly today. Again, I'm speaking as a resource management commissioner and I want you to know that I've attended all but two of the working group meetings. So given that people of color were almost entirely excluded from the resource plan update process, the broader community will only be able to provide input through public processes at the council level. So I and other folks were hoping for potential Austin energy utility oversight committee meetings and subsequent open to the public meetings at council. I know now those aren't really possible with the crisis, so I understand this is a crisis situation and y'all are under a lot of pressure. And that there are some elements of the resource plan update. However, I want to emphasize that I think that we could realistically wait at least two weeks to specifically

[2:43:00 PM]

allow for more communities of color across Austin to have the chance to weigh in on this plan. So this is a major policy update that is going to disproportionately impact people of color and local people in Austin. So it feels wrong and I would say violates the council's equity and holds values and the strategic direction 2023 to move forward to quickly with a plan that designation proportionately impacts people of color when this entire process excluded them. While knowing that you could delay a couple of weeks to allow specifically the communities of color to weigh in. And then I'll just say a quick thing, an essential issue about the four recommendations themselves. I see as they're posted on the website that they're posted as an addendum to the plan, however I want to make it clear that both commissions voted in support of the resource plan on conditions that the four

[2:44:01 PM]

recommendations would be incorporated into the plan itself as edits to the language of the plan not as an addendum. So I wanted to make sure for city council to vote on what the --

[buzzer sounds]

-- What the commissions recommended. You need to make those edits into the plan language itself.

>> Mayor Adler: Thank you. Is Olivia Ott here?

>> Thank you. Good afternoon, councilmembers. I'm a concerned resident and proud member of district 4. Thank you for providing the opportunity for public comment in this session. I first want to thank you for all the work you're doing for just the current covid-19 crisis. I'm sure we can all agree the past few weeks have been hectic, stressful and crouseing, which is why I'm surprised with the major policy update such as item 2, the update to the 2030 plan, are still taking place as scheduled. It's already been affirmed by two commission votes that there was a lack of equity

[2:45:01 PM]

in the process of the 2030 plan that people of color in Austin were excluded from the process and that additional improvements were needed to remedy this. Prior to the outbreak of covid-19, the best opportunity for input from communities of color and the broader community of austinities was going to be a potential Austin energy utility oversight committee meeting and subsequent open to the public city council meeting. Now that is no longer possible. That does not mean that the input of communities of color is not necessary nor that the previous inequity in the process goes away. Bordering on such a major policy issue it will have a huge impact from Austin's lower income and minority residents. Most are worried for their families and livelihoods and disruption to basic everyday supplies. It feels disingenuous. At worst [indiscernible] Of

[2:46:02 PM]

equity and inclusion and seems like trying to pass this item while no one is looking. I understand that a crisis situation and that there are times that elements of the resource plan update, however, why does the vote still need to happen this week, two days after the lock down, just mere weeks after schools closed until April. I think we could realistically wait two weeks, just two weeks to specifically allow for more community leaders of color to have a chance to weigh in on the broader plan that they were excluded from. Two weeks to demonstrate equity and inclusion during the time we need it most. If the past two weeks have taught us anything, it's the difference that two weeks can make. Thank you.

>> Mayor Adler: Is Kelsey here.

>> That's me.

>> Mayor Adler: You have three minutes.

>> I'm Kelsey and an

[2:47:02 PM]

organizer can sunshine Austin. I want to start by saying I hope everyone is well and finding the support they need during this crisis. I'm here to share sunrise's experience in the Austin resource plan process and to request that you postpone the vote two to four weeks to allow the community more capacity to better voice our opinion. The Austin community like every other community is trying to find stable ground right now. We are scared, which is why we are appalled that city council decided to move forward with the vote this week during this pandemic crisis. There are many community members passionate about this plan. Councilmember pool acknowledged this at the last oversight committee meeting and suggested to move the vote to the end of April to allow for more input. As you know, hundreds of people have shown up to speak on this plan. This time around you won't get a chance to hear from the people, to hear from us, simply because you won't allow the time or space. Sun advise has tried to engage again and again, missing school and work to do so. In December we wrote a

[2:48:03 PM]

letter to Austin energy and the working group details our plans for the plan and the issues for this process. We even read the letter at one of the few public comment communities which are not accessible and honestly have not felt worth the public's time as we having ignored and disrespected each time. Please see sunrise's letter which was emailed to each councilmember and available online for more information. Despite feeling ignored and disrespected, we continue to go to these meetings to listen and learn. We learned of the new goal, which is pretty much decided by the working group chair and Austin energy staff, was carbon free by 2035. This is not good enough and it does not align with the tenets of the green new deal which is to [indiscernible] Which council voted to support last year. We

studied this plan -- we know the carbon reduction in this plan and we know that it can still be better. When we requested that council postpone this item yesterday we were told that it was too time sensitive. Carbon-free by 2035 doesn't seem so time sensitive when we are talking about the climate crisis. And also postponing two to four weeks to allow for true

[2:49:06 PM]

public comment on this is desperately necessary. Of course we want to reduce carbon emissions as soon as possible, but the problem with urgency in this process is the community and the stakeholders are being left out and left behind. People of color and young people specifically. We wanted to share that at the public meeting on March 9th a vote unfolded there. That video is available and we encourage you to watch it. That meeting should be enough for council to step in, process and hold a community meeting on this plan. Council has one more example of how equity inclusion is always an afterthought. Please don't make us an afterthought. I want to end by saying that this process should come back there in two years. Not because it is not representative and we need to get it right, but because technology will continue to improve and we know we need to make our renewable energy goals even better.

[Buzzer sounds] Waiting five years like this plan recommends is way too

[2:50:06 PM]

long. Thank you.

>> Mayor Adler:

>> Garza: Thank you. Rafael Aguilar, are you there?

>> Yes, this is Rafael. Can you hear me?

>> Garza: Yes, you have three minutes. You're signed up for item 90. As of now, many of my close friends as well as my students and families in Austin are out of work with no compensation or health care. To say nothing of childcare for younger grade levels. I've watched numerous city live streams this week and it doesn't appear to me that business interests and profit based medicine is placed ahead of health and welfare of the public. This speaks to so many who live paycheck to paycheck a between starvation and eviction. I as a teacher have had myself to sustain multiple

[2:51:06 PM]

jobs in addition to my profession over the last five years to manage the amounts in medical and student debt. Some of that debt came from keeping somebody very close to me afloat for eight months because

she didn't have any of the same protections I or others are demanding today. Furthermore I know in my heart I know a meaningful learning can happen remotely from my dozens of students when the fear and threat of being homeless and losing health care for them are for their parents is over them. I'm also an ap teacher and I'm convinced that my rent or debt will deeper and magnify the already existing performance gaps we see year after year along the socioeconomic status, racial and gender lines.

[Indiscernible]. In the best interest of the people they can refuse

[2:52:06 PM]

revictimises. Prevent late fees from being charged and by allowing a mechanism to the ordinance of allowing extending the 60 days if required. Don't let landlords put people out into the streets during a pandemic. A personal friend of mine was evicted last month and he was even a candidate running for the very council on which you stand at this time. I was on the phone with our neighbors in the Williamson county health departments this Monday concerning the detention center there and without any hyperbole feel it is my responsibility as a citizen and taxpayer leaves many steps and will have people in more dangerous and potentially in this crisis. I implore you to vote yes on item 90 with these additional provisions. Thank you.

>> Garza: Thank you. Matthew Della Cruz speaking on item 2.

>> Yes, I'm here.

>> Garza: You have three minutes.

>> I'm speaking to agenda

[2:53:07 PM]

item 2. At the March 9 special joint meeting of the E and rmc, it was acknowledged that was problems with the updating of the 2030 resource plan. And they made important steps in revising the plan to direct Austin energy to work with the equity office in the future. Whatever city council should delay passing the resource plan in order to allow more input from members of the community who are not included in the process. City council shouldn't simply commit to future inclusion and future concern for equity issues. Instead it should be searching for and listening to representatives of working class communities and communities of color before passing the resource plan. This is especially true now as the city has shut down and largely cut off from voicing their thoughts to city council. By doing so the city will be living up to the values in council's strategic direction 2023. If this kind of outreach and inclusion is not possible given the extraordinary circumstances we find ourselves in, then council should at least delay passing the resource plan for two weeks to allow the public time to comment and contribute. Thank you.

[2:54:08 PM]

>> Garza: Thank you. Jeff glass, you have three minutes to speak on item 2.

>> Okay. Thank you. I am a member of Austin dsa and the co-chair of our eco socialists committee speaking on item 2. We're generally aligned with sunrise on this as Kelsey described their position and the former speaker as well. I'm grateful councilmembers have noted some concerns about the process that created the resource plan update, particularly the exclusion of people of color, low income folks from the process, but the proposal to pass the update as written today misses something important because it assumes a plan can be sufficient when the process that made it was not. The exclusion of voices from low income communities, communities of color, youth, means the plan was developed by a narrow sector of Austin stakeholders and excluded the real interest of those most affected by energy insecurity, environmental

[2:55:10 PM]

pollution and other climate impacts. The process that brought us this plan was also flawed because it was conducted with few or no procedural rules. The structurelessness had the predictable effect of making the working group and review susceptible to stifling by a view. Inclusively, diverse stakeholder engagement and democratic decision making are substantive targets not just add ons. Because of the process flaws, though, the update plan itself is flawed. As Kelly mentioned as a result of the process we have an update plan that conflicts with the green new deal framework. The city committed to last August when it declared a climate emergency. The update plan targets 2035 for final decarbonization, but the green new deal framework is a demand to decarbonize the entire community by 2030. Decarbonizing Austin energy is only the first step in

[2:56:10 PM]

that process and every update plan is critical to this city's response. Due to the narrowness of interest represented and the discussion that went into it this update takes a timid, conservative approach to an emergency that threatens our society. Councilmember Casar said last August we can be judged by its response to this emergency. I think this update fails to confront the emergency with the imagination that Austin deserves. I'm asking city council in order to meet its commitments to bold climate action and to did he quitable and decision making to first delay this vote for at least two weeks to correct the flaws in the plan and hear from more diverse voices. I'm also asking council to ensure the resource plan updates are conducted at least every two years. The ground is shifting beneath our feet as we speak and we don't know what conditions will be like in five months, much less five years. And I'm asking council to set concrete rules, including open meetings rules, for democratic

[2:57:11 PM]

process in the working group that positively include an elevate the voices of those usually left out of our plan. Thank you.

[Buzzer sounds]

>> Garza: Thank you. Manu sine, speaking on item 90. You have three minutes.

>> Yes, thank you. Hello, councilmembers. Thank you for taking the time to hear us out today and providing a forum for this discussion, particularly in the circumstances we're in. I'm a property manager and a landlord. I've been in this role for some 20 years. And as everyone knows, this is unprecedented in modern history. The global pandemic requires us to take steps we've not taken in modern times, protect the vulnerable and hold those accountable who take advantage of the situation. This applies in every facet of life, including the current item on the agenda to pass item 90. I oppose this action by the city council when the state

[2:58:11 PM]

supreme court and other jurisdictions have already issued stay orders for the time being. The city plays no part in this process normally. Many landlord policies are normally around retaining tenants and helping them when possible. It's always in the landlord's best interest in place to avoid the cost of turnovers and evictions. The added cost of an extended stay period with the city is just going to cause more confusion and more expense and it may harm tenants as well. Passing this ordinance you're also enabling unscrupulous tenants to evade their responsibilities and gain the system in their favor. Landlords and property managers across the world are already working with their tenants and by creating a policy specifically for the city of Austin you're creating a situation of people taking advantage of the system. We already have tenants not paying in March and in this point they become unresponsive because they know our hands are tied

[2:59:13 PM]

because of stay orders of 60 to 90 days in various counties. We have a system in place to keep landlords in check by hearing both sides of the story and not granting evictions when they're necessary and right now it's shut down anyway. These legally mandated tools are in place for a reason and shouldn't be altered by the council when the courts have a the ability to handle a situation like this. Finally a large relief package is on the way from the federal government and possibly includes individual payments, extended unemployment payments and other stimulus items to get business back on their feet and retain or bring back employees. This again, this ordinance again empowers to take advantage of. Landlords and property managers need the court system as it is. The only enforcement tool we have. In

summary, I appreciate the steps you've taken recently to protect the citizens of Austin, but do not feel like this a necessary ordinance and respectfully request that you refrain from passing it. I'd like to also request

[3:00:14 PM]

that instead of passing this measure that you contact your colleagues in government at the justice of the peace courts and ask them for extra scrutiny on their cases if you feel it's needed. With respect to the previous speakers, I appreciate your perspective, however city intervention will cause a snowball effect. Our phones have been ringing off the hook and we're trying to help as many people as we can. If you intervene and prevent us from collecting rent, we won't be able to pay our loans. We'll lose our health care, our employees will lose their jobs and a lot of people will be in a situation where they can't pay they're own rent. This miss characterization of all landlords as being predatory is offensive at minimum. We are [indiscernible]. Who are you going to call if your air conditioner goes out. We're here for a reason and we are people too so we would appreciate if you would consider this. Thank you again for your time. I hope everyone including

[indiscernible] Are all safe and healthy in this challenging time. Thank you.

>> Garza: Thank you. Bob batlin, you have three

[3:01:16 PM]

minutes to speak on item 2.

>> Mayor and council, my name is Bob and I've been an Austin energy ratepayer since 1992. I've been an advocate over the years trying to protect limited income rates and address other equity issues, often [inaudible].

[Indiscernible].

>> Garza: Mr. Batlin?

>> [Indiscernible].

[3:02:45 PM]

[Indiscernible]. Austin energy is well ahead of the targets. Please [indiscernible].

[3:04:04 PM]

>> Protect the ratepayer from exorbitant bills and become carbon-free as soon as possible. The mere existence of the working group with its strategic focus gave Austin staff a forum to bring forward this creative approach. To plan such goals, but like the previous one everyone intends to do even better. I am confident Austin energy will work to meet the goal.

[Buzzer sounds] I am certain that

[indiscernible] Will do everything to make sure that they do that. Thank you very much for this and for what you're doing at this time.

>> Garza: All right. Thank you, Mr. Batlin. We've been able to hear every speaker loud and clear with the exception of that last one, Mr. Batlin. So if you could please send us an email, you can feel free to email the council your comments and then any future speakers, please maybe go to the part of your house or wherever you are that you get the best reception and speak clearly. But again, we've been able

[3:05:05 PM]

to hear every speaker clearly with the exception of this last one. So please email us those comments, Mr. Batlin. The next speaker is Whitney Allen. You have three minutes to speak on item 90.

>> Okay. That's me. Can you hear me?

>> Garza: Yes.

>> I'm assuming you can. Okay. I'm just calling in about item 90, the postponing of rent, and I don't want to beat a dead horse. I think a lot of things have already been said. I definitely don't think that it's enough, just the postponement of rent for 60 days. I do understand, though, that things have to get paid, mortgage companies, lenders all need their money. So I -- I don't really know what the answer is, but I think there needs to be more added to this in the upcoming weeks and a couple of months. Something else that I want to put out there is people

[3:06:06 PM]

who own homes or condominiums, there are hoa fees and hoa's have a lot of power and authority. And if hoa fees are in arrears they do have the ability to put liens on homes. So I just want to put that out on the radar. As far as utilities being frozen I think that's really great. I think it would also be awesome. I'm very fortunate I'm in a position where I'm -- right now knock on wood I'm not at risk of losing my job or being laid off and I'm able to make all my payments on time. I think it would be really wonderful if with the utility company there is an option for those of us who are able to pay to offer a donation of extra

money payable for extra that would help people who are fortunate enough to be in a position where they can make all of their payments and bills. I would also say this would be great if there would be an opportunity for this to be done with rents. That said, I definitely

[3:07:07 PM]

don't envy any of you all sitting up there on the council. There are so many issues going on right now and everybody has to get paid at some point, but I definitely agree that the 60 days is not going to be enough. I think that there needs to be some sort of table and a lot of people need to be invited to it on different levels to kind of figure out what are we going to do in 60 days because evictions probably will end up happening and there's already a shortage of affordable housing. I live in district 3, 78741 and I've been here for almost seven years, and every -- the pockets of where people can afford to live are slowly shrinking. And it is very concerning to think that some of these individuals may get pushed out of here and if they are pushed out of here, where on Earth are they going to go? Especially since cap metro is stopping some of the bus

[3:08:07 PM]

routes. So anyways, that's it. Thank you very much. That's all I have to say. Bye.

>> Garza: Thank you. Next speaker is ky Abe a white. You have three minutes to speak on item 2.

>> Good afternoon. Can you hear me?

>> Garza: Yes.

>> Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I'm speaking on item 2 on behalf of public citizens of Texas. First I understand that the carrying resource generation and climate protection plan is not the most urgent matter before council today. I appreciate that you are putting as much time and effort as possible to

[indiscernible] From the covid-19 comprises. That said this plan is important for the Austin community and certainly does merit your attention at a later date. While the plan before you could be better in some ways, it is not a bad plan. It has a new strategy to reduce carbon emissions immediately, which is great. But if this plan is adopted

[3:09:08 PM]

today, I hope that Austin energy will act immediately to implement that strategy without delay. In fact, I would urge the utility to do so either way as I don't believe that it requires council action. He have. What wasn't good was the plan that brought this to forward.

[Indiscernible] Did not adhere to open meeting stands. Despite the efforts of several of the working group members before the planning process began, people of color were dramatically underrepresented. Given that there were qualified people of color who wished to serve on the working group, but were not invited to do so, there is no good excuse for the lack of inclusion. There were also no young people. No one under the age of 35 on the working group. Women were also underrepresented. I know that you don't have time now, but when you do have time, you should watch the joint meeting of the electric utility commission and the resource management commission from March 9th.

[3:10:09 PM]

There was an extended conversation about the lack of diversity on the working group and I think that many of you would be concerned about some of the things said at that meeting. I believe the conversation at that meeting illustrates why it is so important that we move past a model that gives older white men an out sized voice in decision making. This should fly apply to all levels of governance at the city, including advisory commissions and working groups. I ask that you have a full discussion about this as well as about the timeline for the next update to this plan as soon as there is time and space for that to happen. As you have heard from others, there is a desire for more community input before you vote on the plan. I think that the others who have spoken on that make good points and I would support postponing the vote in order to allow for conversation at a future council meeting. While I have had a chance to voice my views at the working group, many have not and I do not represent

[3:11:11 PM]

everyone in this community. And particularly people of color and young people were not represented. At very least I would ask that you exclude the future process section when you adopt the plan today. It was made clear that there would be a full discussion and deliberation of how and when the next update will occur. The resource management commission --

[buzzer sounds]

-- In 201623.

[Indiscernible]. That merits conversations before adopting that plan. On a completely unrelated

[indiscernible]. I've seen a lot of people obviously violating the ordinance [indiscernible]. Thank you for all that you're doing.

>> Garza: Thank you. The next speaker is Robert foster. You have three minutes to speak on item 2.

>> Thank you very much. As other people have said, there are much more pressing things to do, including dealing with all those people violating the ordinance, like the gym

[3:12:12 PM]

right across the street from my house, which is still doing private training, but I digress. Being involved in this resource generation plan process was quite frustrating. You know, 31% of Austin's carbon dioxide emissions come from Austin energy so it's very important to get this right. Trying to be involved in the planning group during the workday in downtown Austin includes many of us that are not downtown Austin employees or cannot take time off work. It felt like a pretty thin process of public engagement. I know there's some very good, well meaning people. Many of them have spoke today that are on the committee. But for example, they produced an analysis showing that being carbon free by 2030 wouldn't be that expensive. And I got pretty excited, but by the next meeting they also said they weren't doing it. What's going on? How is that a public process? If they process data that we want and then don't take any of our opinions on this into account, that doesn't really seem like good engagement.

[3:13:13 PM]

Austin energy has been extremely Progressive in the past, but nothing in this plan lives up to that great work. There are some good things about the plan, including the reach carbon pricing. That's something that we should implement now and maybe we should adapt this plan in two weeks, but give some more time for feedback just so we can start reducing some of the emissions, but we have to come back and revisit this. Definitely given the crisis before us now there will be massive stums and recovery by the -- stimulus and recovery by the federal government hopefully. And if we had a better plan or if we could work with those -- that additional funding, we could really put a dent in unemployment here in Austin. We could help the recovery, we could reduce our carbon emissions and we could be the bold climate leader that this city has been in the past and should be in the future. And we can see all around us what austinites can achieve when we confront a process. Big change is possible. Let's plan for a big change and work for a green,

[3:14:13 PM]

equitable future. And also pass 92. That just makes sense. Everyone is going to get evicted and then it will be sad times in Austin, including my little sister who is a bartender and obviously isn't working. And also three of her roommates are bartenders, so that's a house that's gone from great income to zero income in two weeks. Thank you very much and everyone stay safe.

>> Garza: Thank you. Derrick flurry. You have three minutes to speak on item 90.

>> Yes, hi. Thank you, council. My name is Derrick flurry. I'm a member of workers world party. Currently I'm speaking today in support of, but albeit creditably item 90, the grace period on evictions. I am also compelled to tell you that this measure falls extremely short of what needs to be done. Lack of preparation and proper response to the covid-19 virus has allowed

[3:15:14 PM]

it to spread unchecked on how many of us in and around Austin are out of work with little to no compensation, paid time off, sick days or health care. Personally I know people that have been laid off very recently, but also fired. They've had accrued paid time off that their employers have not allowed them to pull out. Business interests and profit-based medicine have placed greed ahead of the health and welfare of the public. This leaves those of us who live paycheck to paycheck like myself choosing between starvation and eviction. Delaying evictions aren't enough. We need immediate suspension of rent with a guarantee of no rent debt for the common good in the best interest of the people. This can begin by refusing to process evictions for nonpayment of rent even after the 60 days are up. Forbid any late fees from being charged and add a mechanism to the ordinance allowing it to be extended

[3:16:15 PM]

beyond 60 days if expired. I grew up in Louisiana. I'm no stranger to crisis. I've lived from hurricane to hurricane, including Katrina, all of them, since 1990. And I do not trust the landlords to make the best decisions for their tenants. I have seen housing taken out from under people time after time after time and flipped and sold at higher prices and huge gentrification campaigns in New Orleans around and around that area. The last bit is feudalism. And I pray to god by the time my daughter has grown up that we will have no more landlord class. But in the meantime we have to make sure we take the proper measures to ensure that we are protected as renters in this city. Not only that, but to house those people we don't have places to stay and protection as well. I was helping a couple for awhile at the Austin suites hotel. At the beginning of the

[3:17:15 PM]

crisis, the Austin suites hotel changed management and immediately began evicting the people staying there who otherwise had no other place to stay. Actions like this should absolutely not be acceptable right now. So for anyone on the council who is thinking of voting against this measure, know that you are enabling predatory landlords to put us out on the streets in the middle of a pandemic. The blood of each person who dies in the street or is infected with covid-19 will be on your hands if this measure does not pass. So I urge the council to vote yes on item 90 because the people will never forget the actions of our leaders during this crisis.

[Buzzer sounds] Thank you, council.

>> Garza: Thank you. Next speaker is avonia nurri.

>> I'm here. I am here with the

[indiscernible]. I am a resident of district 4 and also a member of the economic commission, appointed by Greg Casar.

[3:18:15 PM]

I am here in support of the resolution that was out this morning to committee members and the mayor to allocate 10 million dollars for cash assistance to families impacted by covid-19. There are many local groups to help the city council act on this in the next 24 hours. A press release is being sent out to invite others to push this forward. It's well-known that with the relief package and unemployment, many people will be left behind, such as contractors, people who live in a cash economy and undocumented families. We invite you to act on this as soon as possible and to please put cash into people's hands. We know that they will be -- people are wise and smart and they will know how to utilize the money. We know that that money will stay locally and contribute to the local economy. Please take action in the next 24 hours. Thank you.

>> Garza: Thank you.

[3:19:16 PM]

Emma holder, you have three minutes to speak on item 90.

>> Hi, thank you. Yeah. I am a social work student at UT and I am fortunate enough that I have some loan money to cushion me right now even though I did lose my service industry job, but as I look around at my co-workers and many friends who work in the service industry and see them completely devastated by what's been going on, I think item 90 is the bare minimum of what we can do. Like others have said, many people are going to be out of work for most of April or all of April as well and I think owing two months' rent by the time may comes around is going to be just as hard as well if people have late fees. I think the number of people in Austin who have to live

[3:20:17 PM]

paycheck to paycheck is more than you might realize. And for us this has just been so devastating. And again, I'm in a fortunate position right now, but a lot of people are not in that position. I also think it's important to remember that even those people if they're looking for work right now there isn't much

work to find. The work that is available is -- the market is being flooded so it's really hard to get those jobs. And then even still the jobs that are out in the community may not be safe. For example, I have asthma so it would be really dangerous for me to get a job working in the community right now. And I do think this ordinance is important. I don't think it goes far enough. Obviously we want to avoid evictions and avoid increasing homelessness in our community. And that needs to be done

[3:21:18 PM]

however it needs to happen. I do think I'm hopeful that the unemployment and the national bailout bill will help people, but we don't know how long it's going to take for people to receive those benefits or how many people who need it will be denied. I think postponing eviction is a great start and I think it's great to get that done before the first, but we really need rent and mortgage forgiveness for everyone. We need utilities to be free for the next couple of months. And a lot of people are also going to be losing their health care in the next couple of months. All these things are going to compound this crisis even more. And I know that you all are dealing with so much and it's unprecedented, but I wanted to speak out for those issues because I think the people in this town are really hurting. And we need to do everything we can beyond this item itself. Thank you.

>> Garza: Thank you. The next speaker. And we have nine more speakers. The next speaker is Adam

[3:22:19 PM]

Gates. You have three minutes to speak on item 90.

>> My name is Adam Gates. I've been an Austin resident for 20 plus years and I've been a landlord for about 15 years. I presently live in district 5 and the bulk of my rentals and income exist in drew. Ms. Garza is very familiar with this district. She's also very familiar with the dove springs area where many of my rentals exist. I've had against standard landlord protocol, I've had tenants for on average of five plus years who are hard working tenants, hard working families that are just sort of part of the fabric of that district over there. Part of -- not part. All of why I'm here to speak is really against agenda item number 90 the 60 day

[3:23:24 PM]

moratorium on evictions. San Antonio, Bexar county is making it April 19th with no hearings until that time. Not a moratorium on any processing of evictions. The second is Dallas I think at may third right now. Many of you guys are aware of the stimulus image package, the two -- package, the two trillion dollar stimulus package that got passed. Some is for retail businesses, the businesses that are on their last legs here due to the crisis. \$1,200 that is going to individuals, five hundred dollars for children's tax

rebates. A lot of that stimulus obviously is federal stimulus and will be forthcoming and will help assist many of my tenants in paying rent in the future. One thing I encourage you guys not to do is to have

[3:24:28 PM]

government over reach, reach into the private sector and try to force the private sector to absorb what is arguably -- not arguably. Definitely a -- needs to be a government subsidy. So one of the gross misceptions of the stimulus package is there's mortgage relief for anyone who holds a mortgage, including landlords. The issue here, and I think everyone needs to understand is, is that 80 to 85 percent of rental property financing is non-traditional gsc loans. Those are Fannie Mae loans, Freddie Mac loans. There's there is no relief for me. So what rate what you are asking me to do and other landlords to do is a subsidy that needs to be provided by the city or the federal government. I urge you guys to review federal code 42usc1983 --

[buzzer sounds] , Which if you guys proceed

[3:25:28 PM]

with this, it's a taking of my equity. And you can't do that. So again, I feel for all of these people on the line that have lost jobs. Clearly we are in a crisis, but you can't ask the private sector to absorb what should be either a federal, state or local subsidy in the form of rent. If you guys want to go partner with hud, if you want to go partner with the federal government and get an immediate stimulus for rent relief, feel free to do so. But you can't step in and arguably take rent away for 30 days, 60 days, 90 days, and expect me in the interim to pay for a mortgage. And so what you're doing by adopting this ordinance is you're providing the right for people to just withhold rent --

>> Garza: Mr. Gates, you will have to finish your thought.

>> That's something you don't want to interfere with.

>> Garza: Okay, thank you.

>> Thank you for your time.

[3:26:29 PM]

>> Garza: Thank you. The next speaker is Bo Delp. And you have three minutes to speak on item 91.

>> Can you hear me?

>> Okay. I'm here to speak on 91. First I want to say thanks to the council and to the mayor and to all the staff that are working such long hours to respond to everything that's going on? I know it's quite tough and I just want to say thanks for all of the work that everyone is doing to keep everybody safe. I want to talk about the public impact on workers. Here at local 923 we represent hotel and food workers across the state, including here in Austin. And the way we're feeling about this is that we really do need a bailout for Austin workers, not just a bailout for Austin businesses.

[3:27:29 PM]

Our members and hospitality workers in Austin are feeling the severity of financial collapse as, you know, they lose income and their benefits and they struggle to pay bills and provide for their families for really what does feel like an indefinite amount of time. Austin hotel and food service operations, as you've heard elsewhere, have been devastated by this pandemic. And we support efforts to try to stabilize some of these operations. And we really appreciate everybody willingness to come together and figure out what the -- what the right response is going to be. We're reaching out to our employers across the country and Texas in hopes our unions can collaborate in innovative and broad solutions that can help save lives and ensure job security for our members. I think our big ask of the

[3:28:30 PM]

council and of the mayor and of the city manager and staff is that as the city starts to formulate the policy response that any employer relief program or bailout initiated by the city includes solutions to help make sure that there is resiliency and job security for working people who have been impacted by this because again -- and I can't overemphasize it, we really do need to make sure that workers are not left behind in any kind of program or policy response or package that is designed to help businesses. So we really just ask to be at the table as city staff start to put this together, especially in the hospitality industry and food service and in hotels. And I know I speak on behalf of our members and everyone in local 23 when I say we're really looking forward to working with you on this. Thank you so much.

[3:29:36 PM]

>> Kitchen: The next speaker is Emily blare and you have three minutes to speak on item 90.

>> Thank you. Good afternoon. My name is Emily blare speaking on behalf of the here in Austin. We understand how difficult a time this is for renters and the entire rental community. Our focus has been not only making sure we limit the spread of the virus in our communities, but doing everything we can to help people stay in their homes. At this critical time we understand the city is looking to use all resources available to minimize impact of the covid-19 crisis. We fully understand that the eviction of

tenants at this time would be counterproductive to this goal. Now is the time for renters and property owners to work together to maintain stability and housing. The ordinance item 90 on the

[3:30:39 PM]

agenda stated while well intended is unnecessary. It's already created confusion for renters in the industry and may have unintentional consequences. If adopted, the council may be decreasing the city's ability to help constituents in the long run and only providing a limited amount of protection for the vast majority of the rental community in the city. It's important to note during this crisis we have been at if forefront responding and taking action by collaborating with the Texas supreme court on their order to prevent the filing of evictions statewide to April 19 which he with support along with the forms and tools we have created, we have equipped our industry to address individual situations eliminating the need for this oncer. We also have developed resources not just for property owners but renters as well that can be found on the website. We're hearing these conversation with renters and their property owners and managers are underway.

[3:31:41 PM]

And in those conversations that is leading to impossible new rental agreements, new payment plans, late fees being waived, rent freezes in some cases on renewals just to name a few. This ordinance could hinder these conversations occurring in good faith and would even create more confusion. Lastly we urge council before taking action to give strong consideration to the legal arguments raised by our counsel and the communication we provided. I again want to encourage anyone impacted through a job loss or lost wages please begin the conversation with your property manager and to quickly craft solutions. The Austin apartment association remains committed to doing everything we can and we'll continue our efforts to be a resource and partner in housing here. Thank you.

>> Garza: Tom Smitty Smith three minutes to speak on item 2.

[3:32:44 PM]

Smitty, Tom Smitty? I'll come back at the ends just in case. Next speaker is and gel la arazo, three minutes to speak on item 90.

>> Hello, good afternoon, everybody. The landlord with rental properties in d2 shame on you. You can't [inaudible] Until it doesn't make sense for you. I want to say the black and brown communities are already reporting to the coronavirus website they have been harassed by the police even though the stay-at-home policy stated they wouldn't. I raise that concern in hopes you can resolve immediately. Foundation communities who gets money from the city send a letter to tenants it is vital rental

payments be made in a time lay manner. If anyone needs to miss payments there are strict rules about providing written proof of hardship. This is hard for people who don't have proof to show the paychecks that they miss, especially undocumented people. I understand that there are limitations that prevent the

[3:33:47 PM]

automatic suspension of residents and something is trying to be done with this bill. I hope council can set political difference aside and work on our state ledge and council for up to further provide relief. The senate was able to do it, but were able to and we hope Austin and Texas legislators can work something out too. We have no contact or information from my apartment complex in d1 even though I have asked they are providing relief for those that need it. If apartment complexes are sending notices that individuals that need help can be 16 days away, it would be great if they could send a letter out before they default on payment. Meaning instead of waiting for someone to not be able to pay rent and then being asked to get on a payment plan, everyone is informed before due to not everybody watching the news. Families not aware of local municipal politics are deciding to pay their rent or feed their families and we can provide some temporary relief by adding this specific provision in place. Adding for those stomach in

[3:34:49 PM]

the individual divide. Evictions will begin once the pandemic rolls over and go on people's record. We already know Austin isn't an affordable place to live. We shouldn't have to resort to rent strikes. I understand this is not something council can solve themselves. This pandemic is demonstrating inefficient cyst in all levels of government. I recommend looking into creating specific policy around evictions and people's records, post a 60-day policy to create a second part to this policy to help alleviate evictions going on people's records. Houston is already doing some of that and we should mimic policy from other cities. The land development code showed why density is not always smart. We can see what's happening in New York and council should take that advice too. Thank you.

>> Garza: Thank you. Next speaker is Christian gavayardo speaking on item

[3:35:50 PM]

87. You have three minutes.

>> Hi, yes, can you hear me?

>> Garza: Yes.

>> Christian gavayardo here. Resident of district 2. Advocate and vice chair of the human rights commission at the city of Austin appointed by councilmember Renteria. I plan to speak on specifically agenda item 87, but I want to make quick comments afterward on some other items as well. First beginning with item 87, as you all might know, board and commission meetings have been canceled indefinitely and we've been denied to meet virtually even though the governor has granted suspension of certain open meeting statutes to allow for telephonic or teleconferencing. I asked for clarification by the city clerk's office and while I didn't get a clear answer, I eventually received the ordinance language which seems to support boards and commissions meeting virtually during the state of emergency. If so, I encourage council to not only confirm that

[3:36:51 PM]

intention but also support whatever means necessary for boards and commissions to convene virtually so our work is not delayed or prolonged any further, especially in response to covid-19 and the budget recommendations from community forums that we hosted the past few months. Whether that remains creating separate telephone or conference accounts for boards and commissions, utilizing social media platforms, et cetera. Moving on to the other agenda items I wanted to quickly make comments on, I personally support agenda items 88 through 92 to help relieve anyone that will be economically impacted by this pandemic crisis, especially the most vulnerable. They should be prioritized above all. I support other speakers in their plea for utility, rent and eviction suspensions as well as access to other resources or services including on but not limited to food, shelter, health care, et cetera, for an extended period of time that will suffice during this

[3:37:51 PM]

pandemic crisis. Going back to agenda item 2, I share the concerns of other speakers about the process of developing the climate protection plan. And that it needs to include more feedback from vulnerable communities. Therefore I think that item should be postponed and extended to include additional feedback. I don't want to take any more of your time. I know you have a long day ahead of you and I appreciate all of your work on the council. So thank you.

>> Garza: Thank you. We have three more atmosphere. Kevin Richie, you are signed up to speak on item 55. You have three minutes.

-- Speakers.

>> Thank you. I am the owner of

[inaudible] For over 30 years and provide lighting equipment, supplies and personnel for live events. Speaking in support of agenda item 55, I want to

[3:38:53 PM]

encourage live entertainment workers are included. I would like to explain how my company has been affected by the cancellation of south by and led to a larger crisis. As we geared up for south by, we increased our inventory and encouraged staff to take time off as they could in preparation for long days, nights and weeks. Works. This resulted in use of paid time off, which is now not available to them as we look at a layoff or furlough. Starting late February we received a few cancellation notices from customers regarding their regies -- rentals related to cancellation of sxsw. Remaining jobs canceled drying up all of our business for the month. This caused some of our clients to completely close their businesses expecting future business. As you can imagine get any other work in the live event world in stun during sxsw is virtually impossible. The ripple effect of the cancellation of south by was

[3:39:54 PM]

large and we had numerous conversations with staff who obviously noticed a lack of work and were concerned about longer term employment. As the rest of the city, state and nation began shuddering public gatherings, all of our rental business for the foreseeable foot future is gone. The cash provided by those clients would have allowed us to keep through ease during this continuing crisis. Instead we're forced to take drasc measures. We are now in a situation where our shelves are overstocked, we're grasping for funds to pay rent and keep lights on. The sxsw cancellation and covid-19 closures have been devastating in a year where we are poised to have 100% growth. Thank you very much for your time. I appreciate everything you are doing and don't envy your position. Thank you.

>> Garza: Thank you. The next speaker is -- is it rainy Collins? You have three minutes to speak on item 91.

[3:40:56 PM]

>> Yes, thank you. As the CEO of health alliance for Austin musicians, I want to thank you for letting me speak today in support of keeping item 91 on the agenda and we really want to thank the council and the mayor for your leadership through these unprecedented times. It's very scary time for everyone and I am speaking on behalf of multiple non-profits and organizations in the music community. And we are just urging you as you are looking at support and packages and things that you are going to do for Austin workers to remember that our music system in Austin is a very fragile ecosystem. And we really want you to remember that our music community has long been one of the backbones of this city. Not only does our creative

[3:41:56 PM]

sector supply the heart and soul of Austin, it's also a major driver of our economy. You all already know this. What we're asking to remember is now that -- now is the time to protect this precious resource in our city. Not only has the music industry been involved in driving billions of dollars to our economy, but these same folks who most of the time do live in such a fragile ecosystem are also the first ones that our Austin community turns to in every crisis for every cause, every celebration. Usually asking them to play music for free, to donate their venue and services, and every time this music community jumps on board to support others. We're asking you now is the time to ensure that we are not only providing real economic resources to our music community, but that when this is all over, that you ensure that we'll still have a music community here in Austin. We know that this will end

[3:42:57 PM]

and we need to ensure we have not lost the heart and soul of our city and leave a major gaping hole for our economic engine. I have friends in new Orleans who tell us that when hurricane Katrina hit, the music community was decimated and it took them ten years to get their ecosystem back to where it needed to be. And nobody wants to live in an Austin without music. We are urging you to just remember as you are taking everybody into consideration that our music industry, all of our musicians, our music industry overall really is a huge piece of who we are and we ask that you consider us as your signature at the table, we hope that we'll have a seat at the table and we hope we will have specific plans and packages that will address our music community's needs. I am representing multiple music non-profits. I'm representing sue says Antoine, who is executive

[3:43:59 PM]

director of the Clifford Antoine foundation-

[buzzer sounding]

-- Cary baker, president and CEO of long center, Marcia ball, president of housing opportunities for musicians and entertainment. Patsy [inaudible] Executive director of stem. Will bridges forward chair of the Clifford Antoine foundation. Gavin Garcia, executive director of eq Austin.

>> Garza: How many more names do you have?

>> I'll stop.

>> Garza: Fee free to send us an email of the people you were going to list.

>> Okay.

>> Garza: Thank you. We actually have two more speakers. Rachel Maggie, two minutes -- I'm sorry.

>> Hello?

>> Garza: Go ahead. You have three minutes.

>> Rachel McGee.

>> Garza: Sorry.

>> That's okay. Good afternoon, mayor pro tem and council.

[3:44:59 PM]

I'm speaking as the president of my union, the international alliance of theatrical stage local 205. We represent Austin's live entertainment technicians and I'm speaking in support of agenda item 55, a resolution to support those impacted by the cancellation of SXSW. I want to thank you for taking this initiative and for your continued hard work and leadership during these past few weeks as we try to navigate safely through that pandemic. I ask you to ensure that the work that those working in the entertainment industry are included in any program the city manager develops. March is typically one of the busiest months of our year, but due to COVID-19-related cancellations, 80% of our membership and 100% of our -- 100% of our cash work is unemployed including myself. We have gone from a full calendar to zero events. Casual employees are our

[3:46:01 PM]

most vulnerable employees employed on a gig to gig as needed basis. We lack job security at the best of time. We are ineligible for paid sick leave and frequently live without health insurance but still have to pay all the same bills as other workers. I'm very concerned about members and co-workers who have only themselves to count on and living paycheck to paycheck prior to this pandemic, but also those who are lost their household income because their spouse or significant other also works in the entertainment industry or a similar affected industry. When SXSW was canceled, the casual employees lost an estimated 4300 works totaling wages and health benefits. Within a week of that everything else canceled and all remaining work evaporated. An estimated 9,000 hours of work thus far. Our industry that is ground to a halt. Unlike other affected

[3:47:01 PM]

industry, the entertainment industry is unable to adapt. There is no temporary work for staging events. Events can't happen without gathering people and until it is safe for us to gather again, we are on hold. Unfortunately this is the case across the whole nation so traveling out of state for event work elsewhere

isn't even an option. None of us could have ever imagined all work stopping at the same time all over the country. We've been out of work now and without income for three weeks. And state and federal help has not yet arrived. Our needs include money for food and assistance with rent, mortgage payments, bills and continuity of health coverage until we can get back to work which we anticipate will not be until the fall. Before closing, please note I can only offer you information about those we represent, but there are hundreds of other unrepresented entertainment workers and freelancers out of work --

[buzzer sounding]

-- And equal affected. We can all agree the economic impact of covid-19

[3:48:01 PM]

is unprecedented and there are many within our city that need and deserve help. This resolution is a step in the right direction. Please ensure workers and employees within the entertainment industry

[inaudible] The effects of this pandemic are going to be felt for a long immaterial too. Thank you.

>> Garza: Thank you. The last speaker I have is Nathan Stevens. You have three minutes to speak on item 2.

>> Thank you so much. Others have spoken more eloquently than me on item 90 and we absolutely need to strengthen and help renters, not landlords. I'll focus on item 2. I would like to thank the council for allowing time for public comment. Unfortunately the same input has been rare if not impossible with the Austin generation plan. Not only does the current plan not reach aggressively enough for renewable goals that match the council's own admission that we are in a climate crisis, there was a lack of public input during the energy utilities commission meetings. Despite the fact you, the Austin council, serve as the

[3:49:03 PM]

board for Austin energy and therefore the citizens of Austin own Austin energy, there's been next to no ability for Austin residents to make the energy generation plan more democratic and transparent. Forcing a vote during the pandemic is another layer of distance between people who will be the most affected by the plan and the construction of that plan. Austin is in a unique position to lead on green energy and create a sustainable city. As we see abdication of responsibility from our federal government during the pandemic and the climate crisis, we cannot allow that same abdication in Austin. That's why I'm asking council to postpone the vote on the generation plan, allow for more public input to Austin energy and push for a higher standard of green targets that reflects the crisis we are in. This plan locks us nor the next decade. Democratic, transparent and sustainable are the Lee adjectives that are to be connected to Austin if we're going to make this work.

[3:50:04 PM]

Thank you.

>> Garza: That's the last speaker I have on my list. Are there any other speakers on the line that were not called? Okay.

>> [Indiscernible]

>> Garza: All right. At this time staff will disconnect any speakers still on line from the teleconference. Residents can watch the meeting on the web at atxn TV or time warner cable channel 6, grande communications channel 6 or the AT&T U-verse customers channel. Thank you to all speakers who participated today. I'm going through the changes and corrections. Mayor, do you want to --

[3:51:04 PM]

changes and corrections.

>> Mayor Adler: Mayor pro tem, thank you. Item number 1 is withdrawn, 17 is withdrawn, 18 is withdrawn, 20 is withdrawn. 24 and 25 are postponed to April 9. 28 withdrawn. 31, it's execution of a contract for nine months. For a total amount not to exceed \$16,000. Items -- \$126,000. 44, 45, 54, are withdrawn. 5 is withdrawn and replaced by item 91 on the addendum. 36 is withdrawn. 61 and 62 -- 61 postponed to April 9th, 62 postponed to may 7th. And 63 postponed to April 9th. 64 and 65 are withdrawn.

[3:52:09 PM]

67, 68 -- 67 postponed to April 23, 68 postponed to may 21. 69 is postponed to April 23. 70 is postponed to may 21. 71 postponed to April 23. 72 postponed and 73 both postponed to April 9th. 74 and 75 both postponed to April 23rd. 76 and 77 both postponed to may 7th. 81 is postponed indefinitely. And items 83, 84, 85 are all postponed to April 9th. Item number 90 have added councilmember kitchen to be listed as one of the sponsors. Okay. We have late backup on items 1, 2, 3, 4, 17, 18, 24, 25, 35, 37, 43, 44, 45, 54, 61,

[3:53:11 PM]

62, 63, 64, 65, 72, 73, 83, 84, 85, 89, 90 and 91. Yes.

>> Pool: There's revised on 88 and I think that you missed item 53 adding in kitchen, councilmember kitchen and item 94.

>> Mayor Adler: Was that on the later -- it was on an amended -- I think there was an amended -- which ones?

>> Pool: 53.

>> Mayor Adler: 53 add in councilmember alter I think as a sponsor. What was the other one I missed?

>> Pool: 94.

>> Mayor Adler: 94 postponed to April 9, 2020. Thank you. There was an amended late backup. Yes, mayor pro tem Garza.

>> Garza: So item 56, I

[3:54:12 PM]

just want to make sure, you know, the agreement was if there were any questions for them to be withdrawn. Is that the equivalent to being postponed to April 9th for number 56?

>> Mayor Adler: Yes, it's withdrawn from today. It can be put up on the agenda as soon as it's ready to be put on the agenda, put it on the agenda.

>> Garza: It was ready, but this was my --

>> Mayor Adler: I don't have a problem with postponing to April 9 if you want to.

>> Garza: I would prefer it be postponed, but I also wanted to add because I understand -- I made a message board post about this item and the need to move forward. There was actually supposed to be a task force put together in February that hasn't gotten started. And so I do believe it's urgent. I mentioned on the message board if anybody had any questions to please daylight them. There was nothing put on the message board. We were alerted by the clerk there was a question and that's why we had to move it to withdrawal. I would ask whichever

[3:55:13 PM]

colleague who pulled it off to ask a question so you can daylight that question so we can be ready -- nobody else voiced concerns or questions. I just wanted to make sure we address that so on April 9th we can pass it.

>> Pool: So mayor, I was the one who had the questions on the magistration item and I would rather talk about them off the dais at this point. Thanks.

>> Mayor Adler: Okay.

>> Garza: Quickly, I don't -- I can't talk to you off the dais so I'm wondering, are you going to ask those questions on the message board?

>> Pool: I think that you and I can talk about these procedurally off the dais.

>> Garza: Well, I don't know if I can talk about

[3:56:14 PM]

this item, but I hope that we can have it on the April 9th and pass it on the consent agenda.

>> Mayor Adler: We'll note it as being postponed to April 9th.

>> Mayor?

>> Mayor Adler: Yes. >>

>> Ellis: Councilmember Ellis here. I just wanted to double clarify that our last co-sponsor is going to be Alison alter, the first time councilmember pool spoke, I think she said kitchen. On item 53 for the mwbe, councilmember alter has asked for co-sponsor.

>> Mayor Adler: Very clear now. Thanks. Councilmember alter.

>> Alter: Thank you. I had a question or clarification for item 31. So on the message board yesterday I made a suggestion that we might want to consider a nine-month contract with an

[3:57:14 PM]

aloud extension if it came back to council before it was extended, that would give us a little more flexibility if we needed to otherwise they would have to go out and rebid and do the whole process which we may or may not be ready to do. I wasn't sure from the adjustment you made if that had been captured for 31 or how councilmembers Flannigan and kitchen who were talking about it would feel about that.

>> Kitchen: Mayor? May I speak?

>> Mayor Adler: Your question is speaking to an extension period in addition to the nine-month issue.

>> Alter: My suggestion would be to make it a nine-month contract and consider if they choose to to allow an extension for one year, but they would have to come back to us to do the extension, but they wouldn't have to go through the whole procurement process.

>> Mayor Adler: Thank you.

>> Kitchen: May I speak to that?

>> Mayor Adler: Councilmembers Flannigan and kitchen have raise their hands to speak on this.

[3:58:15 PM]

Councilmember kitchen.

>> Kitchen: Thank you for that recommendation. I think we should proceed that way. The nine-month gives us an opportunity to address councilmember Flannigan's concerns, but I think allowing for an extension without having to go back and rebid is important. For my colleagues, this is about the bike share program and it's -- bike share program and about the contract with the non-profit that manages the bike share program right now. What they do is they provide maintenance for the bikes in the evenings and bring them back. So bike shares are a really critical program and we wouldn't want to rebid it after nine months. I anticipate that we will be continuing services there. Also just, you know, this will be coming back to the August -- August mobility committee meeting so we can talk through all the plans. There are currently the potential for cap metro to step in and work with this

[3:59:15 PM]

non-profit. And so those kind of conversations we can have in August, but I think allowing for -- allowing for an extension of the contract after coming back to council of one year would be a great way to address that right now.

>> Mayor Adler: Councilmember Flannigan and after he speaks we can decide whether to pull this item or not. Probably what we need to do. Councilmember Flannigan.

>> Flannigan: I'm fine with that. I don't know that there's a substantive difference only because this might be one of those sole source contracts because of the nature of the service and the provider. But I'm fine as long as it comes back to council in nine months, I'm agnostic to the tactic.

>> Mayor Adler: Does the clerk understand what the motion is? Staff understand? It's going to stay on as recommended by councilmember alter. Consent agenda is items 1 through 59 and 86 to 92.

[4:00:15 PM]

Any discussion on the consent agenda? Councilmember Casar.

>> Casar: I think councilmember kitchen signed up also as a co-sponsor of item 90 and I don't know --

>> Kitchen: He said that.

>> Casar: Got it.

>> Mayor Adler: That one I got. Any further discussion on the consent agenda items 1 through 59 and 86 to 92? Councilmember kitchen.

>> Kitchen: I have a few comments on 90, I believe it is. But I would defer to councilmember Casar if he wants to comment first. No? Okay. I just wanted to comment I think this is very important for us to move forward with and I appreciate councilmember Casar's clarification in the language because there has been some confusion. This is an opportunity to defer the time line for when rent is due. It is not a forgiveness of rent. Although I agree with what speakers were telling us earlier, that's the kind of action that we need to take next. But for this particular

[4:01:18 PM]

item, this is a -- this is limited to a deferral of the time frame during which rent must be paid. I would also like to ask our -- ask our staff to consider creating a rental assistance program and also to consider what can be done to help our small landlords. As we've talked about, we do have individuals in the city that depend upon their -- the rent they receive as landlords for one property or two properties and that's what they depend upon to live on. I know the circumstance of an individual who is on a fixed income, she's retired, she has a rental property and that property is necessary for her to live on. So I think in addition -- I think that this assistance is absolutely necessary and important and was happy to

[4:02:18 PM]

hear from all of our speakers earlier. I think we now also need to take the next step and I would ask our staff to look at our options for creating a national rental assistance program which can help pay for rent and also to determine whether there are other kinds of assistance we can help -- we can bring forward to help our -- our landlords in the city, particularly those landlords who are smaller landlords and really depend upon this rent as their means for existence.

>> Mayor Adler: Thank you. Councilmember Casar.

>> Casar: Mayor, I would like to thank everyone on the council for our work in support passing item 90. It is just -- this anti-eviction ordinance is one of many things council is doing today and the city is doing today and to try to address the crisis. No one should lose their home during the pandemic.

[4:03:19 PM]

It's wrong and it's also terrible for public health. The federal government has stepped up to truly try to protect homeowners from being foreclosed upon and have actually put moratoriums on many foreclosures and I understand the bill through congress right now, one of their primary -- one big chunk of what is going through congress is to continue to make sure homeowners don't lose their homes and then this ordinance would make sure that we do everything in our legal power to make sure that renters don't lose their homes. What we don't want is anyone to lose their home during the pandemic. But I do recognize and have heard from so many people that two months from now, three months from now, there are still going to be people out of work, there are going to be people who have back rent due and we need to work swiftly as a city to get massive amounts of assistance out to the community so that nobody loses their home. I also recognize that --

[4:04:20 PM]

that there are folks who are concerned about losing income who rely on rental income. There are a lot of people that work in property management that are worried about losing income, and there are thousands of people across the city that are currently losing income or have lost their jobs and that is horrible as well. What we want to make sure is nobody in the city loses their home because they have lost income. That's what this is trying to cover. We also want to make sure people have food, medicine, can take care of themselves. That's where the city along about help from the state and federal government can come in especially with the rental assistance councilmember kitchen has mentioned. For those property owners who have impacted tenants, tenants protected by this ordinance, that is helping us identify the places where people can't pay rent and those are good places for the city to come in with money, help those tenants pay their rent and that actually also make sure that landlords have that income. To some of the landlords who have reached out, it's

[4:05:21 PM]

important for folks to realize whether we pass this or not, they are going to have trouble getting rent because there are thousands and thousands of people right now who are going to have a lot of trouble paying rent April 1. This gives people 60 days and basically buys us the time that we need to be able to get to those folks and help them rather than them being worried about getting a notice to vacate their apartment on April 3 or 4. Thank you guys for this ordinance and this bit of work and thanks on all of the different things people are doing. If,

>> Mayor Adler: Councilmember Casar, I want to thank you and your sponsors for participating in this. I know that had there been more than six spaces, you would have had many more sponsors on this as well, literally across the dais. This is consistent with actions taken by city staff which we appreciate and the water department and Austin energy to make sure that no one is going to have their power or their water turned off in this period of time

[4:06:21 PM]

because of an inability to pay a bill. I appreciate we're not in a position to be able to forgive or excuse people from paying rent and that this action is to make sure that those that can't can't get evicted. And I know that the municipal court judges have taken action on their own to ensure that they won't hear any of those cases and we appreciate that action from municipal court judges. The supreme court of Texas has said they are not going to hear certain actions that would lead to eviction of tenants. I appreciate that happening. And to help not only with the eviction part of this but earlier in this stage and I appreciate your advice and counsel on this as well as that of the apartment association who has been such a huge ally and help to all of us as we deal with

[4:07:22 PM]

homelessness in the city. Not always agreeing on everything that we're doing, but helping to steer it right. Just moments ago I entered an emergency order subject to my powers during this period of time to prohibit the issuance of notices to vacate so that the process can'ting started as it might later head to court to prohibit the removal of property or tenant in these situations and prohibit seizure of tenants' property. All designed to make sure while we are all hurting and while we all need to do everything we can to help people at a very base level, no one is going to lose their utilities and hopefully no one will lose their home. Councilmember kitchen.

>> Kitchen: I just wanted to follow up with city manager. I thank you probably heard the request, and I know you all are already working on these kinds of things, I just wanted to understand if this is a request that you all can look at.

[4:08:23 PM]

And that's the two items, the creation of a rental assistance program and the second item being a consideration of what can be done to help these -- to help landlords that depend upon rent for, you know, to live essentially, to pay for their food and other items.

>> Councilmember, thanks for offering that, absolutely we are looking at all these options. We do have rental assistance programs and we're looking at how we can continue to expand and provide more assistance faster to get that information and resources out to our community. We'll be hearing later in the meeting today about all these economic and resiliency programs, but this is certainly high on that list.

>> Kitchen: Okay.

>> Mayor Adler: Okay. All right. Council, any more comments on the consent agenda, items 1 through 59 and 86 through 92? Councilmember Flannigan, then councilmember alter. I can't hear you.

[4:09:24 PM]

Are you muted, Mr. Flannigan.

>> Flannigan: How about that. Item 91 was a really

[inaudible] Of love over the last two weeks. Our economic resilience resolution that has many things we're walking about including direction to staff to explore how to support folks with housing amongst a long list of other things cloud-to-ground lightning sources of revenue -- including sources of revenue especially targeting our music community and venues especially hit by sxsw. Thank you, councilmember harper-madison, Ellis, Casar and the mayor for being co-sponsors. But also the rest of the council for engaging in a really productive conversation on the message board which might be one of the most transparent sausage making experiences we've had as a board, as a body to see this evolve so quickly over the last two weeks.

[4:10:24 PM]

I'm really proud to have been able to work with so many external stakeholders and groups, minority and ethnic chamber of commerce, all of our music organizations, workforce providers and city staff who worked with us in partnership to not just build this resolution for today but also to bring a program ready to go as we move this forward. A lot of the speakers today were talking about item 90 as if it were the only thing we were doing, and I know councilmember Casar being a co-sponsor on item 91 as well. I encourage the public to keep engaging and watch all of the work that is underway and don't think that we are forgetting out or forgetting the crisis at hand. I am a renter and have to worry about the same issues renters have to worry about in large part. We tried to keep this resolution as broad as possible to give staff as much permission as they

[4:11:24 PM]

could to develop these programs. We'll hear more about that and the progress being made there, but we are 100% committed both to all of our folks in Austin who are working, who are struggling, who are no longer working, our small business owners, our small landlords, all of our industry folks, we are all suffering through this together. We're all going to get through it together. Thanks again for participating and putting item 91 together.

>> Mayor Adler: Thank you, councilmember Flannigan. Councilmember alter.

>> Alter: Can you hear me?

>> Mayor Adler: Yes.

>> Alter: Great. I wanted to make a quick comment on 90. I had posted some similar direction to what councilmember kitchen had asked of the manager. I would add that we need to make sure we're providing guidance for the landlord about how to proceed and to the extent we can provide additional resources, that would be great. And then if I might on -- I

[4:12:26 PM]

have worked on a couple last-minute amendments with director [inaudible] And I wanted to highlight those and ask her to just clarify them because we're getting a lot of very specific questions to these points and I think it would be helpful to have clarity from her and not just from me so that we're making sure people applying know more about the eligibility. So under the section on eligibility, we have added explicitly medical activities and commercial and multi-family -- and multi-family real estate. This is to address the -- the medical is to address the many medical practices of various [inaudible] That are having challenges financially at this point and the other is to address some of the challenges that the landlords may be experiencing floating the rent for a couple of months there. Another change was that we

[4:13:29 PM]

change the eligibility down from two to one employee and this helps address some issues that folks like our hairdressers, et cetera, who are solo providers. So I would ask if she could speak quickly to those amendments and what they mean so that folks can hear it actually from staff.

>> Good afternoon, councilmembers. Veronica, director of economic development. Councilmember alter speaking to section 2 on page 4, we did make some amendments based on feedback that we received from many of you. The first and the first bullet adds language to address multi-family real estate -- I'm sorry, commercial and multi-family real estate as well as medical industries, so this allows them to be included in this loan program. And in the second bullet, as councilmember alter said, we changed the eligibility of a business from two to 100 employees. We changed that to one to

[4:14:29 PM]

100 employees. This would include an individual barber, so forth that is a one-member company or business.

>> Mayor Adler: Thank you very much.

>> Alter: Thank you, and I appreciate you working with me to make those changes at the last minute.

>> Mayor Adler: Thank you.

>> Alter: Mayor, if there are no other questions on 88, I want to make a quick comment if I could on 2.

>> Mayor Adler: Councilmember kitchen?

>> Kitchen: Director bresinio, could I have a question? Thank you councilmember alter and thank you for making those changes. That's very helpful. Could you briefly describe this program for people? If I'm understanding correctly, it's to help the stop gap until the sba loans come forward. Is that right?

>> Correct. This program is part of our section 108 program. It's an existing program that we have the family business loan program that we're recommending that we expand guidelines so we can

[4:15:30 PM]

apply for economic relief. This particular program will provide stop gap funding for a business impacted by covid-19. It allows them to receive a loan of up to \$35,000 through this program. And the idea is that will help in the meantime until they are able to receive the sba loan. The sba loan is up to \$2 million and our understanding it could take five to six weeks at best to go through those funds moving forward. So we wanted to provide some relief to our local businesses before those sba funds come forward.

>> Kitchen: Thank you very much. And the last question then is is there -- so are these to be made available immediately after we vote for this?

>> Thank you for that question. Once council approves this, we will have to receive hud approval as well. Hud has up to seven days to do their approval, so far, we've already done some legwork to assure they are aware of what we're doing and poised to respond quickly.

>> Kitchen: Okay. Thank you.

>> Mayor Adler: That is a great program. I want to also thank the governor for working with

[4:16:31 PM]

the sba to have the county declared a disaster so the sba spigot could be turned on and thank John hockenjos who was the first person to realize we had to turn that spigot on and worked hard to get that done. John, thank you, wherever you are. Mayor pro tem.

>> Garza: I had a question about 91. And I also had put something on the message board about concern over duplicating efforts. The last -- obviously support this. The last be it resolved points out the exploring options that can provide assistance including financial, sick leave and supplies to persons and organizations including and then it lists some occupations. We received -- as one of the speakers

mentioned, we received a draft resolution from I think it was grass roots leadership and another organization specifically talking about cash payments

[4:17:32 PM]

and cash assistance. And so my question is I guess for the city manager, does this cover that? Or would we need to -- to -- because what I see here, and I think it's good is we're giving some broad authorization saying please look into all this stuff. That being said, if there's going to be a discussion, and it's a necessary one because so many people and specifically I know all over the city, but we know that the majority of hospitality and service industry folks, majority live in district 1 through 4. And so that's going to take a budget amendment. And I'm curious to know what is going to come back to us. Do we need to make this stronger to bring us the budget amendment to show us the financial assistance that we'll be able to provide people, many of whom

[4:18:32 PM]

will not be able to get any of the stimulus money probably, possibly because of being undocumented. That's my question to the city manager.

>> Sure and I'll defer to the sponsor of the resolution and see if that is covered, about out the direction to myself and to staff as we look at economic resiliency includes all of those items that we need to provide our community to be able to weather this crisis. We know just as we did today as soon as we have items that you can act on, we will bring those forward. So if we have to call a special called meeting or if we have to make sure there are budget implications as we look through these items, we will do so. We're still in the beginning stages of looking at some of those options, but knowing there's a lot of ideas out there, you will be hearing from director bresenio and

[4:19:32 PM]

jock hockenyos, but we want to make sure everything is on the table. I don't need any more direction, but I certainly would see if the sponsoring councilmember, the author author-councilmember believes that should be included in the resolution itself.

>> Mayor Adler: Jimmy? Councilmember Flannigan, are you comfortable with that?

>> Flannigan: Yeah, I mean the point is to be broad and allow staff to move forward. You know, I was really happy with all of engagement that we had on the message board with other council offices. So, you know, I don't think anyone is saying we shouldn't move quickly and expediently, but I still think budget amendments are going to require council approval, obviously.

>> Mayor Adler: Okay.

>> Mayor?

>> Mayor Adler: I will say, comb councilmember

[4:20:38 PM]

tovo, I always feel good when you grab a sweater and put it on, but you are alone in that room and put it on. I'm not going to feel guilty about that at all. Councilmember tovo.

>> Tovo: Thanks. Let me just know I'm having a few issues with sound. If you see me on my phone, I was listening to the sound on the phone while I tried to get it back on my computer. I just wanted to participate in that last bit, mayor pro tem.

>> Garza: Is a, thank -- mayor pro tem Garza and I appreciate drafting it as broadly as he did. I also wonder the next steps. Probably all of us are getting ideas from our community or looking to other communities. One of the things my staff has spent time looking at are small grants, which I know we've heard lots of support for from our community. And so, you know, as I thought about where we go

[4:21:39 PM]

next, I know our staff have reached out about organizing task forces and perhaps we're going to talk about those off line or independently with our city manager or potentially here in this briefing today, but I do think we have a next step that needs to happen where we take some of the ideas coming from the community and ask our staff to take a look at those because there are some really viable, interesting, very specific programs that are certainly covered by the broader language, but having that level of more specific direction to staff or more specific exploration of staff might be useful. I'm not entirely sure where that happens, but I'm glad the resolution makes a space for it. And figuring out what that process is for exploring those or asking staff to work with us in exploring those is what's clear to me at this point.

>> Mayor Adler: Okay. Mayor pro tem?

[4:22:39 PM]

>> Garza: I think Alison was next.

>> Mayor Adler: Alison, do you want you go? Councilmember alter?

>> Alter: Thank you. I just wanted to flag for the city manager a conversation I've been having with [inaudible] And councilmember tovo and Austin recovery which I think is just another example of one of the many non-profits that we contract with that is going to have a severe cash flow problem when they can't necessarily meet with clients in person in the same way that may have a big impact. And it's my understanding that as written this would give you the flexibility that you can. There's some constitutional provisions that appear to be problematic in the confines of the programs that we have who are trying to seek a resolution to try to address some of the issues among our contracting non-profits, particularly ones that are dealing with health care

[4:23:43 PM]

service providing may be experiencing so we can continue to benefit from these services. I don't know if that's the response from Ann Morgan or the city manager at least as we currently understand that situation.

>> Mayor Adler: Mayor pro tem? And Morgan, you are muted. You are unmuted now.

>> I think the resolution language is drafted broadly enough to give the manager the authority he needs to go and do those things.

[4:25:02 PM]

As somebody.

>> Mayor Adler: Mayor pro tem.

>> Garza: I guess my only reservation if this covers these kinds of things, it says including and lists specific professions and I promise I'm not trying to mess with your ifc, Jimmy, I just wondered if it would be friendly to say including but not limited to as it lists specific professions in that bullet.

>> Flannigan: Tell me specific page and line number.

>> Garza: It's the very first bullet, it says exploring options that can provide assistance including financial and then it says including and it lists very specific types of jobs and

[4:26:02 PM]

I'm just asking if we can say including but not limited to. Am I looking at an old --

>> Kitchen: You are looking at an old --

>> Flannigan: You might be looking at an old version.

>> Kitchen: There's still a place for it. Mayor

[4:27:18 PM]

language

[inaudible] And I'm curious if there is a it's the resource.

-- It's the resource and climate protection plan that it sounds like some of the speakers had concerns about input and asked us to postpone it.

>> Mayor Adler: I'm ready for that to go forward.

>> Garza: Okay. I'm curious if anybody else would like to postpone it. Okay.

>> Renteria: I'm ready to go forward.

[4:28:21 PM]

>> Mayor Adler: Councilmember Casar.

>> Casar: I wanted to talk on both of those items. On the councilmember Flannigan's item, I wanted to second what mayor pro tem Garza said to explicitly mention that there are lines in here where I think it does-- asked the manager to essentially look at financial and cash assistance like what the federal government is doing. Seems like the bill is headed to pass the house soon, but upon reading some of it seems like a lot of people may not get their check for four months or even longer. There are going to be people who don't qualify for unemployment. There will be people who don't get a check at all. So while we need to be looking at helping people with housing and medicine, I think direct cash assistance is something that the city should figure out how to fill in the gaps especially for the people who get left out. So I want to second that direct cash assistance should be part of our strategy. I wanted to discuss if we wanted to postpone the item or not, but I'll go ahead

[4:29:22 PM]

and abstain with the mayor pro tem.

>> Mayor Adler: Okay. Ready to go forward with consent? We can move through the agenda. Those in favor raise your hand? Councilmember Renteria?

>> Renteria: I wanted to ask a question. Did you say that there might be the governor agreed on having some kind of support for people who might be struggling to pay their mortgage so they won't lose their house.

>> Casar: Yes. We'll make sure to get it out to everyone, but there has been a 60-day moratorium for government-backed mortgages on foreclosures. It depends on whether you're federally backed, Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, but conversations up to a year, six months, up to a year of deferrals on payments. So we obviously don't regulate the banks mostly based out of New York City from Austin, but the federal government does. And my understanding is the

[4:30:24 PM]

federal government is essentially making it so that folks -- houses shouldn't get foreclosed on and people can defer payments. Currently it sounds like things are on track for the non-federally backed mortgages to follow soon and for the lenders to follow suit, we would hope. So there's a lot of action being taken and hopefully more action to be taken to make sure that those mortgages don't get foreclosed on and people can defer their payments.

>> Renteria: Great.

>> Mayor Adler: Okay. Let's take a vote. Those in favor of the consent agenda please raise your hand?

>> Garza: With the noted abstention.

>> Mayor Adler: With the noted abstention. Raise your hand? Those opposed? It's unanimous on the dais with the note taken, the consent agenda passes. With that I just want to -- we're going to do now the Austin housing finance agenda.

>> Flannigan: Is councilmember harper-madison trying to speak?

>> Mayor Adler: Were you trying to speak or were you

[4:31:24 PM]

voting?

>> Harper-madison: I was trying to stop you from the vote. I also wanted to register that I received a great deal of concern around the consideration with item number 2 and so I would either support mayor pro tem's motion to postpone the item or I would also like to abstain.

>> Mayor Adler: Okay. Let the record reflect that you abstained on that vote and I just didn't see it.

>> Harper-madison: Thank you.

>> Mayor Adler: That's noted in the record. All right. Now we're going to do the Austin housing finance corporation meeting. But before we do that I just want to really quickly say, because I know I may forget it for later on, I want to thank atxn for what we're watching here today for we're doing today. I think it's working very well and it's kind of a neat thing to do. And I want to thank the com

[4:32:27 PM]

staff for the work they did and the press conference we had and the university of Texas to facilitate there. So thank you to staff for all of that. I'm going to recess the meeting that we have right now here at 4:32

[See separate transcript for Austin Housing Finance Corporation meeting]

I now reconvene us in the city of Austin council meeting here on March 26th. The time is 4:33. Yes, councilmember alter.

>> Alter: Thank you. I had tried to just make a quick comment on number 2 before we voted, and just because there's been so much work by our staff and the RNC and the working group to put together the plan P I want to thank them. I think this is a really important step forward and the reach program that they're innovating is going to help us keep our climate and our economic goals. And as we enter this time of uncertainty I think that the flexibility that's built into this plan is going to serve Austin well. And I know they've worked so

[4:34:29 PM]

hard on this and I know our focus is really on the coronavirus stuff, but I did want to just pause for a second to acknowledge that this is an important step forward that will really help us with many of our goals. So thank you.

>> Mayor Adler: Thank you. We're now going to move into the consent agenda. Before we do, Jeanette, also thanks to you and the clerk's office for everything that you're doing seen and unseen, not only this meeting, but the orders and the support you're giving to the emergency populations as well.

>> Thank you, mayor. We would like to make a point that all of the work that you're seeing up there was done pretty much by one person and that was corrie Ellis and his team in ctm.

>> Mayor Adler: Okay. Thank you all. Everybody is working really hard and really stressful times, thank you. Jerry, do you want to take us through the planning

[4:35:30 PM]

consent agenda.

>> Jerry rusthoven with the planning and zoning department. The item 67, staff is requesting a postponement of this item to April 23rd. Item 68 is case c-14-2017-0148, staff is requesting a postponement of this item to may 21st. Item 69 is case c-14-2019- c-14-2019-0098, staff is welcome a postponement of this item to April 23rd. Item 70 is case npa-2019-003.01, staff is requesting a postponement of of this case to may 21st. Testimony 71 is case c8142018-0121, staff is requesting a postponement to April 23rd. Item 72, staff is requesting a postponement of this item to April 29th. Item 73 is case

[4:36:30 PM]

c-14-2019-0137, staff is requesting a postponement of this item to April 29th.

>> Item 74 is case Knapp 2019-0015.02, staff is requesting a postponement of this item to April 23rd. Item 75 is case c-14-2019- c-14-2019-0164, staff is requesting a postponement of this item to April 23rd. Item 76 is case Knapp 2016- 2016-0014.01. Sh, staff is requesting a postponement of this item to may 21st. Item 76, case c-14-2017-0010. Sh, staff is requesting a postponement of this item also on may 21st may 21st. Item 78, c-14-2020-004, staff is requesting approval on all three readings. Item 79, staff is offering this case for consent approval on all three readings. Item 80, staff is offering this case for consent approval on all three readings.

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Item 81, case Knapp 2018-0021.02, the applicant is requesting an indefinite postponement of this item. Item 82 is case c14h-2020-0011, this is a for postponement to April 9th. Item 82 is a request for postponement to April ninth. Number 83, staff is requesting a postponement to April ninth. And finally, item 85, c-14-2020-0001, staff is requesting a postponement to April ninth. That was the agenda.

>> Mayor Adler: The consent agenda, items 66 through 85, any discussion? Councilmember pool makes a motion to pass the consent agenda. Is there a second to that? I need a second. Councilmember Flannigan seconds. Any discussion?

>> Kitchen: Quick question. I'm sorry, I think I heard you right, but you did say that 71 was postponed to the

[4:38:31 PM]

23rd, is that what you said?

>> That's correct.

>> Mayor Adler: With that those in favor of the consent agenda please raise your hand? Yes, councilmember Flannigan?

>> Flannigan: I just want to make a comment on item 66, a zoning case in my district. It's been a long laborious process started many months ago and I want to thank the property owner and the staff for working on a tree mitigation restrictive covenant that was included as part of this zoning case. I think it helps address and cure some of the issues that we had in the development. So I'm glad to see this finally finish its conclusion and thank you to staff for helping get that done.

>> Mayor Adler: Okay. Those in favor of the consent agenda, please raise your hand? Those opposed? It's unanimous on the dais. It passes. The consent agenda passes. That's all our items. Do we have any pulled items? I think we've now taken care of the agenda. That gets us then to the item number 93, which is the

[4:39:33 PM]

covid-19 briefing. Manager.

>> Mayor, councilmembers and to our community, we have been experiencing an unprecedented time for not only our city, our state, our country, the world, and we have been committed at the city and local level to do everything that we can proactively to respond to this pandemic. What we have for you today is a briefing that will involve Dr. Escott, our health authority, director Hayden from the public health department, Juan Ortiz, the director of homeland security. And John hockenyos from our economic development areas. We will be having each of them come up and do a brief overview of the work that has been going on because I really want to have the bulk of our time today to answer your questions. So again we appreciate all the support that we have been given, and making sure

[4:40:37 PM]

that we keep our community safe and make sure that we keep the community safe. So thank you for your continued support and guidance in that respect. With that I'm going to ask Dr. Escott to give an overview of how things are looking from his perspective.

>> Thank you, Spencer. I'm Dr. Escott, director of public health. As you know, the situation has grown worse and worse by day. Just today the city of new York has added multiple trailers outside of hospitals for anticipated need for makeshift morgues. Austin's not immune. Texas is not immune. Communities

across this country are not immune from this. The early and decisive action that the mayor and council and the county judge

[4:41:38 PM]

have taken have bought up substantial time to prepare to get more equipment in, to make more plans, so that we can face this more effectively than other communities. Texas as of today has 1,424 confirmed cases of covid-19 with 100 individuals hospitalized. Just today during this council session the governor has mandated the quarantine of individuals has mandated travelers from New York and New Jersey into a 14-day quarantine. Here in Travis county we have a total of 119 cases, which are confirmed. That information is on our website. Today we also added a dashboard for the community to provide updated statistics, including distribution of age as well as a number of other factors, and we will continue to modify that and

[4:42:39 PM]

update it so that we can provide useful information, as much transparency as we can throughout this crisis. We also intend to add some features on there which will indicate the number of individuals hospitalized, the number of individuals in icu settings, and already on there is information on deaths, which are zero, as well as recoveries. As you all saw earlier today, we have been successful in partnering with not only city and county and surrounding jurisdictions, but with our health care agencies, our hospital -- health care systems and the university of Texas, who today released their modeling for the pandemic at least over the next several months for the city of Austin and the Austin msa. That modeling shows very clearly the impact and the importance of social distancing. We're at 50% approximately

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through our early action for closing bars and restaurants and ending special events. You can see visually from that graph the importance of getting beyond 75%, which we hope to do through this effort at stay home and work safe. We really need to try to get to 90 percent. We need to try to buy as much time as possible so that we can secure enough supplies, personal protective equipment for our health care workers and our first responders, so that we can identify successful options for treatment of those individuals who are suffering from covid-19, and so that we can further enhance our testing capabilities so that we have a better idea of how we're doing and where we are. On the note of testing, we have been successful at creating drive-through testing. We have actually been doing some element of drive-through testing for the past month and a half with our partnerships, with our health care systems.

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We now have community-based testing sites. We have a common platform which can be used by physicians and other clinicians in Travis county, bastrop county, Williamson county and other surrounding counties that can enter patients into this system. We prioritize them and we assign them locations where they can show up to get tested. We now have the capacity to have a testing site for public, a testing site for health care workers, and testing site for our first responders and critical infrastructure members so that we can ensure that testing can be done in a timely fashion. We are still somewhat limited by the test collection kits. If you remember, early on there was an issue with the reagent and the ability to run the tests. Now we're short on swabs and what we call the viral transport media that it goes in, but we are working to secure additional resources so that we can continue to enhance our ability to test folks. So that we can make better decisions regarding how to

[4:45:44 PM]

proceed after this initial stay home and work safe initiative. We have been actively involved in our partnerships with our health care entities, our hospital CEOs, our medical school friends, our first responders, and local government from around the jurisdiction. We have created a number of task forces to look at particular things, like nursing homes. How can we further enhance our capabilities at protecting our most vulnerable populations. We have task forces associated with addressing in-hospital surge. How do we create more beds, how many more ventilators can we get? How many do we have right now if we collect those into those hockey centers? And also looking at alternate health care sites. These may be places that used to be hospitals, may be current hospitals that may have only done elective surgical procedures that now have additional capacity because those elective

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procedures are not happening, as well as other non-traditional sites like hotels and large spaces that may be converted to care for individuals if we do experience a substantial surge beyond the capacity of the health care system. We are increasing our ability to respond to this. Our hospital capacity right now looks good. We're at about 50% capacity in our hospitals across the system right now, which is exactly where we want to be as we wait to see what happens over the next two and a half weeks. Once we have that information, once we have that data, once we have more data to plug into the modeling, it will help us better predict what the next several months look like. As I said earlier this week at a press conference, our unanimous opinion of our expert panel was that schools should stay closed for the remainder of the semester and possibly later.

[4:47:53 PM]

This was in the modeling you saw earlier. Because of the interactions that school students have with one another every single day, getting effective control of the spread of this disease is just not possible for schools are in session at least in the traditional sense. We are working hard at creating opportunities for people to stay in alternate sites like hotels if they have covid-19 F they don't have a home to go to or if their home is not suitable for self-isolation at home, if they don't have their own room or the circumstance is they have someone in their home that may be at high risk complications. We may be able to offer those individuals an opportunity to stay somewhere elsewhere they can isolate effectively and we can prevent transmission within the home, which as you may recall was a significant factor in the spread in Wuhan and China early on. That concludes my report. I'm happy to take questions.

>> Kitchen: Mayor?

[4:49:00 PM]

>> Kitchen: Thank you. Let me express my thanks for all of us and the community. We really appreciate the work that you and the team are doing. I wanted to ask about testing. I wanted to ask if you could just speak to -- I think there's just a common question that people have is why can't we test everyone? So I know you've spoken to that at press conferences, but I think this is a briefing and I think it would be helpful for people to understand. So I have that question if you could speak to that which to my mind speaks to the availability and if I'm able to speak correctly. Is that a matter of supply? Is it a matter of us in the supply, where is the embryonic down on the number of tests that are available.

>> Unfortunately money is not the issue. It's the supply chain that's the issue. We have a number of companies that are working hard to produce more of the swabs and the viral media.

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We're identifying other options that may be used, other kinds of swabs, other kinds of transport media which can be used to do these tests. The reason why we can't test everybody is because of that factor. We have enough lab capacity now through the national labs to test many people, however, it's not a quick test. I've had my own family members who have been tested recently and the turnaround time has been six days for first responders. While this is important for tracking, when we have to make decisions like who needs an isolation room or not in a hospital, if it's -- if it's clearing them because we need a health care worker, a first responder to go back to work, six or seven days is not good enough. We do have some promise. Over the weekend the the fda approved a point of care

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test which right now can be done in hospitals and is rolling out primarily to those who are hardest hit, but we expect more broadly across the country in the coming month that has a 45-minute turnaround time. That's the kind of testing that we need so that we can test people, we can know relatively instantly if we need to isolate them or not or if they can return to work or not. So that's a big issue right now. We've had to prioritize those in the hospital, our health care workers, our first responders to ensure that we can make good decisions about them, return to work or not, isolation bed or not. And you know, less of a priority has been the young and healthy person that we expect is not going to have a complicated course. Again, we want to test everybody. In some circumstances we don't have to test everybody because the instructions are the same. If you have a flulike illness you must stay home for at least seven days or at least three days after

[4:52:00 PM]

the conclusion of your fever and improvement of symptoms, whichever one is longer. So this is the instructions that folks have been getting along the way if we haven't been able to test them. Our hope is that over the next week that we'll be able to test anybody who is entered by the clinician into this testing pool.

>> Kitchen: Okay. Just as one follow-up and then others may have questions. The related question is, you know -- I'm just repeating what people have asked me, which I think is important to ask. I think there's a -- sort of a -- people are not understanding why this is happening in the united States, for example? And I understand these are just news stories and they may be missing information, but there are stories, for example, of at least one other city in Italy and also another city in the united States where everyone is being tested. So is that just a matter of the fact that they are able to get their hands on those tests or is there something

[4:53:01 PM]

else going on?

>> No. It is a matter of the ability to get their hands on the test. Right now in the united States because those supplies are limited they are being focused on Seattle, New York, new Jersey and those that are most hit. The private labs are doing a good job of expanding the capability of running the test as well as increasing the timeliness of the results, but we simply don't have enough test kits to run right now. We have requested a week ago for one supplier -- from one supplier 100 additional sets of swabs and we still don't have those. We have supplies from the federal government which arrived last week with no timeline for replenishment of those supplies. So we're still in the phase right now of trying to make sure that we have enough in a week to still run health care workers and first responders and those at high risk of complications. I'll also say, councilmember, that we

[4:54:02 PM]

expect this for younger people to be a relatively mild course. As the numbers of cases increase, there are going to be deaths, there are going to be substantial illness, there are going to be people on ventilators who are younger, it's just a matter of statistics. But we still are at the phase right now where we have to prioritize those tests where we need it the most.

>> Kitchen: Thank you.

>> Mayor Adler: Councilmember pool.

>> Pool: I wanted to ask a little bit -- I'm over here.

>> Sorry.

>> Pool: Thanks, Dr. Escott. I wanted to ask a little bit about the resource management pier raters. I was -- respirators. I was watching governor Cuomo in New York doing press conferences and stuff and he talked about the stockpile of respirators that evidently the federal government controls. They're holding on to them and I don't know what the criteria would be for their distribution, but evidently there was going to be some kind of California will get this many and New York will get this many and maybe we'll send some down to Florida.

[4:55:04 PM]

And Cuomo's point is the actual especially center of this pandemic is in New York right now and we need them all. And because of the way the virus works hopefully they can get through that spike? New York. And then he said he would pay to send them to whatever location next needed them, be it Washington state or California. Do you have any information for us with regard to the respirators and the stockpile that's evidently being guarded assiduously?

>> Yes. And this is why are I spoke earlier this week about the importance of a national strategy. And a national plan, a national response right now because of this exact factor. Because we don't have enough supplies if everybody is on fire at the same time. We do have enough supplies if there's a few hot spots. We should be flooding those hot spots with supplies and people like we would in a

[4:56:04 PM]

battle, in a war, because that's what we're in right now. And when that battle settles down, we move those supplies to other places. That's the correct strategy, that's not what we're doing right now. We have received some what we'll call sns, strategic national stockpile of ppe, it's not enough. Many of it expired in 2007, but it's better than not having anything so we've got folks going through the

warehouses looking to see if it still works, if the elastic is broken or degraded, we may have to start stapling rubber bands on the backs. That's where the stage we are right now. Because that's where we are right now, it does not make sense to not have a national response to this effort. That's what we need now. We need to buy ourselves time. We need to settle down this epidemic so that we can create better battle plans, better ability to respond because this is not going to go away in a month or four months. This is going to be an issue for the next year at least,

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and we need a strategy to work over that time period.

>> Pool: Is there anything that we can do here in order to encourage that policy making? I realize we are just a tiny little municipality far away from DC, but I think that there are a lot of voices that have been raised along this same line.

>> Well, I think what we're seeing right now is major cities being affected. And for some people they think oh, this is a city problem. This is a city problem right now. This is the way I like to explain it. There are jurisdictions that know they have cases. There's jurisdictions that have cases and they don't know it. And there's jurisdictions that are going to have cases. This spreads twice as easily as the flu as far as we know right now. So if you had flu in your community you're going to have this except this is going to be worse, this is going to be more impactful.

[4:58:09 PM]

So this is not a big city thing. It may be a big city thing now. In a week, two weeks, it's going to be a whole country thing.

>> Pool: So is a takeaway from that that you think that the simple weight of reality will come to bear and maybe then the adults in the room in Washington will make the right decisions and get some kind of a strategy in place? In a helpful way.

>> Let me say this, there have been some good decisions made in Washington early on. There was a good decision to make the travel restriction for China and the other countries affected as it went along. But we've got to continue to make good decisions. It's not going to stop. We're not going to turn things back on by Easter. We need to think about the impact through next Easter because if we look at pandemics, if we look at 1918, 1919, the same exact

[4:59:09 PM]

thing happened. Things settled down over the summer. We're not sure if it's going to happen with this. It settled down over the summer and then it came back in the fall. And we have to understand that that's the nature of virus, that's the nature of disease. We need to delay this as long as we can so that we can identify effective treatments and at some stage a vaccine so that we can get a better handle on this.

>> Pool: Thanks

>> Mayor Adler: Councilmember harper-madison? You are on mute. I think that you have to unmute your microphone. You are good.

>> [Indiscernible] Homeschool sounds like. I just -- I had a couple of questions. First of all, I would like to say thank you to everybody for -- for doing our part to flatten the curve and be doing this for your living rooms. I know that -- I know that it's a whole new world, there's a lot for us to all adjust to, so I appreciate everybody's commitment.

[5:00:09 PM]

To Dr. Escott, there's a couple of things, one --

[laughter]. Wow, what a job you have. So there are two things that seem to be inundating our office right now. One of which I think that you might be able to help us point folks in the right direction. So there are a lot of people who are interested in manufacturing masks and we all recognize that some of those are more effective than others. So I just I'm very curious, in a lot of ways I think how to direct the effort to folks who really just want to make a contribution to what you describe as the battle, to help us win the war, but not do more harm than good. Just curious about -- about where you stand in those regards. I know that I have seen a couple of different outlets that were asking folks to take the opportunity to make masks at home and just -- just what I have heard on the other end is that doesn't necessarily always produce masks that people

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can use. So just any -- any contribution there would be helpful. Then I have one other question after that.

>> Dr. Escott: That's a question question. We've certainly received lots of reach from private citizens as well as industry locally to enter this effort, to change their manufacturing to help this effort. I think this is an example of T resiliency and the community that we have here. That want to come together and work together to really address this as best as we can. I'll -- I'll say that we have a individualized plan personal protectiveequipment task force that is evaluating these types of things, looking at different designs for masks. I will make sure that Juan Ortiz who is speaking after me connects y'all's offices with the right person to -- to address those particular questions.

>> Harper-madison: Yeah, it maybe doesn't necessarily seem like it, but it is a point of priority for our office. You would be amazed at how

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many folks are trying to contribute in whatever way they see fit and can and Austin happens to be the kind of creative city where we have a lot of makers who don't happen to be working right now, so they are trying to contribute what they can. I want to make certain that we take the opportunity. I appreciate that there's a task force and I could maybe take it to them, but I want to make certain that we take the opportunity to combine all of these separate efforts and have a quarterback of sorts. Like one stop shop where folks know to go and then subsequently what's the protocol and say thanks but no thanks but folks really can't use these masks, so let's use your time and effort elsewhere. It really is a big point of concern for us. The other thing that I was going to ask was, I don't know if this is directed at you, unless of course you have some insight based on your experience. We would need a full-time employee to be able to field all of the questions we are receiving about how people can help.

[5:03:15 PM]

We have this organization, how can we help, I have this idea about this initiative, how can we help? We want to do this thing, now that's there a shelter in place we don't know that we can help. I'm just curious if you have any ideas on how we can harness the power of all of the people who wouldn't take contribute but not take away from the other work that our offices should be continuing to do outside of the, you know, real concerted effort.

>> Dr. Escott: I will ask you to hold that question for Stephanie Hayden or Juan Ortiz, they will give you a better answer than I will on that. We do have phone lines, we do have points of contact for that, we do have amazing volunteers from the Travis county medical society helping us answer clinical calls. We do have a lot of people volunteering to help us out. I will tell you that Austin public health has never been so large as it is today because we have so many departments and so many healthcare workers and others who are engaged in

[5:04:16 PM]

this battle with us. That's been extremely helpful. So I will defer to them.

>> Mayor Adler: Thank you.

>> Harper-madison: Thank you. Doctor, I want to give visibility to this chart again, which came from the university of Texas and I know that you just spoke to this and I want to thank the -- the university of

Texas for getting us this, Dr. Myers. As it turns out, kind of serendipitiously the person doing the model for the United States is from the university. What that means is someone from our own back -- in our own back yard has been able to do modeling for us. I want to thank her and I want to thank Dean Johnston, the Dean of the medical school for the work that they are doing in advising

[5:05:18 PM]

you and then you then take that to -- to me and to the county judge and to the staff and everybody else that's involved. But there are two charts that I just want to make sure that people watching this have a chance to see. This is part of the university of Texas presentation. It's online. You can see their -- their entire press conference this afternoon and I would suggest people see it. But what this shows us is the amount of control that we as a community have over what it is that we're going to face. And there's a tremendous amount, I think, of both hope and opportunity in that. But I'm going to ask you about this in just a second. What this shows, I wish that I could, but they tell me with the technology they can't do that. It would shut everything down. It's -- it's posted, we'll get it online, it's in a couple of different places. I don't know what else to do other than I don't know if

[5:06:18 PM]

the camera can get closer on this or not.

>> We could also take a picture of it and put it up on social media, like we could take pictures right here and put it up.

>> Mayor Adler: Right. If my staff can get these documents up on social media, I think these are -- can you put it up? As the back drop? Fits hard, I don't want to waste -- if it's hard, I don't want to waste a lot of time.

>> [Indiscernible].

>> Mayor Adler: We can't lose that. Let's just stay here. At this point, we put this on so many different places online, the city did a press conference, it's going to be the city of Austin website. The university of Texas did a press conference, it's there. If I can get people curious enough to look for this, they will actually go hunt and find this, I will consider it an achievement. What it shows us is that by

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getting to 50% where we are right now, which is great, in short order even that 50% -- that's decreasing daily interactions that we have with people by 50%. Which is about where we are right now. If we

maintain that, we are almost -- we are almost 15 to 18,000 hospital beds under water in the next month and a half. If that long. Which means we're going to have to find 15,000 places for hospital beds in this city. Not to mention how that taxes and strains all of the healthcare system. That's what we're trying to avoid and that's at the 50% that we're at right now. But if we can get to 90%, then we're going to be able to handle all of this within our existing capacity. If everybody can go to sleep tonight and think how many people did I interact with today, physically interact with today, and count the number of people over the

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course of the day and every day when you go to sleep, think that through. And to try to drive down to -- to 10% of what you used to do, that's what we're trying to get people to do. Because we control this. The other chart at the university of Texas and Dr. Myers had more than just these two, but this is a serious one because this one reflects mortality in our city. What this says is that at 50%, where we are right now, we're looking in this community at potentially having over 6,000 people die of this -- of this virus. Which is a staggering number. We're talking about 6 figure numbers across the country. Lives that are going to be lost. But again we have control over this. If you get to 90%, if we can decrease by 90%, we're only

[5:09:21 PM]

talking about very few people. Very few people relatively speaking. And we get to control that. But what that means is that the people that I saw at Barton springs pool, in the free end of that, shouldn't be there with a group of people. The people that I drive-through town and I see playing basketball shouldn't be doing that because we have to decide as a community how important those lives are to us. Because now we get to make the choice and the decision about what it is that we -- that we want to do, what it is that we value most in this community. And it is everybody's individual decision added together that will determine what we're able to do as a -- as a community. There is great power in that we control this. But we get to decide.

[5:10:23 PM]

Other questions about this chart and then at the end of questions about these charts then I have one last question for you. Councilmember kitchen?

>> Kitchen: Just about the chart. When we are referencing the percentage, when you say 50% and 90%, you are talking about the level of social distancing that we have maintained. And if I'm understanding correctly, right now we're -- we think that we have maintained 50% --

>> Mayor Adler: Just prior to entering the shelter stay homework safe ordinance.

>> Kitchen: 50%, at 50% we are estimating 6,000 deaths in the city of Austin.

>> Mayor Adler: 6,000 people potentially dying before the summer is over.

>> Kitchen: Okay. So when we say 90%, that's our goal. So we can reduce those number of deaths which I think you said to almost none.

>> Mayor Adler: Well, some, but very, very few.

>> Kitchen: Thank you.

>> Dr. Escott: So we're not going to be able to avoid all deaths. What we want to avoid is

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excess deaths because we have exceeded our ability to care for people. Let me point out that what you are seeing here is just covid-19 related deaths. If we far exceed our capacity of our healthcare system, people having strokes or heart attacks or pneumonia not related to covid-19, they are going to have increased deaths, also. This has the potential to touch every family in this jurisdiction. And we've not faced something like this in 102 years. What we are working on now, if we can delay this, it gives us the opportunity to look with everyone else at what kind of policies we can put into place so that we can open the window some more and do it safely. Can we further protect nursing homes, can we further protect hospitals, can we implement other types of policy that will allow us to return to operations more

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normal than they are now without putting us in danger? We can continue to have cases. We're going to continue to have cases. But we want to make sure that we never surpass the surge capabilities of our current hospitals.

>> Mayor Adler: Councilmember tovo? You are on mute.

>> Tovo: Thank you, mayor.

>> Mayor Adler: Questions about the charts.

>> Tovo: Thank you, Dr. Escott, for your tremendous work and as you pointed out Austin was proactive in many ways, I just want to commend you and our public health staff and our mayor and our judge, county judge for taking such strong leadership action. Mayor, you touched on the images that circulated pretty widely about Barton springs. And Dr. Escott I appreciate your real directness in helping our community be aware that we continue on

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the trajectory we're on, we will have an overwhelmed healthcare system. And so, you know, we've also received feedback from people about trails and the extent to which people are -- are walking some of the trails in our communities, some of the parks, getting on benches or playground equipment, so I wonder if you could number one, emphasize that -- that we really must reduce our interactions down by 90% and that when we're in those public spaces, if people are out getting exercise and in those public spaces how important it is to maintain that appropriate distance. But, two, you touched on this in your presentation. And I appreciate you doing so. You are and I want you to confirm if you would, the healthcare community is working in a collaborative, coordinated fashion to address the need for more pps, the possible need and planning for -- for a

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possibility that we would need additional -- that you are working in collaboration with all of the partners who represent our medical community to really plan for those kinds of possibilities. With regard to protective equipment as well as facilities and

[indiscernible] Safety.

>> Dr. Escott: We are meeting every single day with our healthcare partners from Baylor Scott & white, St. David's, Seton, ascension health, the medical school, we have multiple meetings every day at multiple levels. So we have our emergency planners from all of the healthcare systems working together with our emergency planners. We have the executives meeting with executives. We have different layers of people meeting to ensure that we are covering all of the bases. We have collaboration from mental health. We have collaboration from -- from homelessness, we have collaboration from primary care, from pediatrics. We are doing everything that we can to make sure that we

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are engaging as many people as possible and I'll say that I am incredibly proud of this healthcare communities, I'm incredibly proud of our Austin public health team and in the community in general because they really have reached out and I think this is a great example of what we spoke really early on about, the need for an all government, all community effort at this. Austin and Travis county are doing an amazing job.

>> Mayor Adler: Okay. Questions about the chart before I ask my last question or do you want me to ask my last question?

>> Go ahead.

>> Tovo: Mayor, I had asked if you would also just re-emphasize public spaces as you did.

>> Dr. Escott: Yes. The way we need to think about this is any time two people come together, there's a risk of transmission. We need to reduce that as much as possible. It doesn't matter if you are 60. It doesn't matter if you are 15 or 25. That risk is there. So what we're asking people to do, if they are going to go exercise, we want people to exercise. We don't want people to have

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diabetes, strokes and heart attacks. But when they do that, they need to do it six feet apart. They need not do it in groups of people. Exercising by yourself is fine. Maintaining that social distance is fine, we want people to do that, but they need to be smart about it.

>> Mayor Adler: Further questions about the charts? Councilmember alter.

>> Alter: Thank you. So I wanted to ask about -- about the chart shows the 75% and the 90% and part of what I'm hearing from physicians that are writing in is that the steps that we took starting yesterday would only get us 75%. So can you explain sort of under what conditions we would go further in restrictions and what those restrictions might involve, you know, when do we need to

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have a -- a strict quarantine regime, just trying to understand what gets us from 75% to 90%? If -- if what we did yesterday doesn't do that.

>> Dr. Escott: Certainly, if we see that we are on a trajectory that's going to exceed our healthcare capacity, we're going to have to talk about stricter measures to do that. You know, I think in Austin we have an engaged community. We have a community who understands what we're talking about. Who can understand these graphs and the importance of their individual decisions. My hope is that we don't have to have an officer on the street asking for identification and proof that you are an essential employee. I'm hoping that we can do that together. Because we may be in this for a long haul. We're not sure yet what kind of impact the summer months are going to have. We are not sure yet the timeline to identify an effective treatment. We're not sure of a timeline

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yet for vaccination. So we want to be in a position where we can do things which are reasonable so that the community can be engaged in part of the solution because they are the ones that have the opportunity to downgrade this from a category 5 down to a 1 or 2. We're not going to make it go away.

But we can make it better if we can stretch those infections out over a much longer period of time than we have seen in other jurisdictions.

>> Alter: Under what conditions would we go to a systematic quarantine system for folks who have tested positive or who are sick, which is I believe part of the next step?

>> We're in the process of doing that right now. We're injecting more than 100 people into our contact tracing that's through Austin public health, through other city departments, county departments, our partners in other jurisdictions as well as the university of Texas so that we can track people down, do that contact tracing, put them in

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quarantine and do that effectively. Those were some of the other policy things that I was alluding to earlier. If we can get control of that and monitor the strategies of other jurisdictions who are facing this, then we have an opportunity to open the window more so that we can be less restrictive on the general community and focus more tightly on those who are at risk for spreading.

>> Alter: So you would say we're working towards implementing that, getting the pieces in place that we need to be able to do the more systematic quarantine?

>> Dr. Escott: Yes, what we are seeing in China right now is they're not back to business as usual. They are opened the window some to see what happens, to see if they have effective control. We're going to see different experiments of different policy and the effectiveness. So as -- as we go along, we're going to learn from other jurisdictions what's working and what's not so we

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can implement the right measures here.

>> Mayor Adler: Thank you, mayor pro tem ask your question.

>> Garza: I have a chart question but since you mentioned China, is it correct that's the only area that -- or seeing now a decline? Is that right?

>> Dr. Escott: There are a number of jurisdictions that have plateaued at least. China is one of them, south Korea, Taiwan, Singapore have all implemented effective strategies. Some of those have involved strict quarantine. They have involved, you know, aggressively taking people from homes and putting them into quarantine. We are looking for more reasonable measures. So that we can isolate people if they can't isolate themselves at home, offer them a hotel room, another

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space to convalesce and get better and limit the exposure to their family members.

>> That's my concern because I have seen that they have a different respect for civil rights in some of those countries and were able to implement some very strict quarantines and so I guess along the lines of what councilmember alter was asking, it seems like we need to be implementing as really as strict as we can here because we may not get to the point where we can implement the restrictions in those countries at this point. But -- but my question about the chart was it mentions the five county capacity of our -- of the five counties. I don't know how to -- isn't it true that those five counties, though, actually help more than five counties. So -- so -- so there are

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rural counties that will be -- are not included in those five counties that will be sending patients to one of those five counties, is that right?

>> Dr. Escott: That's correct.

>> Garza: So because of that, this -- this um -- our governor not doing the statewide mandate, how does it affect these models? Because these models are based on what we are doing here and what these five counties are doing. It doesn't take in -- if we're getting closer to 75, that's good for us, but that doesn't take into account a six or seventh or eighth county not in any restrictions because they don't have the hospitals in many of those counties. So they will be sending patients as we are doing all that we can to stop the spread, they will be sending patients because, as you said, there's three categories. You have it, I forgot the middle one or you're going to get it. It's going to come to your area. And it's going to come to

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parts of our state that don't have it right now. Those patients are going to get sent to our hospitals. The governor mentioned -- in the last press conference that I saw, listening to what seemed like the national doctors. He said he was on a conference call and, you know, certain doctors were on that conference call. I'm just curious to what extent is he listening to you and listening to the people here in our state showing us modeling like this.

>> Dr. Escott: You know, I -- I think the challenge is that -- that everyone is concerned about the economic impact of statewide or national action. The challenge is that we have to learn from people who have fought this battle already. We have to learn from China. We have to learn from our jurisdictions within our country who are facing this battle who are lining

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morgues outside of hospitals. We have to learn that individual jurisdiction strategy is not ideal. An individual state strategy is better but not ideal. We need a national strategy. Because as you alluded to, you know, it's going to keep getting reintroduced if we do it one jurisdiction at a time. We are going to have fires burning out of control in multiple large us cities more so than we already have right now and we're not going to be able to control it. It's a mistake to believe that rural America is not going to be touched. They are likely to be touched in a worse way than we are because they lack that healthcare capacity in their own jurisdictions. When the hospitals are full here or Houston or Dallas or San Antonio they are not going to accept transfers in from outside of the jurisdiction, that is going to disproportionately affect those in the rural community.

>> Garza: Okay. Is it fair to say that the lack of a state strategy at this point really is hindering our ability to recover from this effort?

>> Dr. Escott: I think

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it's important that we act as one state. We act as one country. Of we can do it as our own jurisdiction or msa and our partners in central Texas. It will be much more effective if we do it as a whole state, as a whole country.

>> Garza: Thank you.

>> Mayor Adler: Further questions for the doctor? Councilmember kitchen?

>> Kitchen: I just wanted to follow-up on something councilmember tovo had said. That is simply that are we considering closing down places like Barton springs pool? I -- I don't want to put you on the spot with that, maybe perhaps what what I should say instead I hope we are considering. I hate to go to that extreme, but I have seen multiple pictures now on multiple occasions and unless we end up really working with that area and informing people and enforcing, it is -- it is one of our gathering points that we are not seeing

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social distancing. So -- so my request is simply that we take some steps. And maybe we try some level of education or enforcement at that location first. But I -- but I think that what's happening there is putting the whole -- has the risk -- adds to the risk to the whole city.

>> Dr. Escott: It's a great point, councilmember kitchens. You know, I'm hopeful that when the community sees the graphs, they see the numbers today, they will take it more seriously than they have in the past. More than 50% of our cases are between the age of 20 and 39. And they are the ones who are more likely to have a mild illness, less likely to have a severe outcome. But because of the number of social interactions that they have, they are the most likely individuals to spread. So we need their attention. We need their support. We need their compassion for

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other members of the community. Their parents, their grandparents. To really drive their decision making.

>> Mayor Adler: In fact the age group that has the most positives in our community right now are people 20 to 29. More than any other age group. I want to go to something that councilmember -- one of my colleagues spoke to in terms of the orders that we have now and what percentage can they get us to. I think that was the -- one way to -- to interpret the question. And I think the answer is that the ordinance -- the orders that we have in place right now could get us to 90%, if people would, in fact, get their -- get their -- their physical interactions down by 90%. So the orders that were entered by the county judge and myself at your recommendation and the city managers and others had --

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had -- wanted people to stay at home. The only people that shouldn't be staying at home are people that have a critical or essential need to be out. And we recognize when we do that that there's grave financial hardship that results from that, that we're talking about thousands of -- of lives. People shouldn't people shouldn't be trying out how to fit within the exception. We have finance as an exception because people's credit cards still need to be able to work when they go to the grocery store. So those people need to go to work to make that happen, but that does not mean that a company that does that gets to do all the other things that the company wants to do other than the reason why it is that they're on the list. And people should be looking at everything that they do and thinking about their neighbor and trying to decide is this critical or is this essential? Is this what I need to do? To that end we've listed

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construction and I'm getting a lot of emails and a lot of calls about that now, and it's certainly something that we have spoken about and continue to speak about. And the professor at the university has offered

perhaps to help us model what different restrictions mean or don't mean or the like. So while you're here talking to the community would you talk about construction activity?

>> Dr. Escott: Yeah. So the challenge is that we do want people to right now for the next -- the remainder of the three-week period to really think of themselves as a Wuhan style lockdown. We don't want to mandate that, but that's how we want them to think. We want them to think that when they go outside of their house right now it should be essential because as I said before, if they're interacting with other people, particularly within six feet, there's a risk of

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transmission. You know, what we're in the process of doing right now is assessing over the next three-week period where are we going to be? How is that curve changing? Are we stabilizing? Are we decreasing the rate of transmission? Are we improving our doubling time? If we are, then we can look at opening the window a little bit, allowing for some aspects of the business community to return if we can do it in a safe way. You know, again, we are cognizant of the impact on our community. We're cognizant on the impact on jobs. We're cognizant on the impact of the ability to afford housing and health care. And we want to be as least restrictive as possible, but if we are not successful, we really have the potential of impacting every single family in this community. And that's why we have to make careful, deliberate decisions about how much to

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open windows to ensure that it's going to be as safe as possible.

>> Mayor Adler: Councilmember harper-madison. Did you want to go?

>> Harper-madison: Sorry about that, I was still muted. What I was going to say was you made mention earlier of a test. You called it the point of care test. And I'm just curious why we don't have more access to those now? What's the difference between what it is that we're short. I think you said we're short on the other test, we're short swabs, viral media, transport media, but with this point of care test it sounded like a different test. Is that the case? And if so, how do we get closer to getting more of those where we could get faster results? >>

>> Dr. Escott: That's a great question. That was just approved over the weekend by the fda. Right now they're focusing those efforts on making sure those tests are available in the hard hit areas and then it's going to expand to

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other hospitals using that type of lab. And then we expect that we'll see growth outside of the lab or outside of the hospitals into outpatient settings. It takes time. Remember that we just identified this disease earlier this year and it's quite remarkable that we already have mapped the genome and we have testing and now we're already at point of care testing. Some of this testing is -- we expect to increase rapidly, and this is another reason why delaying as long as possible puts us in a better position to handle this for the months to come.

>> Harper-madison: I appreciate that. And the last question that I had as a result of something that you said was you were talking about spaces for people to quarantine. Are we -- do we have an asset map that's established that we're in a good spot with spaces for people to go or do we need more spaces?

>> Dr. Escott: We have

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some contracts for spaces, both hotel type spaces as well as other spaces where we can put more open spaces. Our ideal situation at this stage, while we have relatively small numbers, is to -- again, if it's not safe to isolate at home or they don't have the ability or they're afraid to isolate at home, is to put those people in hotel rooms so they can feel safe, they can ensure their family's safety and we can limit that person to person spread within a house how would, which is really a challenge in Wuhan.

>> Harper-madison: I'm sorry, one last question. And this just occurred to me. So in a hotel setting, for example, you have to go through the lobby, you have to get on the elevator. You have to interact with -- that the housekeepers would otherwise take into the environment. I guess I'm just curious you said that's ideal, but it sounds almost to me what would be ideal is a single dwelling where a person could enter and exit without

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interacting with anybody else and truly isolate. And I say that to say, you know, I was reading about how many people really got hit with airbnb cancellations and I was just wondering how many spaces are in the city of Austin where people would quarantine if they don't have a space and I wonder if that's a strategy to sort of figure out how to manifest.

>> Dr. Escott: Those are great comments. We do have a team that identifies ideal hotels. Ideal hotels are ones that have entrance from the outside with no common lobby. So there is a process for evaluating and making sure that it's safe for other people in the hotel. Primarily using hotels that don't have other guests there, at least in the same area, because we don't want to have any risk of spread within a hotel type of setting with people who are

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not confirmed. And that's why we are looking at specific sites so that we can cluster people together who are known positives. We'll have other circumstances where we have people that are being tested that are not able to isolate themselves at home that we could put in another area so that we can ensure that it's as safe as possible while protecting the rest of the community.

>> Mayor Adler: Councilmember pool and then councilmember Casar and then to director Hayden.

>> Pool: I was getting calls about construction. There are a number of projects going on in my district, and my understanding is that construction could continue as long as workers stayed at least six feet apart and disinfected tools that are any shared tools. The nature of the construction is that you actually cannot do the work six feet apart, so I guess

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this is advance notice for the city manager and the mayor and for the covid team to look at some of the construction projects that are not in fact deemed to be essential construction projects, I have some of those in my district. I'd be happy to kind of work through a list with y'all on that, but I would like to see that we are more directive and emphatic, not only with our enforcement, but acknowledge the realities that construction mostly cannot be done six feet apart or in those instances where it can't. I would just note that many of the workers on those crews are probably much more vulnerable than would the rest of us and we have the ability to shelter in place. So I want to care for them as well.

>> Mayor Adler: That makes these issues really hard because those workers are also the ones that are going to be least protected by what congress just did. So we're taking the most vulnerable part of our population and saying you

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can't go to work --

>> Pool: Completely understand.

>> Mayor Adler: They don't have the social safety net.

>> Pool: So that has been -- I think we all recognize that, but they will become ill too.

>> Mayor Adler: You point out accurately that we are in a world right now where we're choosing between two bad options every time we're given a choice.

>> Pool: So I really do want to point to the physical health and safety of our community is our primary mission.

>> Dr. Escott: I agree and let me just comment. I think it's important for us also to remember that this is an all-community, all-government effort. And for me that means those of us who can still work, those of us who can telecommute to work, have a duty to support those who can't. And that means giving more than you normally do. That means sacrificing more than you normally have to sacrifice so that we can get through this together as a

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community. That means donating to churches and Salvation Army and red cross and groups who are going to support these folks who are most impacted, living day-to-day in their income. That's what a community means, that's what a community has to do in circumstances like this.

>> Mayor Adler: And to that end there are still conversations going on about construction, about the construction that's happening. It should happen in about what we could be doing on these sites or not doing on those sites. Whether we could use those sites and those gatherings to reach communities we might not otherwise be able to reach. Just everything. And that conversation, like so many, is happening everyday. And what you last suggested to me, doctor, was that in another five days we'll know so much more than we know today and we can continue to make these decisions again daily as if they were new, which is what we're doing daily.

[5:39:59 PM]

Okay. Councilmember Casar and then councilmember Paige and then director Hayden if you would come down.

>> Casar: Thank you, Dr. Escott, for everything. How well can we track the percentage reduction in social interactions to know where we are on the graph over time?

>> Dr. Escott: So on the press conference from UT, Dean Johnson displayed a couple of different sources for that kind of information using cell phone tracking, the proximity of cell phones together. In one of those graphs it showed Texas as a whole about 50%. Travis county was -- I know was at 50%. So we're doing well compared to other jurisdictions. But that's not good enough. This data was through the 23rd, I believe, maybe the 22nd, so it will be impressive for us to see what it looks like after the implementation, particularly after today and the display of the graphs so that people can really understand what

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we're talking about. So that's primarily how they're doing it. Another method is looking at road traffic to see a percentage of reduction of road traffic. So we're trying to support the medical school and their wonderful efforts at modeling with as much information as we can to inform that model and help us look at particular issues like what happens if we were to turn construction back on to some extent. What would the impact of other policy changes so that we can open that window a bit more, we can allow jobs to continue and business to continue, but do so in a way that doesn't express our health care system.

>> Casar: And it can be a short answer yes here if I understand this right, that if we get to that 90% reduction and keep that line down you're not saying that we necessarily need to stay at 90% reduction throughout the end of the year to keep it that way because basically the 90% reduction buys us the time to do the more strategic

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response that you just talked with councilmember alter about.

>> Dr. Escott: Correct.

>> Casar: So the goal is to get all of that stuff in place over the course of the summer so that the window could potentially open up more afterwards without much risk of thousands of deaths.

>> Correct. And I'll say that -- I'm not saying at this stage if we have to commit to a summer at 90%. That's what the model looks like today, but every single day that data comes in it will inform of us how we can change policy. And we're going to learn from other jurisdictions so that we can make policy better and be less impactful on jobs and the economy.

>> Casar: I'll speak a little bit more to this in a minute when we talk about economics, but from the public health perspective we have primarily I guess the folks that are deemed essential are often times people doing working class jobs overwhelmingly communities of color, overwhelmingly more of the people that don't have health insurance, lower income people that we need stocking shelves or working class folks that we need

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taking care of kids. Can you -- there's an inherent tension there, but from the public health side how do we -- how do you think about and what would you advise us on grappling with that risk with the fact that the people that most need work because they most need income because they're a least likely to have access to other government benefits or to savings and are most likely to be doing the low wage jobs, are also the people that are potentially getting most exposed? Can you talk us through the refusal of risk especially for those communities and how we should be thinking about that tension?

>> Dr. Escott: Yeah. It's difficult to quantify the risk at this stage. Again, because we don't have -- we don't have community-wide testing. So how much risk is there for somebody stocking a shelf? It's difficult to say. We know with some degree of certainty that the more face to face interactions that we have the more likely you are to get this disease. It's difficult right now to

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quantify the long-term impact on jobs and health at this stage. But this is a worry of ours, it has been a worry of ours since the first discussions regarding south by southwest southwest. This is why we are looking for opportunities to refine policy as much as we can so that we can provide jobs and employment for those folks who are most impacted by this. I think this is part of what I would love to see as a state and national strategy. Let's employ folks, but instead of doing what they normally do, we need people to make masks, we need people to make ventilators, we need people to make health care equipment. We need people in childcare to support those essential workers. There are lots of things that we need more now than we did two or three weeks ago. Let's refocus those efforts, let's offer opportunities for those folks in those positions that we now have identified as areas of need. I think that will help at

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least get us through the short-term of employment. I know that there are a number of companies who are hiring lots and lots of people. We have to make sure that we're connecting those who are out of work now with those that need work so that we can be as thoughtful and limit the impact on them as possible.

>> Casar: And that's the economic side that I want to get to. I guess just as a takeaway is on the public health side I imagine that there's a greater risk that we could have more outbreaks and more cases in places where you have more people that are doing work, that are still going to work, which I imagine are much more significantly going to be people that work with their hands or that are doing the kinds of jobs that require being there. You're not going to see outbreaks in communities where you're going to have more people that are accountants and data scientists compared to places where you will have more people that are stocking shelves or picking up trash and that are doing the recycling or fixing water lines.

[5:46:04 PM]

And so as -- if that's what we start to see because that's where people work or that's where people are that may not have as much access to Twitter and knowing everything that's going on, I think we just

need to be connected and make sure that we're taking care of those communities if that's where people are more at risk.

>> Dr. Escott: Absolutely. And the modeling that we have that you have suggested that probably the majority of us in austin-travis county will get this at some stage over the next year. So there's knots there's not a class that's not going to be affected. Either personally or somebody in our family or a friend. It's not the same thing as ebola or MRSA or sars if you get it. The problem is getting it at one time.

[5:47:04 PM]

So it's important to support folks who don't have health insurance on or are underinsured. We have a number of volunteers in city services that do provide health care, city and county, to ensure that those who need care get it. Those who need testing will get it regardless of their ability to pay F we are working hard and we have an amazing health care workforce, amazing physician workforce who is donating a lot of time to ensure that folks get the information and the care that they need regardless of their ability to pay.

>> Mayor Adler: Councilmember Ellis.

>> Ellis: Thank you so much, Dr. Escott, for being with us today. I know a lot of people are relying on you. I appreciate some of the comments that have taken place around construction. I have a gentleman in my district who is in the middle of some kitchen updates and the contracting team understood the information coming from the city and halted what he was doing. So he's been kind of left in a gray zone of not having the right type of food prep

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space. I wanted to know your thoughts on how we can strike a balance between allowing some construction projects to continue in the case of clean drinking water, plumbing updates, anything related to kitchen or baths or if you have kind of any advice that you could give us about what we should be telling our constituents and where we need to speak with our city staff and legal experts to try to find that balance between making sure people can shelter in place and also protect people who are doing the difficult jobs with their hands that sometimes require them to be in tighter spaces. Can you speak to that a little bit?

>> Dr. Escott: Sure. We are -- right now the message is we need to be as protective as possible, particularly over the next week to two weeks so we can sort out where we are and what direction we're headed up or down as far as the rate of increase of the spread of the disease. Over that time period we've had groups, law and public health and code as well as

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the modeling folks at UT that the mayor mentioned who are going to look at some of these particular issues. What would be reasonable -- if we're doing okay in a couple of weeks or in a week, what is reasonable risk that we can turn back on from the construction piece so that we don't halt everything, but we can limit and continue to mitigate the risk of uncontrolled spread. So we are doing that, we will be doing that and we've had a number of staff already involved in working through some of those details.

>> Ellis: I appreciate that and it sounds like there are a lot of us or some of us that have similar questions. I hope we can kind of guide that conversation moving forward. I think some of it is a matter of health and safety, but we obviously want to be looking out for everyone involved. So thanks.

>> Mayor Adler: Okay. Let's go to director Hayden. Before we do, colleagues, we

[5:50:08 PM]

didn't postpone the public hearings, items 61, 62 and 63. 61 to be postponed to April 9th. 62 to be postponed to May 7th. And 63 to be postponed to April 9th. Is there a motion to postpone these? Motion councilmember pool. Is there a second? Councilmember alter seconds that. All in favor of postponing raise your hand? Those opposed? It's unanimous on the dais, those three are postponed. Mayor pro tem, would you please take the helm and I'll be back in just a moment.

>> Appreciate all the dialogue so far and with council's permission, we'll dispense with Dr. He is sort so he can get to his work and I would ask if we could have director Hayden, director Ortiz and then director Briseno go in sequence and then we'll open it up for questions for all

[5:51:09 PM]

three of them at that point. Dr. Hayden.

>> Good afternoon, thank you for the opportunity to be here this evening. Austin public health department operation center continues to be operating within this response. That is where our subject matter experts are, which include our epidemiologists, as well as our nurses, and we have our planners and we have some medical staff that are in that space. We set up a regional call center and Travis county medical association is helping us to staff that with some physicians. Some of our Austin public health nurses are providing assistance at the call center ATS with. A public health representative is always at the emergency operations center when it's open. So that allows us to ensure

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coordination between what's happening at the department operations center as well as in our field operation and our testing site. As Dr. Escott mentioned, we are working very closely with our partners on that testing site and we have several Austin public health staff that are leading that effort from an incident command structure. Our staff are working on contact tracing as well as surveillance to ensure that as we get cases that come in we are really looking to see if there is any connection to other cases, and at this time we have five clusters that we are looking at throughout the city and determining the commonalities with those clusters. We have established a social service branch which was -- which started today in the emergency operations center

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and so the social services branch director will have the same schedule and be embedded in the emergency operations center. Those representatives are assistant director Adrian stir from Austin public health and then Travis county health and human services and veterans services has provided two of their executive and senior level manager staff. We have a weekly call with the task force and strike team leaders and we're going to make sure that you all get the information which provides a description of those task forces, the strike forces, as well as the leads for those specific areas. All of those task force have an equity lens. We are working with the equity office to ensure that as we are planning and providing services and

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looking at the services to our vulnerable population, we are considering and making sure we have an equity lens in those services. We have groups such as childcare, food access, behavioral health and homelessness just to name a few. So for example, our homeless folks are on a daily call where they are - which actually includes vela Carmen, our interim homeless services officer, as well as assistant city manager Chris shorter. And our food access folks are having weekly calls, but they're having some daily calls with food pantry providers as well as other partners that provide food assistance, including our farmers market. Our childcare folks have been working really extensively through this process. They've developed a survey

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which they've sent out to our health care providers as well as other community members. They are also providing technical assistance to our childcare providers. We are working with city legal on an

agreement to have data sharing agreement with the university of Texas medical school because as we expand the footprint of our contact tracing and get more cases in, it will allow us to have the ability to share some data with them as they look into our operations and assist us as well. Our environmental health team are continuing to work with our restaurant vendors and provide technical assistance to them to ensure food safety so we can avoid a foodborne illnesses. And one other thing, I know a lot of you asked questions

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about construction and I know Ann could probably elaborate more on this than I can, but there is a wind down clause that we put in the orders that allows the ability to wind down the current construction. And I believe it is ending March the 27th, but Ann can probably correct me if I'm misstating that. And so I will pause for her to --

>> Thank you. You didn't quite misstate it. It wasn't in the order, but there was guidance that the mayor asked us to put out after the order was in place and it does have that wind down period which ends at midnight tomorrow.

>> Thank you, so I'm --

>> Garza: Sorry, I have a follow-up. Where is that, Ann? Is it on the covid website?

>> I think it should be there. It went through Pio. If it's not there I'll make sure it gets there.

>> So I'm going to turn it

[5:57:14 PM]

over to Juan Ortiz.

>> Garza: Before you do that let me see if anybody has questions for you.

>> He said to go --

>> Garza: I'm sorry. Go ahead.

>> Good afternoon. I'm Juan Ortiz, I'm the director for homeless security and emergency management with the city of Austin. We've been working to support public health since the beginning of this incident. Officially we activated the emergency operations center on March the third and we are continuing to provide support not only to public health, but to the medical system that provide services to the citizens of Austin and Travis county. We are coordinating with all of the major counties around us and also with the council of governments to make sure that we're sharing information looking at all the different parts of the community. Officially we are at level one of our activation and we have declared a disaster. The president has declared the state of Texas a disaster, which makes us available for some

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protective measures reimbursement that would be at a 75/25%. We're working with the state of Texas to identify all our costs to ensure that if that is -- ticket-to-work with the state of Texas to ensure that Texas, as well as our communities, are eligible for any additional programs that then become available. At this point in time there has not been what we call individual assistance. We hope that the administration at the national level will make that recommendation to the president, therefore there will be an individual assistance provided to our communities as they are impacted, and help them to recover from this nationwide disaster. I want to just kind of let you know that we are coordinating several of the major efforts in the community to look for any additional personal protective equipment that can be collected and made available for first responders. We have received lots of offers for assistance and we're coordinating to work through all of those.

[5:59:21 PM]

Every lead that we get for resources and supplies, we're working with allover logistics team. And also we brought in the office of innovation from the city of Austin to look at how we can also look at fostering innovative ideas to expand not only the availability of personal protective equipment, but also expand the innovation so that we can expand our capacity in the medical community as well. We took steps early on to ensure that our departments were aware that this was coming and make sure that they had their continuity of operations plan in effect, ready, and make sure that we were taking protective community, essential services. We want to make sure that people can still call 911 and get those adequate level of services, ensure that there's power, water, those basic community life lines that everybody requires in a community. In addition, we're we can

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do to meet the requirements of the public health authority from a social distance privity whether we can come up with ideas of how we can ensure that there's availability of products at the grocery stores and so forth. Even in the eoc, we are doing our efforts to ensure that we -- that we harden our facility. We have taken steps, checking temperatures outside of the facilities, developing sops, sharing with other departments and other agencies in other communities that are looking at us to guide them and make sure that everything that we can -- that we can do, just like you are doing here today, we are trying to virtuellize as best as we can and expand our operation to other areas and we want to ensure that we are meeting that social distancing as well, just like everybody else in the community.

>> Before the director starts, to answer the question, the documents on guidance is online, on the main page of our

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www.austintexas.gov/covoid19 under the current orders. Dr. ?

>> Common, Veronica Briseno, director of economic development department. As you are aware, covid-19 has resulted in unprecedented health and economic impacts to our Austin business community and their employees. I want to talk a little bit today about what we have done so far, what we plan to do in the immediate future and what's to come. Staff has been working diligently to lessen financial hardships and will continue to do so. Some of the actions that we have taken already include working closely with our eoc to make sure that we are getting information available to our business community. Additionally we now have two staff members on staff in the eoc to answer questions directly with businesses as they call in with questions about how the orders pertain to them. We are waving fees for online classes for small businesses, working with the city and county -- we worked with city and county officials to help Travis county receive a disaster declaration from the us small business administration. We are offering virtual

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workshops and office hours for our heritage grant program, returning outdoor music venue permit fees to venues and assisting with other fees assessed in relation to south-by-southwest and seeing that those can be refunded. We are meeting with regional economic development task force, including the greater Austin chamber, Travis county and workforce solutions, both capital area and rural. We're involved in creative restaurant construction tech and manufacturing industry discussions regarding the city's covid-19 orders. We are partnering with our service providers, like bcl, egbi, big Austin and people fund to provide technical assistance to small business owners. We are working with communities -- community arts and business organizations to communicate resources that are being provided to our community. And wear also talking to the Austin community foundation about alignment of potential programming and partnerships. We are grateful for the action that city council took today towards creating the Austin economic injury loan program. In addition to these

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resources, we're looking at how we can redeploy current resources or acquire additional resources for Austin's businesses and their employees. For example, we are reconfiguring our staff to ensure that we are providing technical assistance as businesses are applying for federal disaster aid. We are looking at creative space assistant program modifications or cap to allow for arts groups that -- individual artists or creatives that have been impacted by this economic situation to apply for relief. I know housing assistance is also a priority. Housing is working on a variety of programs with existing providers. They

will be providing a memo to council in the weeks to come once details are finalized. They are also providing outreach to landlords with low and moderate income renters. So as it's been mentioned today, I've been asked to lead the city's overall economic recovery efforts, this is going to include both cross departmental

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efforts to address recovery as well as a regional approach with other entities. It's important that we respond not only as a city, but as a region. I want to be clear that we are doing this working closely with our equity office. It's important that equity is part of that framework as we are looking at economic recovery. As it was communicated to you earlier this week, this plan has four main goals. They include convening leadership panels to guide recovery efforts. These will be panels including economic experts, elected officials, key administration officials and this will guide our efforts as we move into recovery. Connecting businesses and residents to economic resources is our second goal. We are looking to connect individuals and businesses to the resources that exist in our community, our region, our state and our federal government. The third goal is promoting and reassessing current city programs. We will conduct an inventory of all of the programs that we provide as a city that can provide assistance

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immediately or can be repurposed to provide assistance, we will be collecting to drive decision making, we want to make sure that our work that we have to increase funding or redirect funding is based on data. So these are the four goals that we will be using to move forward into this next stage of recovery. The goal of this plan is to incorporate as much input from our community leaders, community members, our businesses and their employees and in addition to that, we have been working with John Hockenjos, the economic development department has been working with him in terms of identifying sources for relief and helping us in looking at economic relief and our budget has also been working with him looking at economic impact. So I believe he's on line, John, are you part of our call?

>> I am.

>> So I'm going to turn it over to him so he can speak to you a little bit about his thoughts on where we're at as a city.

[6:06:31 PM]

>> Well, thanks, Veronica and mayor and council. It's great to see you all virtually I guess. Doesn't it feel a little bit kind of like we are building an airplane and flying it at exactly the same time. It's crazy. Anyway, just to give you a little context, first of all, I want to say that it is awesome to see the city

focused on being as responsive as they can be. I think Veronica, her team, other leaders in the city right now are doing a terrific job of leaning into all of this, trying really, really hard to be as both responsive and forward thinking as they can. That's really the challenge, right? I mean, every single day we get new or better information about what resources might be out there, coming from the federal government, potentially coming from other sources and we have to try to be responsive to that and fit our local programs and our local efforts so that they don't duplicate what's coming from the feds or they provide a bridge to what's coming from the federal government. And I think that's really,

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as we stand here today, on March 26th, kind of what it looks like we are finding is that there is going to be substantial relief coming from the federal government for small business. There is going to be, I think, substantial relief coming at least over the next four months or so, for folks who have been laid off. There are going to be opportunities to bridge the gap. But the bridge may not get built for a matter of days, maybe a matter of weeks, could be as much as a month or two, and I think in the short run there's a very important role that I think the city recognizes and is trying to play in helping to build the bridge to bridge if you will. Having said that, then it will be about how do we restart the economy once we have given people this kind of foundational grid to restart the economy on. Of course that is obviously largely going to be determined by really confidence that our public health situation has been taken to an acceptable level that it's okay to come back

[6:08:33 PM]

out, okay to go back to work, okay to go out to eat, it's okay to go to a movie and all of that. We are going to have to see how that all plays out. I wouldn't pretend to know the specifics on that. I know if magically tomorrow hey everything is opened, I don't think the city at large is going to rush right back out to see a movie or go to a restaurant because people would rightly think there's public health implications to that which we have to be careful about that. That would be the next challenge. Then on beyond that and today is not the day to worry about this, except I'm already worrying about, there are going to be budget implications for the city of Austin and other local governments. I think it's absolutely crucial that we're doing what we are doing to build these bridges and transitions but sales tax is going to take a hit, hotel lodging tax is going to take a substantial hit. What I'm working on right now is putting together the capacity to run a whole range of different scenarios on that, so you as decision

[6:09:35 PM]

makers have the best information possible that we can give you in as broad of a context as we can make it so that you can begin to make decisions as we move into the summer, as we move to budget season

about not only what do we have to do in the short return but in the immediate term or the longer term. I have to tell you, it's an honor and a pleasure for me to be involved, you know, energized as can be, I'm excited to work with everybody at the city on this. And, you know, with some luck, we will do this as well as we can do it, we will minimize the damage, we will position ourselves to be as successful as we can be going forward. If.

>> Thank you, director and with that, mayor, I will just remind council that I sent a memo out on Sunday night, March 22nd, that was a supplement to the daily email that you receive, but for both director Hayden, director Veronica Briseno and director Ortiz, they stand ready for questions, but we

[6:10:36 PM]

also have folks from hr, finance and many others on the phone. And so we'll just open it up for additional comments and questions at this time. Okay.

>> Mayor Adler: Okay. Questions from the dais? Mayor pro tem Garza?

>> Garza: I have a question about -- about the food pantries. Just because hopefully folks are watching this and spreading news, but I received -- I had a call yesterday with the executive director of the capital area food bank. And they expressed that -- that -- that demand had obviously significantly raised in the last couple of days but yesterday it drastically declined. The concern was maybe the stay at home order may have made people think that they could not go to the food bank. And so -- so my office tried to push out information to

[6:11:36 PM]

the media to make it clear that you can still go. It's an essential business. And you can still go to the food bank to -- or any of the distribution centers as well as you can still volunteer at those centers as well. And so I have a separate food pantry question. But I also wanted to mention -- I didn't see anybody here from I guess A.P.D., so is there anyone that can answer those questions in a second when I get to that?

>> Mayor Adler: When we do that, sorry to interrupt, now we have more people coming up to the microphone. Don't anybody touch the microphone. They are all positioned and they can catch you. While we have three people up here, if the third person could be sitting down, I think that would be best. I'm sorry, go ahead.

>> Garza: That's okay. It's my understanding that in order to be a food pantry, you have to get a city permit to be able to do that, is that right?

>> I can't answer that question about -- I would

[6:12:39 PM]

have to ask um --

>> The only reason that I ask, if that is in fact true, I appreciate the broad -- the broad resolution that we just passed and I hope as part of that is that we are more lenient about that right now. So if a church wants to now set up a food pantry, they will not be fined by code or be required to close and then get a permit to open so I would just -- I wanted to ask about the permits and the fines involved in that.

Because in the conversation that we were actually having with the food bank that was -- I actually had a meeting with them before this all happened specifically about this permitting issue that they were trying to work on through the food policy board and then because -- because of what happened, because of all this that's happened, they have said can we talk about that later there's more pressing things right now.

>> Sometimes I have to go back in my mind and think about it.

[6:13:39 PM]

So the department is working with the food policy board. And so we are being very, very flexible with the food pantries, but there was a conversation, as you talked about, as you spoke of, with the food policy board. Our environmental health folks are a part of that team. As we are looking at other -- I'm sure that's going to come back later. So at this time, yes, there is a requirement to have a permit. But our folks will be adding that to the list of things that -- that we need to be thinking about and considering. So, yes, there is a requirement for that. But we will work with them.

>> Garza: Okay. Sounds good. Then I don't know who to ask this to, but it was specifically -- I've done lots -- I've gotten lots of questions about construction and then this was another one that rose to the top,

[6:14:40 PM]

the decline in people going to the food distribution centers. But -- but people will not -- we're not under a curfew. I just want to make sure, we're not under a curfew, is that right?

>> No, no curfew.

>> Garza: And a police officer is not going to start pulling people over simply because they are out in their cars right now. Is that right?

>> That's not the -- the city manager can answer that, but that's not the directive.

>> That's correct. We are not in a shelter at home scenario and we have explicit instructions both on our website and that we have given to our police department on, you know, you have to have -- and making

sure that this is not a mandatory lockdown, that this asks our community to avoid non-essential outings. But additional documentation beyond regular id requirements for transportation is not necessary to travel to essential activities or

[6:15:41 PM]

businesses, so, therefore, that should not be an issue. But if people do hear about something, we want to know those examples so we can proactively address them. But we have been proactively communicating through our law enforcement agencies that that is not the intention of this order.

>> If I can also add from the eoc perspective, we are communicating with the other surrounding communities to ensure that they are aware of our decisions so

[multiple voices]

[Indiscernible].

>> Can you hear me?

>> Yes.

>> Okay. I just wanted to add that the -- in addition to that, that the eoc is coordinated with the surroundings communities to ensure that they are aware our position and make sure that they are aware that we will have -- have employees coming in both directions if they are going to essential work locations and we're getting

[6:16:41 PM]

really good cooperation from everybody.

>> Casar: Am I and the to -- am I able to ask a question of Mr. Hockenyos, is he still on?

>> I'm still here.

>> Casar: I appreciate the idea of building a bridge to a bridge that might be coming. Have you or is anybody on staff doing an analysis on how many people are not getting a bridge right now? How many people in our community we don't anticipate under the federal bill will have access to unemployment or emergency assistance, do we have that number or is anybody developing it?

>> We have the started yet, but we clearly need to take a look at that. Literally, the fact that --

[indiscernible] Fairly late last night, [indiscernible]

[Sound cutting out] You have to go through it with

[indiscernible] Figure out

[6:17:42 PM]

who is covered but unemployment, you know, who was likely to retain their job, the provisions made for small employers and then really who falls through that net. One of the encouraging thing there's specific language in there that says if you are a 1099 worker, you qualify for the unemployment benefit which, you know, extend out around four months, likely should average I'm going to say 900 to a thousand dollars a month. 600 -- sort of a ballpark number for here in Texas. So I think what -- what we're going to likely find that it's going to be people who are undocumented. People who are not I'm assuming 1099, all of that, we are going to have to work to figure out what that looks like.

>> Casar: I want to start off just with my comments on this thanking everybody

[6:18:43 PM]

that's been working on. I mean, our city leadership has been in touch at all times. Our front line folks have the people working on public safety to -- to the folks at 311 call center. I know that everybody is working as hard as they can on this. I think that what I have experienced in the last few days is similar to what some council offices may have experienced, a huge flood of emails and calls and messages at a level that I -- that I haven't seen before. Of people that are just really afraid. Scared that they can't go to work and they don't know how they're going to pay for food and medicine and housing. Scared that they might be forced to go to work but don't want to get sick and then get their family members sick or put people at sick. Scared if they go to work if they're going to get in trouble for having gone to work because they don't know the rules. I appreciate what we are trying to do to get people to understand and to know

[6:19:44 PM]

that we're going to get through this together. But I just -- for those of us that represent communities that are overwhelming folks that are restaurant workers and domestic workers and construction and cooks and hospitality and community of color and working class folks, we know it's those communities on the front line potentially to get the virus and then the same people that have the most trouble paying the bills. And I think we all have to stand up and refuse to choose between people disproportionately getting sick and dying and people not having the money that they need to survive. We know that tens of thousands of people in our city have already lost income. Many of them have lost jobs. And that we know that many of them aren't going to get unemployment insurance, even under the best version ever this federal bill. Many of them are not going to get help. Many of them we can't billed to a bridge to a bridge if

[6:20:46 PM]

the second bridge is not coming. Mayor and city manager and those that are working hard, I think we are still not prepared. We need to work even harder to get prepared for what is coming. As Dr. Escott said and as the mayor emphasized, we cannot let people die. We cannot allow us to get to a place where we have 3,000 or 6,000 people dying in the next five months, and we have to save those lives and also make sure, regardless of the challenges, that everybody in the city can meet their basic needs. And we have to step into that breach because the federal government we cannot plan that they are going to take care of the tens of thousands of people in this city who they may leave out. Whoever that is. So we have to find out who is going to get left out and find out how it is that we both make sure that we don't have thousands of people dying and make sure that we don't have thousands of people that don't have the money to survive. And we can do it. But it's going to be really hard and it's going to take

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extraordinary measures. And it's going to take planning for it now. Because we cannot just hope that they are going to figure it out. They are incredibly resilient people in our communities. Many of whom will figure it out on their own. With so many people all at once not having a job or not being able to work, which for many folks is going to be the right thing, we -- we are not -- everything that we are doing right now does not sound like enough if we're going to have potentially tens of thousands of people who don't get help. So we need to find a way to get every single person help. I know we can do it. I appreciate the work. I want to sound the alarm that people are scared and they are scared for good reason and we can help them feel better when we have a plan.

>> Mayor Adler: The county is taking a look at all of the social service dollars that they have and deciding whether or not we could redirect social service dollars to people making sure that we have food and medicine over the next two

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or three months, that's the kind of thing that we need to be taking a look at. Councilmember tovo and then councilmember harper-madison.

>> Tovo: Thank you, mayor. And thank you to my colleague for your good questions and to our staff. I think the question is best directed at director Hayden. I wondered if you could provide us with some information about -- about new and additional resources for our neighbors who are experiencing homelessness, you certainly referred to it and I know there's a lot of hard work going on. You mentioned daily calls with our social service providers. But if you have any level of detail to provide our community,

that's been certainly something that we are hearing from the community about making sure that there are the resources there for -- from food to -- to shelter to medical care.

>> Absolutely. Our homeless task force with those calls they have also

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developed some strike teams and so one of the strike teams is -- is access to food. And so we've had -- we've had a few conversations and meetings about -- about emergency meal distributions. Really working with our existing partners, because currently we have some partners that have decided at this point for various reasons they are not able to provide meals so we are looking at the existing folks that remained in that space. Working with our leads and office of sustainability to determine exactly how we can provide those meals seven days a week to be able to -- to work with our partners to be able to do that. So if -- if we don't want to create a new process of feeding if we don't have to. But how can we provide,

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whether it's meals or -- or protective equipment, to our partners so they can stand back up their operations and be able to provide those meals. The other thing that we are doing is working very closely with them and the medical providers. As they go through the process. If they determine that they have a person that needs to be quarantined, we are able to put them in one of the locations for quarantine. And then be able to provide them the food and the necessities that they need in that space. The other thing that we are looking at from a food access perspective is kind of goes back to councilmember Casar's concern, looking at how we as a community can mobilize and do emergency meal distribution outside of the homeless population. But in neighborhoods where we know that people are going to be, you know,

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really hit the hardest, looking at our neighborhoods where we know before covid-19 are areas where we have pockets of poverty, pockets of folks that may have been uninsured before this hit and being able to address some of those already preexisting social determinants of health. So looking at emergency food distribution, boxes, as well, to be able to provide that. And then the other thing is as we are looking at our social service contracts, of course conversations with the actual vendors and talking with them about, you know, how they can modify the services that they are providing to be able to provide a little bit more flexibility to them as far as performance and that way they can -- they can be able to work with the clients that they need assistance

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with. The other thing that we have been having several discussions about is our experts have really, really

[indiscernible] In to help us to provide us some insights on additional federal dollars that are going to come down as well as just providing us their expertise about what they have seen nationally in other areas. And so between all of those conversations and those meetings, we will be moving forward with additional actions and bringing some things forward to council that are in alignment with the -- with the resolution that you just passed.

>> Director Hayden, if I could -- thank you for -- thank you for -- [laughter]. We are all adjusting to the new workplace. Thank you for discussing the mobilization of food within

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the neighborhoods, the emergency food mobilization that you just addressed. That seems like a very important initiative and just as a reminder to the approximate be that aid is doing that for students who are in [indiscernible] Aisd, not just students but caregivers, they have information about that on the aid website. I understand, too, that you are working on providing some education, hand washing and other supplies to individuals who are experiencing homelessness, that's working either way -- making restrooms available at some of our existing city facilities and getting hand washing or hand sanitation items out. Is that correct?

>> That is correct. Our library and wells our -- as well as our parks and recreation department, as you may know, they have left some of their park and

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recreation sites open, so our homeless community can go in and take a shower and address their hygiene needs. Some of our libraries have remained open as well. We have -- we have put out some -- some portapotties where folks can access those. We have mobilized some hand washing stations. And, also, ensured that with our [indiscernible] A bag program, we are continuing to make sure that we are picking up and disposing of trash. The other thing is throughout the city, in our parks location with our outdoor restrooms, those outdoor restrooms are -- have remained open during this time. And our parks staff have serviced those a little more because we want to make sure that they want to make sure that they are keeping everything clean. So -- so we have several

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efforts that we have to ensure folks have the ability to shower, use the restroom, and wash their hands. We are expanding and so we intend to expand in that space.

>> Tovo: Thank you very much.

>> Garza: Councilmember pool and then councilmember alter? Anybody else on the screen have a question? And councilmember Flannigan?

>> Director Hayden, thanks for your report today. You mentioned a little bit ago something about clusters of infection that you've identified around the city. Is that information available to us?

>> Yes. Maybe we can talk off line about exactly what you would like to know.

>> Pool: What I would like to know if there's any particular issues in my district specifically, so, yeah, I would be happy to talk with you off line.

>> Okay.

>> Pool: Recognizing that

[6:30:58 PM]

I'm not looking for names or anything, I would just kind of like to know a geographic location. Recognizing hipaa violations and that sort of a thing.

>> Yes. We just recently got the confirmation of three of those clusters, we're going to be talking with our staff to go ahead and map that. That way it's available for the public to have that information so we are working on that.

>> Pool: That's great. The mapping should be public. The other question that I had, I had an email from a friend who has a friend working at one of the hospitals and they have a lot of contract nurses. Who have been let go. And so they don't -- this goes to some of the concerns that we've raised already today and passed in a couple of other resolutions to provide support for people. Evidently there's -- there's maybe a lack of accurate information being handed

[6:32:00 PM]

out. So some of those people who are newly unemployed are not happy about it and they are directing their anger and blame toward the city council and Travis county. So I think it's really -- it would be really helpful for us to get as much information out to the various hospitals to make sure that they are also, if indeed they are letting contract employees go, which -- which I -- you know, just personally for me,

why? Because I would think that our healthcare workers would be the ones that are most needed at this time. So I -- I frankly don't understand why they would be -- be being let go. And then, also, so there's that. Then one other thing relating to the hospitals, is there something that the hospitals can do to reconfigure, restructure, free up more of their beds to be icu beds?

>> Okay. We can follow-up with our

[6:33:01 PM]

team that we have our conversation with, so, yes, absolutely. We can follow-up with them.

>> Pool: I bet they are already thinking about that. As far as letting go the healthcare workers, the nurses at the hospital, that is also a concern, to see if we can find out more about that.

>> Absolutely.

>> Pool: Thanks so much.

>> Mayor Adler actually called councilmember harper-madison after councilmember tovo, so I'm going to go ahead and recognize councilman carpenter.

>> Harper-madison: Thank you, I appreciate it. I think a good segue would be to pick up with councilmember pool left off. I sort of wrote the same thing. Five clusters, basically asking for the same information, if we could get that by zip code or district. I think something about that could be helpful for the information that we disseminate with our constituents. Other than that, I wanted to ask, I think this will be

[6:34:02 PM]

for Ms. Brisineo. I can't see the chamber, if you are up I don't know.

>> Yes, I'm at the podium.

>> So the question about somebody brought it up earlier about getting paid under the table. So my question is about -- about employers who aren't, you know, sort of paying their employees aboveboard. If they are able to get access to some sort of relief program, where they have, you know, sort of -- hourly wage employees that they are offering any benefits to, I'm concerned about that. I just want to know if that's a point of concern for y'all and if we are prepared to reconcile that problem.

>> Absolutely. I think that is a concern. I don't know what the resolution is, but I do think that that's something that we're going to need to address and find some resources for the employees in those situations. So happy to work more on that.

>> Harper-madison: Yeah, that would be great I would like to follow up with you

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on that sooner rather than later.

>> I'm sorry.

>> Can I say something on that? This is John hockenyos. In the federal stuff anyway,

[indiscernible] You have to document it. That you have actually made payroll, paid payroll taxes and all of that. If people are paying folks under the table, that wouldn't be a legitimate basis of -- of asking for relief from the federal government.

>> Harper-madison: I heard -- I think that I heard most of what you said.

>> Sorry about that.

[Laughter].

>> Harper-madison: You know what? At the risk of sort of belaboring the point, I think the point that you were trying to make is that most employers have to qualify for that federal subsidy.

>> Yes.

>> This is Anne, anything that the government is going to pay, they would have to demonstrate they paid

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properly, all of that kind of thing. That would be part of our program.

>> Okay. I appreciate that. Then the other thing that I was going to ask was about -- I'm sorry, I wrote down several things. Hygiene access. So I know we had the conversation -- I'm sorry director Hayden, I should have asked you this when you were up. I know that we had the conversation about emergency food delivery and adjusting food insecurity in neighborhoods. Addressing. But it's also been brought to our attention on multiple occasions that people are having issues with access to hygiene products, specifically feminine high again, incontinence, diapers, those sorts of products as well. Just wondering do we have a system in place so that we know what people need or are we able to somehow meet the need in addition to the food need, I don't know if it happens simultaneously or independent of one another, but just wondering where we're at there?

>> We are actually -- that actually is happening within that process because the

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food bank, for example, does receive those products. But, also, Austin public health at the neighborhood centers, we have -- we have some of our parks and recollection sites as well as a -- parks and rec sites as well as a few of our libraries, started a pilot this year, so we have those products available through several of the libraries and a few of the park sites. But then all of our neighborhood centers. So our neighborhood centers are currently open and are providing -- we're not open with people just to walk in from the public. But what we are working on

-- what we have put in place is, we started on Monday, is a food delivery process where folks will call us at the -- at the neighborhood center and then our staff will put together the food order and because we have those products, we are able to put that in with the food

[6:38:05 PM]

order.

>> Do you know how people are getting this information? Like how do they know to call the neighborhood centers and to be able to ask for, you know, a custom made food box and to get access to products, how are we getting that out?

>> Well, we have been putting that out in the information, but we'll go back and double check it with our Pio folks to make sure that it is updated to have that specific information on there.

>> Harper-madison: Yeah. That would be great. I mean, including a list of the neighborhood centers and all of that. And then -- that -- that was for -- for volunteers. Yeah I think that -- oh, no. My last question was about somebody asked so 1 along side a church, a volunteer organization, a group of volunteers are packing food

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and other products and then delivering them. They wanted to know how our current set of orders affect those volunteer initiatives.

>> So we -- we reached out to -- we have a person, a couple of people, one of our task forces is a faith based task force. And so we've had some folks to reach out to a group of people and have that conversation and we understand that there are several churches that are providing -- that -- that food delivery as well as keeping their pantries open. And so they are able to do that and we have shared that with them and we have provided some technical assistance to them about how they would be able to do it. And so -- so as we get those requests, we do need to go ahead and update the website to include that information, but that is something that they can continue to do.

[6:40:07 PM]

It is very helpful. The office of sustainability really tries to track everyone in this community in Austin and Travis county that are -- that are doing some type of food efforts.

>> Also let me add also, we are working with -- we have a representative from the eoc from the volunteer organizations, active in disaster, and also from the red cross and from the Austin disaster relief network, they are helping us make sure that we are becoming aware of those local grassroots efforts to pass food as well as collect the personal protective equipment and other programs that are taking place in our community by themselves. We are sharing information. We also are letting them know where -- what the needs are out in the community as we become aware and so that's -- a lot of that is actually being coordinated through those primary

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agencies that we have in our community. That's the Austin disaster relief network, the American red cross and the volunteer organizations active in disaster.

>> Garza: Okay. Those are all of your questions?

>> Harper-madison: More or less. I was going to say for the folks that are on the ground that are already doing the work, if their questions are can we continue to do that work, I think what I just heard we get them connected to the disaster relief folks, red cross folks and active in disaster, is that --

>> It's called voad. And a lot of the -- voad is actually made up of different organizations throughout the community. So if they get the word to us in the eoc, we will make sure that we share them with all of the other agencies so we all become aware of what everybody is doing.

>> That's helpful, thank you.

>> Garza: Okay, councilmember alter?

[6:42:07 PM]

>> Alter: It would be great if you could share us that information in a written form, that would be appropriate to share. We are getting a lot of requests like councilmember harper-madison had suggestions of people wanting to help. I first of all want to thank all of the staff for the tremendous amount of work that you are doing and the amount of time and the sacrifice that you are doing to keep the city moving. So thank you very much. I wanted to -- I wanted to first just flag something both for my colleagues and for I guess the Pio staff. My staff has been working on broadband access for about a year, when this all hit we started working with the social equity team, isp, community members, identifying

the digital access needs and the available resources around Austin. Many isps are offering programs for those now at home. And business and community groups are looking to

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identify access to devices. And they are pretty close to having a final resource together that will share some of that information. But I would like to just make sure that we can get that up on the covid-19 website and I will try to get it out as well to colleagues maybe on the message board so you can help share it in your newsletters. I wanted to ask about our city of Austin employees. And I've been hearing some concerns about folks on two fronts. One is that there's not enough childcare and that's causing people to have to use sick leave and vacation time. Sometimes this is for essential employees and there needs to be a way to address that. You know, they may not be able to come in for eight hour days and whatnot. Then the second part of that is that we are hearing reports of employees who

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could work at home but are being deemed essential and they do not necessarily agree with that interpretation. So Ms. Hayden if you could talk to how we are handling that and what our next steps are. I know it's not easy to switch 16,000 people quickly and move forward, so there may be things need ironing out, can you speak to how we are adjusting to those

>> Absolutely. Joya hays. I'll begin with the childcare concern. We currently have three locations, one south, north, central, to allow employees who are essential -- not all employees, but those who are essential, who are required to come into the workplace, we have facilities that are available. As of now those facilities are not full. We received some communication from councilmember Flannigan's office that we try to create better ways to ensure that this communication is getting to the employees that are essential. We have a daily call with our hr managers from across the city. We've communicated that we need to make sure that this

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is announced and communicated to all field employees and all essential employees so they are aware of it. Our pard department has been excellent in not only providing childcare space, but also providing the opportunity to assist students who may have special needs, and they are prepared to add an additional space if the numbers increase in the current existing spaces that we have. So we've tried to address those issues as we can. I've tried to clarify as it relates to childcare, as it pertains to laws, our pard spaces can only accommodate children over the age of five years old. So children in the ageful 0 to 4 cannot participate. So we've worked with the health department and aid and ACC to establish a list of

spaces who are accepting children under the age of five and provide that on our city intranet site so employees who have children of those ages have an opportunity to acquire some

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additional support. As you are aware we have a child system stipend that we already provide to employees who have children who fall within a threshold. We're currently evaluating that to see if there's some flexibility for additional funds during had this period of time to support those parents who have young children that may need support through the day cares. We've also through many different sources worked with ymca to provide information about their resources and made that available to our employees. So we are doing our best to assist in those spaces. In all honesty as we transition so many employees home we're recognizing that are parents are being challenged with how to function, work, educate and baby bit sir children. So we are also attempting to allow flexibility through the departments so employees with work early morning, take a break midday, maybe come back in the evening hours when they have additional support or providing them the opportunity to create as much of a flexible schedule

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to adjust to the needs of having to be home with their children. In the two weeks that we have been in this process, we are working directly with departments to figure out ways, innovative ways, to allow employees who typically don't have jobs that can be done at home the opportunity to be at home. Really excited that our organizational development team has developed over three weeks of free training that people can access not only through their home computer, but also in the outer areas we have some access to computers that employees can go to that provide them safe distancing to allow them to be closer to home, but also have the opportunity to participate in online training, and we're looking to add hundreds of classes to the online training process as early as next week so employees who are traditionally not able to stay home to do their work have that flexibility. So we're trying to slowly but surely add as many people in our employee population to those who can work from home to address

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their childcare needs. So that is the current strategies as it relates to childcare. If any of you are receiving calls from employees who are concerned about childcare, if you will refer them to us we are working directly with afscme and all of our sworn unions we work on a regular basis. I talk to afscme a little more often to address the needs of employees and make any adjustments we need to meet the unique needs of our employee population and we're willing to do so as relates to the childcare. The --

>> Alter: Before you go to the second part, if I just might add, I appreciate all the work and I understand it's a mammoth task, and I appreciate some of the things that you're talking about in the flexibilities for those who are staying home, but some of them are essential, they just aren't essential to be on the job. And many folks may not be comfortable putting their kids in day care when they're supposed to be

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social distancing. The issue is that they have to use the parental leave banks or leave without pay to address the childcare during the school day, or at least that's how they're feeling that they have to handle things.

>> So thank you for that clarification. We have made it clear to all employees that there is no usage of leave without pay as a result of childcare issues. We are instructing those departments that if they have employees who are essential because their work can only be done from the work space to create innovative ways to allow those employees to go home and work and at minimum do training. And then we're also working with our ctm department to identify the technology needed to support those employees from working from home. So any communication relative to employees being forced to use leave without pay is not accurate and we've attempted to address that in our communications to the departments. I will share with you there are some employees who are

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ill because of things other than covid. They have flu, they've got other illnesses, upper respiratory infections, those types of things in those spaces. If those employees have not saved their leave and they are sick, it is the same scenario we would find in any other day, in any other workday. They have to use their sick leave in order to accommodate that. What we have, though, is a sick leave pool so employees who run out of sick leave and they're actually sick with something that is unrelated to covid, we have a pool from which they can use. We also have a catastrophic pool. So we have attempted to address those employees who may have limited sick leave. I think it's also important to tell you that effective next week the family first Corona response act will be in place and that will address many of the issues we're continuing to hear relative to how we move forward. In that act employees who cannot telework, who cannot work from home or come to

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work as it relates to six different criteria related to covid and childcare, they will receive 80 hours of time to address that. In addition to that, the government has also changed the criteria for the family medical leave act. That was also a part of that act. Which allows parents who are uncomfortable working from

home with their children, uncomfortable putting their children in day care, they can have up to 12 weeks of leave to allow them the opportunity to stay home with their children. Now, with that fmla change what will take place is that employees will have the first two weeks of time they can either go into their own current leave and use it for that, and the remaining 10 weeks the government requires us to pay one-third of their salary to them and employees can utilize their current leave banks to supplement the rest. So there are other programs that are coming as early as Wednesday of next week that allow employees under those circumstances the opportunity to make the

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choice and qualify for fmla to address those concerns.

>> Alter: I think that's dr.information and we should -- great information and we definitely get all that out to our employees. I'm just concerned about how this is being implemented across departments, and I think that it would be great if we were able to have some outline or some different ways of making sure that the people know who to address these issues to, and as one department learns different methods that they can do it. I think that there are employees who are at home, they're not expected to be at work is, but they need to do their work and they're using the sick leave and the paid leave because they can't manage the childcare any other way. And I don't know what the solution is. I'm not sure that I fully heard that solution in what you're saying. So I just want to push you to keep thinking about that and keep working with afscme and our union on that. I will just throw out a couple of other ideas

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because I've already spoken for awhile. I'd love to see us providing materials to neighborhoods on emergency response and how they can be helpful in THR neighborhoods with like ready made tools that they could implement. I really applaud the way that we've handled a lot of our communications, but I think that what I'm hearing from folks is they want to hear more regularly from the city and obviously we'll step up what we're doing, but if there's opportunities to post to nextdoor regularly or for people to sign up for a daily email for the latest news from the city, even if it's just a bunch of links. We need clarity on where people can go to get help and how they can also help by giving to various places. Love to see information about how people need to handle packages that are

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coming into their home. We have a lot of folks going and saying, I'm going to deliver to a senior, but if they go and deliver packages to seniors that are contaminated, that is problematic, so we need some guidance out there on that. And then if we could speak to -- if someone could speak to 311 and what

their role is in this process and what kind of questions we should be directing to 311 and what their kind of potential ability is to interpret the stay in place order, I would appreciate that. Really just the last one needs to be answered.

>> Let me see if I can address some of them. So a great place for information is to go to the city of Austin website, austintexas.gov/covid-19 and we will make sure to have

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some more specific information to address the questions that you brought forward. We'll have information in there about how people can help out. We have several different -- like I mentioned earlier, different volunteer organizations that are helping us to kind of navigate or offer some assistance from a volunteer standpoint. And we also have -- we've partnered with the office of innovation to look at those -- outside of the box ideas that way we can expand capacity or find other sources of personal protective equipment or other items of lack of sort. And also the role of 311, that's the best place for people: If they have a question they can call 311. 311 is working with public health and the eoc to filter those specific covid-19 questions.

[6:56:17 PM]

And then based on the type of question they may get referred to public health specifically where someone can call them back, correct? If anybody has a specific question if there's a city service that is being affected or they have a question in general of what is going on from the covid-19 perspective, the 311 is available. And then there is a specific number that's available for those areas outside of the city that I'm sorry, I'm drawing a blank on that one.

>> Alter: If someone wants to know if something is essential can they call 311, what happens?

>> If somebody wants to know if they're essential from their employer perspective, not a city of Austin employee, is that what the question is?

>> Alter: Not a city of Austin employee, but we know folks who are concerned that they're being told that they're essential and so they have to go into work

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outside of the home and they're afraid to do that. But they don't know where to go to to understand things. And then we also have businesses who are trying to figure out if my business approximate falls under -- if my business falls under the category of essential so I'm complying with the order.

>> Councilmember, this is an ongoing discussion. When the orders came out we were working with our communications team through the joint information center at the eoc giving 311 as much guidance as we could at that point. But we continue to work with our legal staff on any additional questions that we get so we can vast equip our 311 staff to ensure that they can provide that clarity. But what is helpful is when we get more questions we'll be able to respond to those questions to know what themes are generated from what concerns or uncertainties or clarifications need to be addressed by our staff. This is ongoing. We know that we appreciate some of the patience that this community is requiring,

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but we have equipped our 311 staff with the information we have and we continue to get additional feedback with some of the questions they raised.

>> Alter: Thank you. I think 311 is a really valuable resource and to just tie this back to my other comments about the communications, I think folks are looking also for proactive communications from the city and, you know, in ways that are empowering in different ways. And I'm happy to have a conversation with Pio's whatever on that. Really again, I also appreciate your work on this and just trying to think about how we're iterating through this process and how we can continue to improve the communication and the leverages for that. Chronic.

>> Cronk, I'm just use this moment to encourage

[6:59:18 PM]

councilmembers to push out the information that we are providing. You have incredible networks and resources within your constituencies, within your districts, and the more that we can get you what you need to get that information out there, let us know. We give you daily emails. You have the website, but if there are other ways that we can package that, that would be helpful for you, please communicate that to us because we all want to make sure that you can use your networks to get good valuable information out to our community. Joya, did you want to add something else?

>> Just wanted to clarify that we do have an email address that any can submit to us asking on questions. It's on our intranet site so all the employees have that information. We've received many emails on a day-to-day basis, but there is an area in which employees can -- avenue in which employees can submit a an email to hrd to get their questions answered.

>> Garza: I had Jimmy next.

>> Flannigan: Thank you, mayor pro tem. Just a quick few things

[7:00:18 PM]

because there's been a lot of great questions and thank you, everybody, for your commentary. And I think we can hopefully move through this last part quickly. I would say on the permits question on pop-up food banks, I think there are questions about how -- what are the safety precautions related to collecting and distributing food. Much like what councilmember alter mentioned when people are delivering food. I wouldn't want to exempt them from city review, although I wouldn't think we're looking to put people through a laborious process. We want to make sure we're dotting all the I's and crossing the T's. I want to thank Veronica. We've done a lot of development on our item today. A few things that are covered there, but I just want to highlight, the regional economic response that I know that our staff has started to talk with the staffs of other jurisdictions, ones that are overlapping like Travis and Williamson county, which was great to see them they press conference earlier this week, but also our neighboring jurisdictions.

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I've spoken with commissioner Travillion and commissioner cook on the Williamson county side about what the county is exploring as it relates to these economic concerns. Obviously we have a lot of shared constituents and many of our most vulnerable residents are our shared constituents with the counties. So I hope that they are also exploring these same areas and stepping up from their budgets to get this stuff done. One of the other items is partnering with third-parties for administration. My mopac is that staff is not -- my hope is that staff is not trying to build all new capital. If there are outside groups who are built to reach minority owned business, underserved businesses, small businesses, and they already have situations set up like peoplefund and there are others and I know staff has already started those conversations and I wanted to note that and thank staff again for that. Anything that we get into our office we're forwarding to Austin public health and our staff. We had a local manufacturer contact us who may have some

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ability to provide emergency facility for medical equipment manufacturing and so we forwarded that to staff as well. We had a business contact us who wanted to set up a pop-up drive-through testing facility and we connected them to Austin public health who already had a location for it. And so we were able to facilitate that. And I hope all of our offices are doing very similar kind of connecting and convening. I feel like that is really our most powerful tool. I'm doing a partnership project with representative Bussey in far northwest Austin and cedar park and Leander to do direct outreach to seniors. We're trying to get a phone call to every senior in our overlaid areas and I know councilmember kitchen and I had talked about that and representative good win apparently is starting up a similar effort. That's really important I think in terms of doing communications for us. I would, like I said earlier, support any special called

meetings that we need to do in order to expedite the work. There are a lot of fast moving things happening at the federal level and other areas and private sector work that's hopefully coming

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in. So consider me available to convene at a moment's notice. On the cluster data question, I'm kind of ambivalent about that because I would also -- if we started outlining cases by zip code I would hate for people who are in the next zip code, if the case number is low, to feel a false sense of security and start doing, you know, more groups and parties and things. I don't know -- I think it's a complicated question. And it kind of speaks to the challenge that the mayor and the county judge have in making these decisions. As the mayor said earlier, it is complicated and it's always a choice between two bad options. But the one question I do have for staff, what conversations have been had with capcog about doing emergency messages to cell phones or other direct types of communication?

>> We are working with the capcog council of governments, specifically

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with the office of homeland security within the council of governments. They have been in our eeoc. They're working on expand some of the tools we have. We use a tool called web eoc. We are -- at this point in time we have not identified a need to have to utilize the one central Texas cool, the regional innovation system. Most of the notifications we're doing, in other words, the word is already out there. We're using a lot of social tools to get the information out so at this point in time we have not had a -- we have not had a need to utilize that tool, but it's something that we would look into the future and see if there's a need where we can use it.

>> Flannigan: And councilmember, thanks for bringing that up. It's something that certainly the discussions are happening and is on the table, but as you know we have to be judicious in how we use that. And at this point the advice of our experts and our

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public safety officials has been not to. That said that may change tonight or tomorrow. So we'll continue to evaluate that on an ongoing basis.

>> Flannigan: Thank you, Spencer. To the extent that it matters I would support being a little more aggressive, but I understand that the decisions are hard and I think that you all are doing as good a job as can be done with these unprecedented conditions.

>> Garza: Thank you. Councilmember kitchen? And just as on -- a quick time check. Are there any other councilmembers that have questions? Councilmember alter, okay. Go ahead, councilmember kitchen.

>> Kitchen: Okay, I'll be succinct. I have three things or three subject areas. First let me reiterate as councilmember Flannigan mentioned, we are -- my office is working on outreach well check calls to seniors, and I will post information on the message board about how we're doing that. So in case anyone else is

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interested in that. And thank you, councilmember Flannigan, for sharing how your office is working with representative Bussey on that. So I'll do that in case other people want to use that approach. The second thing I wanted to just ask about was specifically -- I'm not sure who would be answering this question, but we had received requests and understand that there are requests for materials for ems. And I had forwarded this information on, but I never got an answer on whether or not this had happened. And these were things like thermometers and IV medication pumps, some other kinds of medical equipment. And this was a request for the city to purchase these items. So how can I follow up to find out if -- I understand that this request was sent on to the eoc logistics team, but I don't

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know whatever happened with it.

>> So if -- we can talk after. And if you give me the details I'll follow up and look into it and give you a response.

>> Kitchen: Okay. Thank you. So I also want to say that that -- I also want to follow up on some of the questions around the -- our employees, our afscme employees and leave without pay. Two follow-up questions for you. I'm very concerned that our employees not have to use their sick leave or vacation leave or leave without pay. So I'm not sure if I heard something that you said earlier. So my question is are there any circumstances under which they are required to use sick leave or leave without pay?

>> Yes. If an employee is ill and they cannot come to work and they cannot telework and

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that illness is not related to covid, then they are required to use their sick leave as they would in any other space. If they run out of leave we have sick leave pools that they can come and work in. So in those spaces they would be required to use their personal sick leave.

>> Kitchen: Okay. So I'm hoping in that circumstance that we are-- that we are taking a more liberal view of that since we don't have testing, we don't know in some circumstances where -- whether someone's illness is related to covid-19 or not. If they haven't been tested.

>> So if they go to -- the protocol requires employees if they want to get testing to go to their doctor. If the doctor has deemed that a covid test would be necessary or they believe that it is covid related, then that is when we trigger treating that employee differently. So it is not about you having to take the test, it's about you not being in the workplace sick, which is

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our number one priority, and ensuring through your medical provider that that illness is not a threat to other employees. So if an employee goes to their doctor and they say you've got an upper respiratory infection, your fever will go away with antibiotics, you can go back to work the next day, you come back to work. I think the challenge that we have is equity across the board. We are not closed. We are still working. So employees are expected to work. And if we can create a space where they can work from home or work from someplace else or do something that allows them -- we have some employees who had a fever the first day, they're still quarantined, but telecommuting, so there shouldn't be any space where they can use their time. If we begin to just make a decision to give employees admin leave just as a general practice, then we're creating some issues relative to equity because another employee could have the flu and know it and they have to use their time, but another employee may be unknown so they wouldn't.

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We've also reached out to our cities in Texas to determine how everybody else is handling it. And for cities who attempted that it created other equity issues that they're now trying to deal with. So we're respectful of the unknown right now, but we're creating as many spaces as we can to allow that employee to work and to heal without creating an undue equity issue of saying to one person, because you're a parent and you're having concerns versus an employee who doesn't or any of the other types of issues, that we treat them differently. But we have been very open, councilmember kitchen. If there are unique circumstances and issues, the department and/or the employee can call us and we will work through those issues. And I can assure you up to this point we have not asked an employee with any covid-related or any concern of covid-related issue to go into a leave without pay status at all.

>> Kitchen: Well, I'm also concerned about them having to use sick leave for childcare. I'll just -- I'll just repeat what councilmember

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alter, she asked a series of questions and I have the same kind of concerns that she raised. And I have concerns that this-- we are acting the same way across all departments. And I think we need to err on the side of the employee. And I don't think -- because of the state of testing that's going on right now, there are many -- there are circumstances where we won't know if it's covid-related or not. So I'm just asking you to please -- I know you're saying that you are, but I would rather in this time period err on the side of the employee and not require the use of leave. That's all the questions I have right now.

>> Garza: Councilmember alter.

>> Alter: Thank you. This is a little bit along the same lines. I appreciate the comments about if people are sick,

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but my understanding is that the employees have been directed to use leave without pay and sick leave. And if that was a mistake because certain departments were trying to implement this and didn't have correct direction, then we may need to rectify that for some of those people who did have to proceed that way who needed to do that because they were dealing with childcare issues, trying to work at home. So I'd like to make sure that we take care of that. The other question I have is for Mr. Cronk. Is there a reason we're not already using an emergency closure setup and then that way we could classify as essential all those who are essential and let people who need to be home, be home without much complication?

>> Cronk: Councilmember, this situation that we're in right now is not like a weather event where we have had emergency closures. This is a situation where we

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can still operate government in a transparent way, and to the degree that we can by using other creative alternatives, by having people work at home and still adhere to the orders that have been issued. We want to make sure that we can keep government running as long as we can because as you heard from Dr. Escott, this could be months, this could be years until we have a determination of how this might play out. So we are making decisions that are in the best interests of our long-term awareness of what this unique situation entails, and just an emergency closure would not have accomplished that because we can still function as a government entity in this environment. And so we know it's a little bit of a challenge from an hr perspective and I really respect the hard work that director Hays has been given to this environment, but we

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need to keep evolving how we think about this because we know it's going to be a marathon, not a sprint. So there were discussions early on about what methods we would pursue, but it was very clear to me that I wasn't going to go in the direction of an emergency closure because we needed to keep government operating.

>> Alter: So I just would ask, Mr. Cronk, if you could try to resolve what we're hearing from folks that they are having to use their leave in order to take care of their children, and find as many mechanisms as possible to address that. I understand it's not an easy problem, but it's not going to be sustainable for people.

>> I would just add we have addressed every individual issue we've received from councilmembers, from our individual email account, and so I will encourage you if you're hearing -- I think the issue last week that many of you got the same information on was addressed within a 24-hour period and

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it was some misinformation. So I would encourage anyone if you have any employee who is reaching out to you saying that they've been asked to use personal leave if you will forward them to us we will definitely take care of it immediately. And we have reached out to the departments to address that to ensure that it doesn't happen anymore. If.

>> Alter: Okay. And if you could just make a point of checking in again with afscme on it and making sure that we've addressed those particular cases, and they feel like you have taken all the steps, I would appreciate it.

>> Absolute. And for my own sake I checked with her yesterday knowing we would have council. In case --

>> Alter: I'm hearing it not directly from them, but also from employees.

>> Send them directly to us, I would be happy to take care of it.

>> Alter: I know that afscme is a clear interlocal that you can work with.

>> Got it.

>> Garza: Councilmember Renteria and then councilmember tovo.

>> Renteria: Yes. A lot of my calls and emails

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had to do with construction. You know, there's some families that are saying, you know, my husband still has to go and work on a construction site,. And I need some more clarification. What is essential and what is -- I know that you're saying affordable housing might be one of those, but are we also allowing these companies that are building -- they maybe have -- they are required to only build one or two affordable units at 80% mfi. What's the definition of affordable housing? To the department?

>> Mayor Adler: You know, I think of all the things that we've done, we've done some things that have worked really well and we've done some things that we have not done as well. And I think that there's a lot of confusion at this point and ambiguity with respect to construction. There are people that are

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meeting on that right now to try and give to the city greater understanding. We've gone back to the -- to the health officer, public health officer and health department to help fashion the attorneys. We knew when we were issuing the rules that we were probably going -- before we had figured it out really well. And the question came up as to whether or not we wanted to wait a day or two until we could really nail it down. And the decision was made that we couldn't afford to wait a day or two and they would have to work as fast as we could to figure this out. So we had to get the word out. So there are people working on that right now. There's going to be greater definition that comes out. There are a lot of fact patterns, we've all been getting them here, we've been getting the same emails. There are a thousand different fact patterns that people are saying, what about me and how does that rule apply to me? The city attorney is working

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through those and trying to help us fashion a rule. And frankly, it's not something we do by ourselves. We're doing it in conjunction with Travis county so that we can get a common rule and a common statement on that. I understand the frustration and I understand the ambiguity that's taking place. We are working as hard and as fast as we can to try to bring some greater certainty. But if you listen to the public health officer when he spoke, what he said today was we're going to know a lot more in five days. And what he said was that he wanted us -- anodize R. It's his request to err on the side of limiting the amount of physical interactions that we have. He said we're going to know more because we can monitor how the community does over the next five days, six days. When you look back five, six days ago it seems like an entirely different world. It was just over a couple of weeks that we closed south

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by southwest. The world has changed. So I think that at this point we're asking everybody to be as patient as we can. We understand the magnitude of the issues involved, both for people that are trying to construct and people that are working to construct, and I think that the best we can say at this point is we are living with this issue every moment of the day and trying to come up with something that will work better than where we are right now.

>> Renteria: And I also hope that when y'all do look into that that there are also individual construction workers who have one or two persons that work with them and see how that would be affected also.

>> Mayor Adler: And we've asked the modeler to see if she can help us model what would happen with those lines on that curve if we were to open up some of the restrictions that we have and hope -- she's offered to

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help us with that. So we're taking advantage of that from her, but the most important thing right now I think is to focus an entire community on getting to decrease physical interactions to 90%. I mean, I understand all the other conversations we're having in the city, but these single conversations, every one of us should be having right now is how do we save 5,000 lives in our city? How do we save 5,000 people that might otherwise die in our city between now and the end of August? That's really what we need to be focusing on.

>> Renteria: Thank you.

>> Mayor Adler: Thank you. Why don't you take us out.

>> Garza: Councilmember tovo, I think you said you had one last question?

>> Tovo: I do. And I don't know if our staff want to address this.

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I'll just point to our covid-19 website that the city of Austin has, also has a section under community resources for mental health services. We've had a huge amount of information discussed today and that's not an area that we touched on, but there are resources. This is obviously a terribly stressful period for so many in our community, many of whom are undergoing really significant financial challenges, potentially health challenges. And so I just wanted to call the public's attention to that section about integral care's various programs, including the 24/7 crisis hotline. And I know for students within aid they also have access to telemedicine as well as teletherapy services through the mental health partner. So those resources -- there's more information about those resources on the city of Austin's covid-19 website. I just wanted to call the public's attention to it. Thank you again to all of our staff for their just

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ongoing work, and mayor, for your leadership.

>> Garza: City manager?

>> Cronk: As we conclude today's presentation, I did want to just take a moment to acknowledge and appreciate all the incredible work that our city staff is doing. I mean, we have true public servants that are giving their daily efforts, giving up family time, giving up time that they could be spending doing other things because they care so much about our community, because they care so much about our city. And so I just really look around the room here, know that there are many others listening in, but everyone is acknowledging and appreciating the incredible work that you have been putting into this effort. So thank you. I also want to thank the mayor and his work with the judge. I think the collaboration between our city and county has been stronger than ever and that shows. It's really critical that we have a united front as a region as we approach this challenge. And the support that we're getting from our council.

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So thanks to all of you for your continued direction and guidance and support as we move forward. Thank you.

>> Garza: I'll just echo thanks to all the staff as we navigate this new reality of ours and thank you for all your hard work. And it was great to see all my colleagues' faces both on the screen and in person. And if there is no objection, we have no further items so we are adjourned at 7:23.