

RESOLUTION NO. 20200326-091

WHEREAS, a local state of disaster for the City of Austin was declared on Friday, March 6, 2020 by the City of Austin Mayor and the Travis County Judge, due to the public health crisis related to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19); and

WHEREAS, the Austin City Council passed Resolution No. 20200312-074, ratifying and extending the local state of disaster declaration indefinitely until such time as it is terminated by order of the Council; and

WHEREAS, the South by Southwest (SXSW) Festival is a home-grown event and cultural ecosystem that represents both the largest convention to take place in the City of Austin and a network of additional official and unofficial events across the city, which, according to a study conducted by Greyhill Advisors, generated an estimated \$346Million impact on our local economy in 2019; and

WHEREAS, while an international pandemic crisis necessarily requires intervention and support from state and federal agencies, SXSW represents a unique local event that requires special support and consideration by the City of Austin to address policy, resources, and programming to help stabilize an integral system to our economy; and

WHEREAS, cancelling SXSW may result in continued and, in some cases, devastating financial losses for members of the Austin community, including service, music, and film workers, small and local businesses, and others; and

WHEREAS, ensuring the resiliency of our local economy and industries due to an unprecedented public health event is of great value to the City of Austin; and

WHEREAS, local needs for this ongoing public health pandemic rapidly change and evolve, requiring a nimble and fast-acting City response; and

WHEREAS, in a March 22, 2020 memorandum, the City Manager announced a large number of programs, responses, and task forces underway or planned that include many of the recommendations developed for this resolution; and

WHEREAS, it is the intent of the City Council to offer guidance and reduce any barriers to the City of Austin organization providing quick response to the rapidly-shifting needs of the community during this unprecedented crisis event.

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

The City Council of the City of Austin directs the City Manager to prioritize all necessary resources available to address the public health and economic crises connected to the emergency declaration related to COVID-19. Except as may be provided in the City's Charter or state law, via this resolution, the City Council is acting to preemptively approve measures to reduce any barriers the City Manager may identify to ensure a quick response to this crisis. To the extent needed to effectuate the goals and priorities below, the Resolutions previously passed by the City Council for the programs described below, are hereby waived or suspended in order to authorize the City Manager to move forward with any of the programs and solutions listed below.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Council directs the City Manager to develop programs to support Austinites that have been economically impacted by the public health crisis,

including, but not limited to, the small and local businesses, musicians, and workers in the creative, hospitality, service, retail, restaurant, music, child care, construction, and film industries and other associated industries impacted by the COVID-19 related cancellation of major events, including, but not limited to the 2020 SXSW Festival.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Council directs the City Manager to consider the following:

Connecting Businesses and Residents to Economic Resources

- Options that can help address short-term impacts while ensuring and maintaining the long-term success and sustainability of the local economy;
- Options that can help individuals and small and local businesses directly with financial assistance and continuity of service for utilities, housing, and other basic necessities;
- Coordinating with regional jurisdictions whose residents and businesses will also suffer economic consequences from the SXSW cancellation and COVID-19 crises, especially where collaboration may advantage state and federal support;
- Providing economic aid for Austinites who do not receive sufficient support or are excluded by federal legislation related to the pandemic;
- Providing childcare subsidies for income-eligible essential workers in the private sector;
- Expanding the definition of “emergency worker” to ensure childcare support is available beyond essential city employees to cover a wider set of critical workers, including but not limited to medical facility workers, providers and their support staff, grocery workers, non-city utility workers, construction workers, and childcare facility workers;
- Identifying funding that can be dedicated and/or repurposed to loan or grant funds for local restaurants and other small businesses, such as child care centers, impacted by closures;

Promoting and Reassessing Current City Programs

- Reassessing other uses of Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) spending that are not currently assigned to active projects;
- Considering possible options for repurposing existing HOT funds assigned to active projects, including heritage grants and convention center expansion, or delaying pending HOT collections to support the hospitality sector and its workers, defining any necessary state exemptions to allow such uses;
- Considering possible changes to the Chapter 380 economic incentives program, including but not limited to delaying or suspending the City's commitments, or providing flexibility for the commitments of businesses impacted by this crisis;
- Where necessary, and in collaboration with Workforce Solutions, adjusting existing economic development, job placement and workforce development program participation options in order to target those impacted by the current crisis and leverage other public resources;
- Where necessary, adjusting program eligibility guidelines to target the current crisis;
- Where necessary, adjusting, delaying, or waiving fees for community services, including waiving the Austin Resource Recovery extra residential garbage fee;
- Considering waiving fees and delaying required payments from businesses that obtained special event permits, or other types of permits utilized by impacted industries;
- Considering delaying or suspending compliance deadlines for any notices of violations for non-health/safety-related code infractions scheduled to occur during the time of the City's declared disaster;
- Considering contract amendments, where necessary;
- Considering third-party facilitation services to expedite administrative needs and services to the community;

Using Existing Data and Collecting New Data to Drive Decision-Making

- Exploring using 311 and 211 to gather real-time needs assessments and solution generation from the community;

- Leveraging the survey capacity of community organizations and the social services sector to obtain survey results that inform choices, as appropriate.

All measures should aim to ensure that economic support provided by the City benefits Austin's businesses as well as Austin's workforce (i.e., ensuring City funding can sustain local businesses while also ensuring that employees are supported through a continuing job with fair wages/benefits, access to hire-backs, or access to state and federal benefits)

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

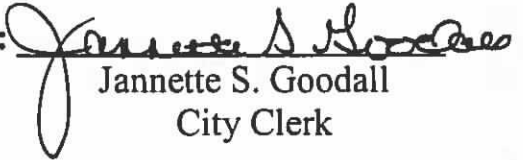
The City Council directs the City Manager to leverage all public and private options available at the local, state, and federal level to help address the larger public health-related issues of COVID-19 connected to the Emergency Operations Center response, including but not limited to:

- Exploring options that can provide assistance (including financial, sick leave, etc.) and supplies (including personal protective equipment and essential health and hygiene supplies, etc.) to persons and organizations that provide services to children;
- Exploring options to the City Council for providing assistance to all organization, personal care assistants, caregivers, and nonprofits and/or small businesses that provide these services for older adults and persons with disabilities which may include:
 - helping nonprofits by using city avenues and/or resources for bulk purchasing of personal protective equipment;
 - identifying and supporting efforts to combat food insecurity;
 - providing transportation resources to those who need medical assistance;
 - providing resources for virtual social participation to reduce isolation and loneliness;
 - providing assistance with sick leave, so that personal care assistants can afford to stay home when they are ill; and

- other assistance that may be needed so that the people who depend on these services for daily living needs are safe; and
- Exploring options that can provide assistance (including financial) and supplies (including personal protective equipment) to medical organizations (including smaller practices) that provide medical services.

ADOPTED: March 26, 2020

ATTEST:


Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk