



## COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

### Joint Sustainability Committee

#### Recommendation 20200422-2D – Climate Resilience Update

**Date:** 04/22/20

**Motion by:** Katie Coyne

**Agenda Item:** 2D

**Seconded by:** Nhat Ho

**Subject:** Climate Resilience Update

**Motion:**  **Approve**    **Approve with conditions**    **Disapprove**    **Postponement**

#### **RATIONALE:**

**WHEREAS**, *the Joint Sustainability Committee recognizes that the future resilience of our City is a fundamental area of focus for this body;*

**WHEREAS**, *climate and community resilience is generally defined as the ability to effectively manage and rebound from acute shocks and long-term stressors related not only to climate change and weather extremes, but to our ability to survive, adapt, and thrive in the face of chronic stresses such as racial inequities and social and economic disparities;*

**WHEREAS**, *the Austin City Council passed Resolution No. 20190509-019 May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019 directing City Manager to explore the best path forward for creating a comprehensive, community-wide climate resilience plan that is fair, just, and equitable; and, asked for recommendations for funding options for the hiring of a Chief Resilience Officer and a consultant to lead Resilience Planning efforts;*

**WHEREAS**, *City staff delivered an interim memo on August 22, 2019 and an updated memo on March 9, 2020 outlining no clear path forward for a City-wide resilience plan or the hiring of a Chief Resilience Officer;*

**WHEREAS**, *the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic presents a new, but not unique and certainly not final, opportunity to more fully understand the concept of Austin as a “resilient*

*community” in the larger context of a global event disrupting all manner of everyday activities, and straining a range of services and supplies on a local, state, national, and international level;*

**WHEREAS**, *in this context, building a resilient Austin requires adopting strategies to achieve “community resilience” in the face of a myriad of acute disasters including pandemics and catastrophic events especially in communities experiencing chronic racial inequities and social disparities which make withstanding acute shocks and stressors more difficult;*

**WHEREAS**, *work towards a resilient Austin applies to all categories of the adopted Austin Strategic Direction 2023, including Safety, Health and Environment, Economic Opportunity and Affordability, Mobility, Government That Works For All, and Culture and Lifelong Learning;*

**WHEREAS**, *many City departments and community leaders are actively working on projects and programs that positively impact resilience outcomes but there is not a comprehensive vision for that work city-wide or regionally;*

**WHEREAS**, *Austin needs a comprehensive resilience plan that builds on the adopted Austin Community Climate Plan, Climate Resilience Action Plan for City Assets and Operations, the currently underway Community Climate Plan update which takes an explicit equity focus, and the implementation of Resolution 20190509-019, to reflect this more complete goal of becoming a resilient community which can survive, adapt, and thrive in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, systemic inequities, or significant sources of stress;*

**WHEREAS**, *in the same way that City departments have infused climate change adaptation into operations including with strategies to introduce scenario planning amidst uncertainty in decision making, similar integration across City departments needs to occur when working toward community resilience;*

**WHEREAS**, *truly intentional, comprehensive, and collaborative work necessary for a resilient community requires that a comprehensive resilience plan be undertaken that incorporates the excellent climate mitigation work by city staff, but with a new and broader focus on equity and resilience to address economic, environmental, and social disparities with a high level of collaboration, leadership, and organization;*

**WHEREAS**, *cities within the Global Resilient Cities Network, formerly 100 Resilient Cities, including many peer Texas cities like El Paso, Houston, San Antonio, and Dallas, have implemented resilience plans that reflect an intentional coordination of key departments, government and social service partners, and the community to create integrated climate, environmental, economic, and social resilience plans;*

**WHEREAS**, *the Rockefeller Foundation and their Global Resilient Cities Network has voiced an eagerness to work with the City of Austin in providing technical assistance toward a comprehensive resilience plan, including the potential to assist in developing private and foundation partnerships for funding the plan;*

**WHEREAS**, *the Rockefeller Foundation and Global Resilient Cities Network has recently announced that ten new cities will be added to the Network in the near future, and Austin is well-poised to earn a position as one of the ten if the City commits to developing a comprehensive resilience strategy and to hiring a Chief Resilience Officer, two key elements for network admission;*

**WHEREAS**, *this desire was similarly expressed in the March 4 resolution unanimously adopted by the Environmental Commission, which calls for “a comprehensive resilience strategy for our City that looks beyond climate shocks and thoughtfully weaves together a plan of action that centers on equity and holistically addresses economic, environmental, and social resilience to both shocks and stressors” and recommends the funding of a Chief Resilience Officer to lead the effort on a comprehensive resilience plan and implementation;*

**WHEREAS**, *an investment by the City of Austin toward a Chief Resilience Officer is possible through use of at least two enterprise funds, including Austin Energy’s Community Benefit Charge, and the Watershed Protection Department Drainage Utility Fund; and*

**WHEREAS**, *resilience experts are moving to convene cities across the state on these issues to present a united front in the face of statewide politics;*

**Therefore, the Joint Sustainability Committee recommends the following action:**

1. Take steps to move forward a comprehensive resilience strategy for our City that looks beyond climate shocks and thoughtfully weaves together a plan of action that centers equity and holistically addresses economic, environmental, and social resilience to both shocks and stressors;
2. Further explore opportunities to work collaboratively with the Rockefeller Foundation, statewide resilience leaders, and the Global Resilient Cities Network on Austin’s Resilience Plan;
3. More rigorously explore other outside funding and partnerships for this work; and,
4. Allocate funding in the 2020/2021 fiscal year’s budget to hire a Chief Resilience Officer, in a position of executive leadership similar in role to the Chief Environmental Officer, to lead both the development of Austin’s Resilience Plan and the implementation of this work.

Record of the vote: Motion to approve by Commissioner Coyne, second by Commissioner Ho. Motion passes 11 approve, 0 opposed, 0 abstained.

Date of approval: April 22, 2020

Attest: Zach Baumer  
Zach Baumer, Liaison