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WHEREAS, the number of food insecure people in Travis County (17.3%) is higher than the national average (12.5%), making it critical to provide this population with constant and reliable access to food; and

WHEREAS, food banks, food pantries, soup kitchens, and other charitable feeding organizations (hereinafter “charitable feeding organizations”) are essential to the COVID-19 response and have become an important resource for families in need; and

WHEREAS, charitable feeding organizations are becoming overwhelmed with increased demand due to COVID-19, and the City of Austin cannot afford to lose this valuable network of resources who support the most vulnerable members of our population; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin has significant areas designated as food deserts based on the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) parameters, particularly located in the Eastern Crescent of Austin; and

WHEREAS, one of the indicators of the Health & Environment Strategic Outcome that City Council adopted in Strategic Direction 2023 is to implement community-informed initiatives that make healthy and affordable foods easily

accessible to all, especially for our vulnerable populations and historically marginalized communities; and

WHEREAS, currently the City Code requires all charitable feeding organizations to obtain a Food Enterprise operating permit if the entity is providing any food that requires time and temperature control, and these entities are held to the same standards as full-service, for-profit restaurants; and

WHEREAS, charitable feeding organizations are also required to comply with the same permit and site compliance standards that are applied to full-service, for-profit restaurants, and must also comply with the universal recycling and organics diversion requirements in Chapter 15-6 of the City Code; and

WHEREAS, charitable feeding organizations are required to receive certain advance approvals from City departments, including Austin Public Health, Austin Water, the Development Services Department, and the Austin Fire Department; and

WHEREAS, the majority of charitable feeding organizations are run by volunteers, who have limited time and financial resources, as well as limited knowledge of the permitting requirements or the skills needed to successfully navigate and complete the permitting process; and

WHEREAS, many charitable feeding programs are offered in borrowed

spaces located inside of buildings where the charitable feeding organizations have no legal authority to modify the physical space; and

WHEREAS, only 24% of identified food recipient organizations in Austin-Travis County have a food establishment permit; and

WHEREAS, the Austin Travis County Food Policy Board established a working group in 2019 to identify stakeholders and affected pantry operators, work with relevant City departments to better understand the permitting process, and explore solutions for charitable feeding organizations; and

WHEREAS, based on feedback from the working group, the Austin Travis County Food Policy Board, in Recommendation Number: 20190909 – 5ii1 Charitable Feeding Organization Permit, recommended to the Austin City Council that a task force be created to finalize the analysis of possible amendments to the Food Enterprise permitting process for charitable feeding; **NOW, THEREFORE,**

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

The City Council directs the City Manager to convene a collaborative working group comprised of the Austin Travis County Food Policy Board, area partners, community stakeholders, and staff from the Austin Public Health Department, Austin Water, the Development Services Department, and the Austin Fire Department to develop recommendations regarding amendments to the Food

Enterprise permitting process for charitable feeding organizations, in order to reduce the barriers of providing access to healthy foods for our community's vulnerable and food insecure populations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

While the working group is developing its recommendations for these types of food enterprises, the City Council encourages the City Manager to cease enforcing structure-based requirements that do not impact life-safety and health at least until December 31, 2020, to avoid losing this valuable network of resources, especially during the upcoming demands that we will see due to COVID-19 related lay-offs.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Council further directs the City Manager to present the working group's preliminary findings at a Council work session no later than October 27, 2020, and to present the final report and items that require Council action, including any proposed fee changes, no later than November 12, 2020.

ADOPTED: _____, 2020

ATTEST: _____

Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk