

RESOLUTION NO. 20210225-006

WHEREAS, on February 12, 2021, Governor Greg Abbott issued a Declaration of State of Disaster for all 254 counties in Texas due to severe winter weather posing an imminent threat of widespread and severe property damage, injury, and loss of life due to prolonged freezing temperatures, heavy snow and freezing rain statewide; and

WHEREAS, in the early hours of February 15, 2021, the Electric Reliability Council of Texas issued a Level 3 Energy Emergency Alert (“EEA3”) requiring electric utilities across the state, including Austin Energy, to implement mandatory controlled outages of prolonged duration; and

WHEREAS, on February 14 and 19, 2021, Mayor Steve Adler, acting in accordance with authority granted to him under the Charter and under Section 418.108(a) of the Texas Government Code, declared a local state of disaster for the City due to concerns related imminent threat of widespread and severe property damage, injury, and loss of life due to prolonged freezing temperatures, heavy snow and freezing rain; and

WHEREAS, the EEA3, extreme cold, and ice and snow accumulation severely impacted the provision of City utility services, causing widespread and extended power outages, ruptured plumbing, and interrupted or reduced water service suffered by numerous residents and businesses; and

WHEREAS, resulting water leaks and the need to drip faucets will cause many utility customers to incur excessive current water bills as well as inflated wastewater rates for the coming year due to the fact that the weather event occurred in the time period during which bill averaging is performed to calculate future wastewater rates; and

WHEREAS, the City Manager has begun to evaluate the effects of the recent weather event on residents' well-being and customer utility bills, and has committed to report back to Council as soon as possible with recommended actions to mitigate any resulting adverse impacts, including to utility bills, **NOW, THEREFORE,**

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

The City Manager is directed to report back his recommended actions and bring any necessary ordinances back to the Council beginning with its March 4, 2021, regular meeting.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager report on recommended actions related to disaster relief should include, but not be limited to:

- Immediate resources and implementable plans that result in or lead to long term housing stability and resiliency for people experiencing homelessness that were impacted by the recent disaster, especially for those that left the streets and received shelter or hotel accommodations.
- Any modifications to the wastewater averaging period for 2021.

- Plan for mitigating the spike in water bills residents may see due to water leaks.
- Immediate resources and plans to coordinate response to apartment complexes with prolonged water outages, including how to support tenant resources.
- Consider creating a one stop shop for all recovery resources, including FEMA and development services related resources.
- Plan to address short term housing needs for those displaced due to housing damage and repairs process.
- Home repair funding and resources.
- Identify how to address any gaps in FEMA individual assistance resources.
- Plan for taking steps within the city's regulatory authority to mitigate the bill impacts of non-city owned utilities (such as natural gas).
- Advocacy at the state and federal levels for disaster relief resources and steps to avoid future disaster events to the extent possible.
- A centralized list of places without water in Austin and Travis County. One central help line should be established to address prolonged water outages, and this line should be publicized across languages to support tenants and homeowners alike. The City should publicly report on the number of outages remaining in our area, and how close we are to achieving our goal of zero outages.
- Immediate water resources targeted to those areas identified as having prolonged water outages, with a focus on places where those with least access to other options live. These water resources should account not only for drinking water, but for the water needed for cooking, cleaning, sanitation, etc.

- A coordinated city effort to ensure that low- and moderate-income homeowners have the support they need, that landlords diligently get running water at their properties, and that tenants know their legal rights and options. Resources should be provided to support tenants, including tenant-organizing resources.
- Recommendations for formalizing and improving the city's and the community's notification and disaster response systems for vulnerable seniors living in the community and in facility settings, and for persons with disabilities, including systems for welfare checks, in consultation with the City of Austin Age Friendly Program Coordinator, the Commission on Seniors, and the Mayors Committee for People with Disabilities. The City Manager shall endeavor to report on these recommended actions by September 1, 2021.
- Plan for a formal review of the disaster and the response with the goal of avoiding future disasters to the extent possible and making improvements to the response efforts, including but not limited to:
 - improved public communications from Austin Water, such as more timely warning notifications; more localized, real-time outage information; estimates of when water service will be restored; and options for communicating with multifamily and master-metered residents, including without limitation consideration of the reverse-911 system; and
 - a review of first responder response to the disaster, including a review of how staffing levels were maintained and a comparison to other municipal equivalent responses in Texas to include staff-on-duty ratio to population throughout and overtime expenses; and

- a plan and recommendation on how to best encourage Austinites to be aware of simple and cost-effective ways to become better prepared for weather crises; and
- a review of city mental health supports to determine how to best reposition and deploy such resources in a crisis, conducting a survey of available resources at non-profits, private facilities and churches throughout the City to compile information for dissemination; and
- a comparison with other Texas municipal equivalents to Austin Energy and Austin Water, and their associated communication efforts and expenses during the disaster with the goal of avoiding future disasters to the extent possible and making improvements to the response efforts.

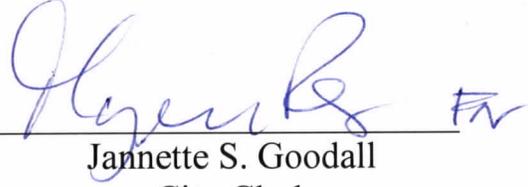
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

Council will conduct a series of hearings with invited testimony to examine key facets of the City of Austin's emergency preparedness and response. These hearings will be conducted in alignment with conversations taking place at other Council committees, including the Austin Energy Utility Oversight Committee and Water Oversight Committee. The City Council will also establish a community task force to solicit information and feedback from members of the public and to prepare a report to Council. These initiatives will be undertaken to understand the circumstances leading to the crises caused by prolonged interruptions of energy and water, including critical needs related to shelter, food, water, and medical care,

with the intent of developing recommendations and action plans for
implementation.

ADOPTED: February 25, 2021

ATTEST:

 *Jannette S. Goodall*

Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk