



EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCIL MINUTES

**REGULAR MEETING
Wednesday, March 11, 2020**

The Early Childhood Council (ECC) convened in a regular meeting on Wednesday, March 11, 2020, at City Hall.

Board Members in Attendance: Chair Alvarez, Vice Chair McHorse, Members Gordon, Conlin, Burson, Hosking, Cortes-Castillo, Wren, Bliss Lima

Staff in attendance: Rachel Farley, Estella Kirscht, Donna Sundstrom, Cindy Gamez, Michelle Rodriguez, Mary Jamsek

CALL TO ORDER: Chair Alvarez called the Meeting to order at 8:34 a.m.

INTRODUCTIONS - ECC members and guests introduced themselves

CITIZEN COMMUNICATION:

- Amy Kidwell – Effective March 1 Child Care Licensing has changed their name to Child Care Regulation; implemented new minimum standards curriculum, monthly training, 25 people training at a time but need space for additional training, with the idea to branch out to other areas; Unregulated Unit is working to send message to parents all over Texas about choosing regulated care, the State gave 28 positions across the state, with 23 already filled and have 5 more to fill
- Paola Ferate-Soto with Austin Public Library will pass on contact info for parent support specialists in schools to Chair Alvarez; asked about an interpreter for the April 1 meeting; Rachel Farley will ask Clerk's Office for interpreter support

DISCLOSURE OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST – N/A

1. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Member Conlin motioned and Member McHorse seconded to approve the January 8, 2020 Regular Meeting Minutes with no changes; minutes were approved unanimously.
2. **PRESENTATION**
 - a. **Success by 6 (SX6) Leadership Team early childhood policy agenda- Brooke Freeland,** Consultant, United Way for Greater Austin- explained policy proposals aligned with Strategic Direction 2023, Travis County strategic plan, and 2-Gen strategic plan.
 - Budgetary items proposed:
 - Add a full time employee focused on early childhood at Austin Public Health- early childhood has been understaffed for over 20 years
 - Preserve funding to AISD for Parent Support Specialists to support families and parents in 60 Title I schools, primarily elementary schools; AISD funds half, City funds other half
 - Manana Fund additional \$3 million in new tax revenue to early childhood and other initiatives
 - Non-budgetary items proposed
 - Encourage AISD to allocate funding to Pre-K teaching assistants to reduce teacher:student ratios
 - Economic Development Corporations (EDC)- opportunities for public-private partnerships to create revenue; City could purchase and rehab buildings; EDC could generate funds for early childhood education; City has hired a consultant to explore the possibilities
 - Use of underutilized AISD facilities- making sure the Early Childhood Education community and SX6 is part of that conversation;
 - Brooke will help schedule Council visits that each ECC appointee can attend focused on this policy agenda

3. NEW BUSINESS AND POSSIBLE ACTIONS:

- a. **Vote to recommend Council add a representative from the ECC to the Joint Inclusion Committee** - motioned Vice Chair McHorse, seconded by Member Wren, approved unanimously by a vote of 9-0
- b. **Policy work group update on boards and commissions budget community engagement meetings-** Vice Chair McHorse spoke at the community meeting of the Hispanic Quality of Life Commission about the SX6 strategic plan and the ECC recommendation to Council to add another full-time early childhood position at Austin Public Health (APH); She also spoke at the Asian American Quality of Life Commission's community meeting; Sue Carpenter from United Way for Greater Austin spoke at the African American Quality of Life Commission's community meeting
- c. **Vote to recommend Council encourage Austin ISD (AISD) to fund teaching assistants for Pre-K classrooms-** House Bill 3 requires districts to provide a certain number of minutes in the Pre-K day and that teachers have a planning time; \$3 million currently in AISD's draft budget to meet those requirements by funding full-time teaching assistants for Pre-K 4 classrooms; would lower the teacher:student ratio from 1:19 to 2:22; Member Conlin motioned, seconded by Member Burson, approved by a vote of 8-0 with 1 recusal (Member Cortes-Castillo)
- d. **Vote to recommend Council direct the estimated \$3 million in new property tax revenue from the Manana Fund to early childhood initiatives-** A consultant report from last year estimated \$3 million needed to provide tiered child care subsidies to families whose income increases and makes them no longer eligible for subsidies from Workforce Solutions ("benefits cliff"); Vice Chair McHorse motioned, seconded by Hosking, approved unanimously by a vote of 9-0
- e. **Vote to recommend Council maintain funding for Parent Support Specialists within AISD at the current level-** would be a powerful combined message from City Council to AISD that the City is funding PSS's and recommends that AISD fund Pre-K teaching assistants. Could consider adding language: "and support similar programs in other area districts within the City of Austin." Chair Alvarez tabled this item until next meeting so members could have time to determine if other area school districts fully fund their PSS's, how many Title I schools from other districts are in COA boundaries, and find out if other districts need funding support.
- f. **Community Partnership and Engagement work group next steps**— first meeting via phone conference, passed out workplan for the year, need to coordinate informing the public about ECC evening meetings in the community; forming a list to pass out to workgroup attendees; share personal email to have Chair cc Members on commission meetings; community engagement group needs to strategize on engaging more with the all the Quality of Life commissions, specifically when passing a resolution, to have them support the ECC;
- g. **Success by 6 Mayor and Council office visits about early childhood issues-** Member McHorse and Brook Freeland will be in touch with ECC members to join in these meetings as they are scheduled
- h. **Week of the Young Child updates (April 13 – 17) - Texas Association for the Education of Young Children taking lead on events; link with information will be included in the SX6 stakeholder newsletter**

4. STAFF BRIEFING

- a. **Time and location for April 1, 2020 and September 9, 2020 ECC meetings**
- April 1 meeting at 6:30 p.m. at Uphaus Early Childhood Center; Members discussed agenda for April evening ECC meeting- Role of ECC and how it influences the City, ECC work plan and work groups, how ECC aligns with SX6 Coalition, overview of SX6 community strategic plan and how community ties in, Pre-K enrollment and importance of Pre-K, Neighborhood Housing and Community Development to present action plan, tentative due to coronavirus- APH presentation on Dove Springs Health Center and community engagement plan; Plan to advertise meeting to the community- neighborhood association, schools (Austin Public Library community engagement librarian, Paola Ferrate Soto has a list of all the area schools), area nonprofits;

- September 9 meeting, 6:30 p.m.; need space large enough for ECC members, City staff, community members, children's activities; plan for children's activities and interpretation for the September evening meeting; possible location- Wells Branch Elementary; Community Engagement Workgroup can plan location and logistics
 - b. Updates on child care centers on City of Austin leased/owned properties**
- Bergstrom Tech Center (BTC) in progress, APH working with child care consultants and Larry Elsner to design physical space, and Public Works and Office of Real Estate Services Departments and landlord and architect; close to finishing interior design; next phase - working to get a contract for design and construction of outdoor playground; released Request for Interest for high quality providers to operate the center; to release RFP soon; requirements- high quality standards, certain number of seats for children receiving subsidies;
- Dove Springs Center – City Council approved design-build firm and staff should move forward with contract with Spaw Glass Construction, design phase will start once contract is signed

5. RELATED GROUPS- N/A

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Next meeting April 1 – 6:30 p.m., Wednesday, April 1, 2020, Uphaus Early Childhood Center, Presentation by Neighborhood Housing and Community Development and opportunity for feedback on Action Plan;

ADJOURNMENT- Chair Alvarez adjourned the meeting at 10:02 a.m. without objection.