

Austin Energy Utility Oversight Committee Meeting Transcript – 03/03/2021

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>> We'll go ahead and convene us. We've got a joint committee meeting here today so I will convene the portion that is the Austin energy utility oversight committee meeting. Today is Wednesday March 3, 2021 and it is 10:4 P.M. And it looks like the committee of the whole, which is the entire city council, does have a majority quorum here. So we're good for that. Council member kitchen. >> Kitchen: Yes, I'll convene the water oversight committee. We're all here and so we're convening at 10:4 P.M.. >> Great. Okay. So today we've got a briefing in the first hour from our Austin energy staff and just to kind of center us here, because we have a lot of ground to cover, today is going to be the first of

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several meetings focused on Austin energy as well as other issues, but today the piece that we're looking at today from Austin energy, the first in a series of several meetings over the coming months, to cover all the issues that we want to cover related to the February winter storm. Today for the Austin energy portion we just have an hour from 1:00 to 2:00. The Austin water utility oversight committee was generous enough to share the first portion of their regularly-scheduled meeting with us, which is how we got this nice joint meeting. The second series of this -- the second meeting of the series will again be a joint one with the Austin water utility oversight committee on March 31, which is the regularly-scheduled Austin energy oversight committee meeting. In that meeting series context, I would like us all to be thinking, as our conversation can be framed, as how it started, how it's going, and what's ahead. This will help us in our review

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in the months ahead to examine lessons learned and determine the best path forward for improvements because all of us here at the city of Austin are committed to best practices and constant improvements mindset for our professional -- the services that we provide at a professional level to the city of Austin. And given the amount of time we have for this first meeting, I thought it would be helpful to start with some foundational information from Austin energy leadership about the utility and then they will present -- included in this presentation will be a broad timeline of the storm events. We will talk about how Austin energy communicated with the public and its customers today. And then close with, if we have time, with a listing of the various relief opportunities that Austin energy has crafted along with the other things that the city is doing in support of the residents who were without power and other services for that period from February 11 to

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about February 18. I wanted to ask my vice chair, council member tovo, to make some opening and centering remarks as well because you know the work that we are engaging in, this is just the opening door for a lot of work that we will be accomplishing in the next few months. Council member tovo. >> Tovo: Yeah, thank you. Thank you, council member pool. So last week at our council meeting we passed a measure to create a comprehensive review that would take place at the council as well as at a community task force. And the ifc that I'll be bringing forward is also going to have a component that is under the auditor's scope. And so really the only point I wanted to make today is that as a council over the next week I hope we can be in conversation on the council message board about how to structure those conversations. They will certainly include

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formal discussions about Austin energy and Austin water as well as other elements, shelter, communication runs through all of them through water distribution, other kinds of supplies and eoc-related items. What I just wanted to air is in talking with the mayor, who is going to be a co-sponsor on the ifc, we talked about how we lay out the work plan. So, council member, I know you said the next conversation would be the 31st and certainly we can try to work that into the work plan, but it's my hope that when we pass the ifc we will carve out a calendar that includes a conversation at our work sessions and at our council meetings until the council can kind of work through our whole work plan. I think we need to look at the emergency in a comprehensive way and really be intentional about how we're going to segment out those conversations and which speakers we want to be included in each of those conversations.

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So these efforts I think will work seamlessly together but they are, I hope, part of that larger calendar of how we're going to undertake the review. So just to underscore something you said, I think it's important to convey to the public that this is a piece of the conversation but only the beginning of the conversation and that we are hoping to undertake it in a comprehensive way as well as to have the community task force really hear directly from the public and have our auditor look more closely at certain elements of it in a more intensive way as well. >> Thank you for that, council member tovo. That sounds great. I look forward to working with you on what that structure looks like. I do know that our Austin energy oversight committee is a place to focus and go laser like and dig real deep in the ground that is specifically and only Austin energy, as well as the other stuff we were going to be doing with Austin energy this year

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when we were setting out our work plan for 2021. So it sounds like we will have ample time between committee work and focused work plan work with the ifc that you're bringing to certainly cover all of the areas and also make sure that all our folks and the community have an opportunity to weigh in and give us their input. So, I'd like to now invite the general manager, Jackie sergeant, to unmute her mic and give us a presentation. The first part is Texas power grid and Austin energy. The Texas power grid is under the state authority, the public utility commission, and ERCOT. We're all familiar with that now over the last three weeks. We'll talk about how Austin energy operates as a municipally-owned utility and the general manager and her staff will offer a broad timeline of the storm events and

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the communications that were issued from the utility and talk all that through. We'll take some questions at the end of that segment and we'll move on more specifically to communications and take questions on that portion when that's done, and hopefully have some time to talk about the relief being offered to our residents. General manager sergeant. >> Thank you. Good afternoon, committee chair, vice chair, and members of the committee. I'm Jackie sergeant, general manager of Austin energy. First, let me say that we at Austin energy share the frustration that our customers and everyone here feels about what happened during the recent winter storm events. The outage duration, severity, and the inability for us to rotate outages was unacceptable. People suffered, they endured significant hardship for that. I am truly sorry.

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We look forward to working with all of you to do a better job of protecting our community from these events in the future. As we review the actions that took place, we will look for opportunities to harden our systems, enhance our response efforts, and improve communications. Our city, our community, and our state must be better prepared for the next severe multiday weather event. For Austin energy and our customers, the challenges began with an ice storm on February 11th before the ERCOT emergency began on February 15. This storm hit the Austin area harder than the rest of the state and it hit the northwest part of our service territory particularly hard. This storm was far greater than any of the extreme winter weather scenarios modeled by ERCOT that are used by all

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electric market participants for planning. No one imagined that we would ever be required to shed so much load so quickly and for so long in order to keep the entire ERCOT grid from collapsing. In 2011, the ERCOT energy emergency lasted only six hours and Austin energy was required to shed 158 megawatts of customer load. By comparison, starting February 15th ERCOT directed Austin energy to shed more than 700 megawatts, four and a half times more than in 2011 and lasting for three days. This amount of load shed was so extraordinary that we had no other available circuits to rotate customer outages, maxed out on available circuits. To rotate outages at that point would have endangered critical

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load such as hospitals, communications infrastructure, water treatment plants, and public safety facilities. Austin energy worked with ERCOT and the PUC to avoid catastrophic grid failure. Such a failure would have required weeks and potentially longer to restore power to all customers in the ERCOT grid. Following the initiation of the ERCOT emergency, a second winter storm brought even more freezing rain, ice and snow that continued for three more days. Austin energy worked tirelessly to restore power outages for customers in dangerous weather conditions. As we get into the details of everything that happened, you may hear us talk a lot about the technical side of things. But I want to make it clear that how we carry out our functions or how ERCOT works is not meant to deflect or to obscure our duty of care

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and compassion for people and to make sure our customers have electricity. We are public servants and we take our duty to our customers and our community seriously. Now that we have restored our system, we are working to identify how to better meet the needs of all of our customers. As the city

council fulfills its role as Austin energy's governing body, you have my commitment we will work towards improvements for our community. We must work together to find solutions to address this emergency and plan for the future. I would like to close by saying how thankful I am to all utility workers here in Austin and across the state for their heroic efforts. Thank you for working tirelessly even when faced with your own personal challenges to restore

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service to customers. Today, as requested by the committee chair and consideration of the time available, our presentation will focus on the time line of events and summary of our communications presiding and during the events. We will touch on customer assistance programs and bill relief measures and will share information regarding policy discussions and regulatory compliance activities. I appreciate that we can't cover everything today and understand that we will have opportunities in the future to address other topics in greater detail. With that, I'll turn it over to dependly general manager and chief operating officer Sidney Jackson for an operational overview of the events that transpired. Sidney? >> Thank you, general manager. And good afternoon councilmembers and city manager. Again, my name is situatedy Jackson. I'm the deputy general

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manager and chief operating officer of Austin energy. And my objective over the next several minutes is to go over the time line of major events leading to, during and after the winter storm pore polar vortex that began Thursday, February 11th and that continued most of the next week or following days. While also that storm being a significant contributor to the ercot grit emergency that resulted in severe emergency load shed. Following my brief remarks, our director of communication, miss Risa Monroy are address communications that occurred before, during and afternoon electrical -- the electric grid emergency. Next slide, please. The winter storm that impacted Austin was a 100-year storm event. Next slide, please. And that 100-year winter storm affected much of the

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south central portion of the United States, as we all know. The storm could really be categorized as a continuing storm and it was unique to stingy ago if I and different -- Austin geography. The storm was wave after wave of storms leaving snow, ice, freezing rain and multiple bouts that coated our vegetation in an additive manner, so it was a unique storm event in many ways. Next slide, please. Austin energy was focused on this weather forecast. We knew the potential impact. We had the recent experience of the January 10th and January 11th snow event that occurred the previous month. Our command

structure was in place prior to the storm, our crews were scheduled in anticipation of the storm. In short, we were mobilized to respond.

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In terms of our strategic preparation, at strategic times our crews were sequestered to assure availability to include field crews, power plant personnel, controller personnel all in efforts to assure we can restore customers and stakeholders as soon as possible. The next slide, please. As this slide shows, the degree of ice formed on vegetation was significant resulting in numerous outages, as we have communicated previously, falling debris, vegetation contact with power lines, power lines sag due to weight of ice and more over the restoration for our staff and employees in the field was difficult and harsh as 2020 conducted in extreme -- it was conducted in extreme low temperatures as well. Next slide, please. Probably I want to spend the

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bulk of my comments around this slide. This speaks to the number of customers outaged at any time and probably of keen interest to all of you. It's bifurcated into three boxes. The yellow box on the left, the Orange box in the middle, and more dark colored bluish dark box. The box on the left, it represents outage customers prior to the ERCOT load shed, Thursday, Friday and Saturday and Sunday, essentially the February 11th to you the 14th time frame. As you can see, our peak outage customers was 33,000 due to that Thursday-Friday storm. The yellow box only. That is despite two waves of snow and ice that came through the service territory. The restoration during this phase was good to repeated outages on the same circuit. This was a commonplace occurrence as we had wave after wave of storms come

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through. So we would restore a circuit and circuit and reenergize only to be faced with continuing falling debris on the same outage. And many sense, this could be categorized as rework and rework and rework. Just to the degree of the storm, the continuation of the storm, and the precipitation in the form of ice. As you know, our goal is to restore all customers as soon and as safely as possible. And as we crossed into Saturday night into Sunday morning, effectively all our customers were restored. As you can see in the yellow boxes, as we get to the right end of the yellow box, essentially all customers were restored. But Sunday into Monday we did have reoutage that's occurred. One due to the reoutages that I mentioned and also due to continuing storms. So as we approached the

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Orange box in the middle, and this is where we had the ERCOT event, we were up to approximately 822 customers that transitioned from the yellow box into the ERCOT event. And let's transition into the red box. The red coded box represents outage customers during the ERCOT load shed event. Our maximum was 33,000, in the yellow box. As we get into the red box, our maximum customers outaged due to load shed, manual ERCOT load shed, was 220,000. Customers. Obviously orders of magnitude difference between the yellow and the red box. And again, this is the result of mandatory and severe ERCOT load shed directives, approximately 44% of our customers, due to emergency grid directives to bring load in line with available generation and again at the direction of ERCOT. Many customers often ask why

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couldn't Austin Energy communicate when they would be restored. Again looking at the the red box and during the ERCOT load shed phase, ERCOT is a grid authority issued directives to Austin Energy to execute those load sheds. During this EEA-3 emergency segment, Austin Energy was told how much to shed and when to shed and when to restore again at the directive of ERCOT. So you can understand just due to volatility of customers coming in and out as shown by the graphic, it's very difficult for Austin Energy to have a view of where ERCOT might go. ERCOT till illegal immigrant Friday to am -- ERCOT has the system, the statewide vantage point and charter authorization and make directives based on that. Austin Energy does not have that breadth of view.

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As you know, our mandate was to execute rotating outages during the ERCOT load shed event, and as general manager as previously communicated, our systems were standing by, our systems were at the ready to execute rotation outages, rotating outages, but as you heard the depth of the load shed curtailments was so severe to execute an outage rotation would have had one potential compromise of critical loads such as police, fire, emergency responders, or have diminishing returns due to cold load pickup or inrush. Essentially picking up cold load that has not had the diversity can result at times up to three times in sustained load versus a singular load that was warm and essentially had heating diversity on it. Again looking at the the red backs, the back end of the red box towards the back end

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of that time period, ERCOT while still in EEA-3, highest level of emergency, was allowing restoration at their directive. And Austin Energy complied with that directive as quickly as possible to restore load. As the greenish box on the right indicates, much of that is the restoration phase, Thursday, Friday,

Saturday. Essentially February 18, 19, 20th. Austin energy restored greater than 99% of our customers Saturday February 20th around 12 noon and that was in part aided by favorable weather. So those three transition boxes are attempt to describe the time line, describe the severity and describe the administrative issues that were going on simultaneously during those periods. Next slide, please. This next time line kind of

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has a bit of a different emphasis, but very similar. It emphasizes the wave after wave of storms that were occurring. The difficult restoration conditions, the closed traffic corridors, the sustained polar vortex, below freezing temperatures and some of the other challenges that I've previously described. Next slide, please. This slide speaks to the unprecedented nature of the near collapse of electric grid. I'm sure you've heard that. This actually is a graph of the frequency over a 30-minute period. The ideal period is 60 hertz as we are all aware. I just want to talk about the load shed that occurred over this 30-minute period. Over this 30-minute period, ERCOT executed five separate

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and distinct load shed events all with the purpose of desperately trying to save the electric grid. Obviously also to arrest frequently collapse as the system frequency was fast decaying. So looking at this graph, all the indications in red are load shed. At the beginning of the time frame to the left of the graph, 1,000 megawatts was load shed at 123. Move further to the right. 25 minutes later and again the frequency is starting to degrade further. Five minutes after that an incremental 3,000 megawatts was load shed and you can see the frequency is degrading further at a dangerously low almost 59.3 hertz. Again our target is 60 hertz. Four minutes later, 3,500 load shed again. Seven minutes later, the

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fifth load shed event inside this 30-minute window of incremental 2,000 megawatts. This shows how dire this situation was and these load shed events need to do arrest frequently decay. Austin energy and other transmission providers and distribution providers fast compliance with these directives were significant contributor to restoring electric grid stability. Moving to the next slide, so the question often becomes how did Austin energy's generation portfolio perform. As you can see, Austin's generation exceeded load in most instances, the load being the black line, as you can see there in this color above that black line. Austin energy's generation resources were made available to ERCOT and more overnagger's renewable

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resources were measurable and impactful in not only assisting ERCOT meet demand but assisting nagger in terms of mitigating our price volatility to the ERCOT price swings. And you can see the notation in red pointing to our load, and that's where it was curtailed by -- started to get occur failed buyer cot load shed directives. I'll move to my last two slides. As councilmember pool said, what's ahead, we recognize that we have improvement opportunities, and as a continuously learning organization one of most visible improvement opportunities is our outage graph and that is what's here today. The outage graph did provide the big picture data, total outage oh, incidents,.

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The more granular could be improved such as customers, all customers, not just the vast majority, all all customers can graphically drill down to service areas as better feedback as to the outage situation. As you can see, this is just a snapshot in time. The outages were well dispersed across the whole service territory. And moving to my last slide, looking at consideration for improvement, some of those considerations include we're reaching out to epry, that is a acronym for electric power researching to assess in after review. We can't stop there. There's other technologies we have to look at. Some of these technologies may be a potential

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candidate. Again, they will require further review. Smart distribution systems or smarter distribution systems or more inherent auto switching may be something worth considering. Expanded use of the Ami business case could be a potential, but there's many others. Our after actions review will bring many of those to light. In summary, we have continued work to do on the post-evaluation. And our responsibility includes working with all our stakeholders, policy makers, councilmembers, customers and industry regulators. With those concluding remarks, our director of communication will speak to our external communications both before, during and after the electric grid emergency. Marisa. >> Tovo: Are we going to ask questions after each segment before we get into the next topic? >> Pool: I think that

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would be useful recognizing we have just under -- we have about 20 minutes left for that. I did want to -- let me check -- fix that layout so I can see everybody. On the piece that Mr. Jackson just gave us with the graph that shows the precipitous drop of energy, the fast succession of the mandates to shed that came down in a tight time period, I think it was about an hour, and the fact that we were close to the entire

system going black, that portion that we just now talked about, does anybody have any specific questions they would like to ask at this point? Yes, councilmember tovo. I do. I have a series of questions, I don't know whether we will be able to talk about them today. I was wondering and you may

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have this information on that graph. Could you give us some sense of how much -- throughout the emergency, how much Austin energy was generating compared to what we were pulling off the grid? Do we have a slide that reflects that? >> Could we -- can we pull up slide number 9, please. >> Tovo: Yeah, I wondered if this might be showing us that. >> You can see where our load was at any given time here. And then you can also see where our generation was. In most cases, our generation was in excess of our load. >> Tovo: So in other words, our plants were generating more for the grid than Austin energy customers were able to actually retrieve from the grid because of the mandated outages. >> That's correct. With emphasis upon councilmember, as you said,

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due to mandatory load shed, [inaudible] Was diminished. >> Tovo: On those two places where the dips are really significant, there's a significant gap between the load and -- and our generation, can you address those? And also I guess could you address more generally how Austin energy -- and you may not have all of this information yet, but because we have contracts and our own plants, I'm very interested in the question how we winterized, how we winterized our own plants and also to what extent that's built into our contracts with other generation. And then could you address whether there were outages that accounted for this gap. >> Let me defer to our vice president, but before I get to that, we do have those

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gaps and oftentimes those gaps with given because we're providing ancillary service, reserve, so it's somewhat misleading because we have generation perhaps not fully maxed out because we're providing reserve to the market. There's a secondary subplot there. And could we open, Mr. Vice president pat Sweeney's in regard to winterization, and again, there's more coming on this. I think pat could give you very brief high level comments. >> Tovo: Mr. Jackson, before you turn it over to Mr. Sweeney, so that when you talk about the reserves that he so of our generation was being held in reserves, that's part of the 15% reserves gridwise, the 15% of the reserves? The grid? >> I don't know about that specific threshold. Erika, can you -- our vice president, Erika, can you address that, please?

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>> Tovo: I'm just listening to the -- trying to match this up with the hearings that are taking place at the state and the conversation about how much reserves are on hand at any one time and it sounded like that threshold was 15%. And I'm trying to figure out what you are saying in those areas where will were gaps, I'm trying to figure out if we're talking about the same reserve. >> Yes, generalry speaking, ercot can change the amount of reserves depending to the system, but typically 5,000 megawatts of operating reserve. Erika, are you able to join? She needs to be moved over, moderator. >> Tovo: We can come back to that. In the interest of time, if you want to move on to Mr. Sweeney and circle back to Erika on that question. >> Erika, can we hear you? >> Pool: I think she just needs to turn her mic on.

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Why don't we move to pat Sweeney then to answer councilmember tovo's first questions and if she can get access, we'll go to that. >> The question was about winterization. >> Good afternoon, councilmembers. So all of our generators do go through a winterization process. This is done in fall leading up to winter. It's a prescribed activity buyer he-by ercot and from time to time they do onsite inspections. We did complete our winterization processes and they vary by the plant, the type of facility so they are not all exactly the same, but the gist of them is the same and that is to protect

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the units from extreme cold or cold weather. And so that was done. That does not change the outcome that we and other generators did have issues from time to time with the extreme cold that we actually incurred. We're fortunate in that for the most part our generators at -- while they did incur some issues with cold weather, typically what these are for us and even more broadly are sensing of control lines that freeze up. These can contain moisture in them and at certain temperatures if those lines freeze up, they lose a connection to the control system. The control system says I need to turn things off before they completely break and they do that and that's -- we experienced a bit of that as did many other folks. Fortunately for us we're able to turn back around those issues relatively quickly. Probably the biggest exception for us was that

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south Texas nuclear project. And similar issue there. But as a nuclear facility, we have a more extensive set of protocols they have to follow before they can come all the way back up. So they undertook their process that took a bit longer, but that's -- that's a short version that I can give you. If there's -- I can try

to answer that. >> Thank you. >> Tovo: Yeah, I would be interested in a more indepth look at that. And I saw that stp, that the south Texas was down for a bit. Do you have a -- do you know what capacity our plants were operating at through the week or is that information that you could provide us with after? >> So I can't give you the -- it's not an easy answer just to articulate here, but going back to Mr. Jackson's slide number 9, you get a sense of that. He did -- that slide number

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9, I realize -- I don't think it's in front of us currently, but it does give you a sense of the overall output from the generators as it varied through the course of time as is alluded to in the periods prior to the 15th, received differences and dips there, prices were lower and so output dips accordingly. They are not needed, there's better opportunities in the market and so on. Some of that was also referenced what are called online or ancillary service reserves where generators are not fully loaded but can respond, quickly move up to events on the grid. Those are intentionally done by ERCOT to address issues in the short run if the generator goes away, the others respond to it. Some of that is embedded if there as well, but ultimately provide a breakdown of the individual generators over the same

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period and that's just a different look than this one. >> Also, councilmember tovo, regarding your 15% question, I believe you were speaking to planning reserve and we can come back to you with more information on that. ERCOT has a look ahead planning margin based on some acceptable forecast. Versus perhaps a daily operating reserve, which I quoted a number. Those are two different things and we can come back to you at a later time with those details. >> Pool: Okay, I'm going to move us on, take one more question at this point. Councilmember alter. >> Alter: So thank you. I wanted to talk about slide 9, so if you could put that up as well. So I appreciate councilmember tovo's questions on the winterization and what we do with our own generation and I think we need to understand that. Graphs and charts tell us stories, and this chart

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tells one story, it doesn't tell the full story which I think your staff have acknowledged. This is, as I understand it, telling us the story of where our load was versus the fuel that we generated. And if I understood Mr. Sweeney correctly, there are times whether we don't generate it ourselves because it's cheaper for us to get it elsewhere and that wouldn't have been shown on here. And it is great to say we performed well in so far as we were supplying power to ERCOT given our load shed, but this also seems to suggest that if we were going along at the load that we would have been without [inaudible] We would

not have had enough of our own generation to cover our needs and to be contributing into the system. And so I would like to understand, you know, more about the choices that were

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made about that generation and the forecast. Because it doesn't look like we were prepared very well with our own generation resources for this, and those gaps were large. It's not a -- you know, at a time we would have expected the cost to be very high. Can you speak a little more to that side of understanding what's going on here? >> Mr. Jackson, if I could step in and answer that question, I apologize for not being available. I had some technical issues. This is Erika, vice president of energy market operations. Councilmember alter, we are typically long throughout the entire year. There are very few intervals that we are not long. Therefore generation being able to surpass our load. What Mr. Sweeney mentioned was whenever it is less expensive to buy it from the market, we have that capacity in our stack. It's that it's just happens

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to be there's a cheaper fuel source on the market. In these situations, there was -- because of the -- because of the winter event, the very, very extreme winter event that we went through, which caused a load shed, but also caused problems with generation in general. So not only were we receiving force majeure on solar facilities, turbines, being derated or shut in due to icing, as well as -- to icing, as well as having issues because of the storm event, it's a -- it has less of an issue of not having the generation to meet our load as it does managing the consequences of, you know, a storm that, you know, was a very, very unusual event. I'm not sure if that answer your question, commissioner alter. I'm happy to answer it more

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properly if I haven't addressed what you are trying to understand. >> Alter: I guess what I really wanted to point out this chart is not telling the full picture and that there is still a sense where our generation would not have met the task even if we don't have the load shed, we would have been pushing at a high price or wouldn't have had the energy to immediate demand even without the ercot load shed. And that is a problem that we have to address and while we can say it's good that we met the needs of our load that -- such as it was reduced and that's better than happened in other markets, we still -- there's not clarity here that we would have been able to meet our need absent of their load shed. So, you know, in some sense we were still contributing to the need for the load shed in the first place because of the choices that we made or because of failures at our generation plants. And I'm not sure what graphic and exactly what information shows us that,

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but this is a snapshot that doesn't fully show that broader picture if we didn't have the ERCOT load shed situation, we would have had to be buying elsewhere. And so in some sense we contributed to that with the choices that we made in our [inaudible]. I have a lot of questions about the February 11 to 14 section. I don't think we have time today to do those so I will save those for a future meeting or individual meetings, but I did want to ask, this was the first I heard that the storm hit Austin in a particular way. That was different than elsewhere. Can you speak a little more to that? And you also said it hit the northwest part of your service territory more. >> Yes, so I'll just give you one reference point. Garland, for instance, spoke at the state legislator and the chief operating officer there spoke of we didn't

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have any storm damage as a result. So quite different than Austin. That's just one topical one off the top of my head. >> Alter: But does that mean they didn't have storms or didn't have damage to their -- [inaudible]. So we had damage. But when Garland said they didn't have storm damage, did they do a better job of maintaining lines or did they not have the ice storms that we had? >> Listening to his testimony, I took away he did not have ice storms. >> Alter: Thank you. >> Pool: Let's move on to -- thanks everybody for the questions and obviously there's way more than we can dig into, but it won't be today. Councilmember Kelly. >> Kelly: Thank you. Real quick, I was wondering if we might be able to put together a q&a from staff. >> Pool: Absolutely.

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Yeah, that is always an option. We're going to move into communications next. Councilmember Casar. >> Casar: We might have space for a question or two. >> Pool: I'm not sure. I promised I would turn this baton over at 2:00 to the water folks. Let's move on quickly to communications. >> Good afternoon. My name is Marisa Monterrey and I'm the director of communications for Austin energy. I want to again by saying the Austin energy communications team continue husbandly engaged with the community, stakeholders, the media and mayor and council before, during and after ERCOT issued energy emergency alerts. We know our utility communicates during a crisis is just as important as how it's managed operational. We understand the needs of our stakeholders and the public so we're able to deliver messages clearly and with credibility. For the next couple of

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minutes, I'll make this quick, I'll walk through the communications Austin energy team provided between Thursday, February 11 and Sunday, February 21st. Let's begin with a look at our communication between February 11 and 12. The initial ice storm came through Friday afternoon, but ahead of that our team working through a number of channels to let people know bad weather was on its way. We also want to help customers through conservation and outage preparation messaging, but we know it's also important to let folks know what we're doing on our end. We set our alarm clocks really early on those days and provided live interviews to TV stations. Energy conservation and outage preparations, social media messaging and updated our website. Next slide, please. This is a sampling of what that communication looked like. On the left you will see the news release to our

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150-plus media partners. Also important to note we always include mayor and council and staff on all news releases so all of you are in the loop. In the middle, on the right just two of the many interviews before that initial ice storm hit. Next slide, please. Once that initial storm rolled through Friday afternoon, we expanded messaging to include outage restoration and messaging around the next incoming winter storm. We continued to provide the same communications we had provided before that initial ice storm, but in addition we facilitated virtual news conversations Saturday and Sunday, we emailed all city of Austin customers, a message about energy conservation. We also sent our account customers a news flash

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encouraging them to conserve energy. For those that may not be familiar, those are customers who consume a significant amount of energy or a complex electric service. We provided messaging to partners at 311 and city of Austin call centers so they would be prepared for the many questions from the public. Next slide, please. On the left our chief operating officer provides virtual news conferences Saturday and Sunday. On the right, you'll see one of our field crews, we know that the best way to tell our story is when it comes from the folks working in the elements. That last image is an inspect shot from a video we put together of crews working in icy conditions. This particular field crew likened to opening up a car door iced over. It takes more force. Throughout our communications we did our best to put things in the simplest terms for the public to understand what was going on. This video is one example of

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that. Next slide, please. Just after midnight on Sunday, ERCOT issued its first EEA or energy emergency alert. Austin energy staff practices for EEA every year, templates ready to go. EEA3 is what triggers rotating outages. When ERCOT issued it, we knew we had to go beyond normal channels and used the communication channels on the side. Email to all of you and working with our partners at Homeland Security and Emergency Management to issue a Warn Central Texas alert in English and Spanish. A quick note about that alert. One of several proactive tools the city uses to reach out to people during this event. It's a regional system orchestrated through the capital -- to contact their communities by phone, email

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or text during times of disasters or public safety events. Important to note people must register to receive these alerts. Next slide, please. Just two minutes after ERCOT issued that EEA3, we shared that information on our social media pages. In the middle you will see a look at the Warn Central Texas message sent out both in English and Spanish. On the right the email we sent to all city of Austin utility customers telling them to prepare for extreme weather. This is a snapshot of what we provided and not all inclusive. Next slide, please. As soon as Austin energy staff realized these outages would extend longer than imagined, we started to get the word out and explain the best we could what was happening. As the winter storm lingered and events evolved, so did our messaging. With focused on conservation, billing

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questions and scam warnings. We shared as many details as we had available using the same communication channels we had been relying on. News conference with Austin-Travis County leadership and answered questions there and through the media requests. We kept in touch with customers with emails. One point I would like to highlight, more than 500 social media messages we provided this week, we understand not everyone is on social media which is why we work through our channels. But we were absolutely getting inundated with questions from the community specific to individual questions and social media platforms. We also provided a special here's what you need to know about our outage situation web page. We knew that website would be crucial in giving everyone whether all of you, the media, public, 311, everyone a place to come back to on the situation. And throughout the week we provided update on the front page of Austin energy.

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Next slide, please. On the left you'll see that web page we updated throughout the week which provided key information about what was happening. On the right a glimpse of our rotating banners. This one

specifically linked to information about Austin energy bills which was and continues to be a hot topic. The other place folks might go is our utilities.com web page. That's where people go to pay bills. We made sure to update content there showing the image at the bottom. Next slide, please. And our social media messages we used photos and messages. We used info graphics to make the information more digest I believe. This is about how we restore power. And finally -- next slide, please. A look at the communication we shared with all of you. I would really like to take the time to thank each

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innervate and every one of you. Thank you for reading our memos and we sent emails throughout the event, sharing our social media messages. So many of you shared talking points about energy conservation in newsletters to constituents. Some of you invited us to talk about what was happening on your own messaging channels as with the case with councilmember harper-madison. As our chief of staff in that Orange hat, ready to answer questions. Have no doubt ago all these shared messages helped people find safety, comfort and help and we look forward to working with all of you in the future as we continue to take a closer look at the events that unfolded during the storm. I'll turn it back over to you. >> Pool: Thank you. That's really good. Somebody needs to mute. I'll just point out a couple things in the last couple of minutes. If you don't have power, it's not going to be power to read the social media or watch the TV. So one of the things I hope

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to talk about and get more information what other ways can we imagine to get information out if we don't have power. There's a time lag in updating the outage map and not a general familiarity on where to find it and what it means. A lot of information was provided by Austin energy and going forward we can dig into what can we do can Austin energy as a council and within our community to increase people's familiarity and federal federal so we're better equipped next time. Does anybody have any questions in the remaining -- I did want to talk about what relief programs Austin energy was providing. And maybe we will be able to slip that in.

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Yes, councilmember Renteria. >> Renteria: Thank you. You know, I was one of the ones that didn't have any power for from Monday till Thursday. And there was no way that I could get any communication because I didn't have internet. There were no power. The only thing I got was this little transistor radio was the only way I could get any information and that was through Kut. And some of the other stations when they do have their news channel. And that was the only way that I could figure out what was going on. And then y'all guys promoted that it was going to be a rolling blackout. That never happened. The

next day y'all said it was going to be back on on Tuesday. That never happened. And everybody was looking at -- on the street where I live, 35 and see flashing lights all over the place. We need to do a better job.

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I mean it was so ridiculous to think that people were going to have an ability to go out and communicate with anybody. I had to go and shovel a path to my car so I could get in there and charge up my battery. On my phone, I have my phone just to communicate. We really need to take a la, hard look at this and how you all communicate because you cannot expect to have -- alter had 40% people without electricity, they are not going to communicate with you because they can't get online. We require a lot of energy and electricity for people to communicate, especially through the internet. You can post whatever you want out there on the internet, we're not going to see it. >> Pool: Really good point. Thank you, councilmember Renteria. Austin energy staff, do we have time to run through the relief programs? I see councilmember Casar raised his hand. >> Yes.

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>> Pool: Yes, councilmember Casar. >> Casar: Just briefly, I want to reiterate councilmember Renteria's point to put a pin in it that one, figure out how we can communicate to people if they weren't going to roll is one thing and second how we could communicate earlier in the day you are likely going to get your power back so people could make decisions. So often it was at night people started to realize that and we were telling them not to drive. Those are important things to mark. From the first presentation, I don't think I heard it brought up, but if we could get some level of report about how we could better get to rolling blackouts if we're asked to shed that much power in the future, better -- or the smart meter issues, that could be helpful. Again, you wouldn't have to communicate so much you are not going to get your power back if we could make changes that would get us to

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rolling if that much load is cut. >> Pool: That's a good point and we'll be digging into that later. I mean at hopefully the next meeting. Is there anybody who hasn't asked a question who would like to? I want to go into the relief programs if not. Who has the relief? >> Mr. Overton is going to. >> This is Kerry Overton, chief customer officer and we understand this is just the beginning. We have a lot going in a short period of time and we'll continue to make our shelves available. We certainly recognize the hardship presented by the storms and the impact they've had on our communities. Others have already shared the gravity of the events, but let you know we are continuing to work with you and the community to make improvements from lessons learned. And provide as much relief as possible.

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Is the slide up? Next slide, please. Yes. Thank you. One of the things that game apparently aware that we were aware of is many customers had been concerned about outside reports of large bill spikes due to variable contracts. Ae's electric rates are fixed and changes to those rates can only happen and must be authorized by the city council. So we wanted to share that information out to the community to make sure there was some level of calm in terms of what they were hearing. In addition to that, customers will only be charged for electric -- electricity that they actually consume. You will hear later in the Austin water report that we're working with them and they are going to bring forth anotr set of

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additional relief measures, rate relief measures to minimize the impact of the storm and the impact they will have on our customer bills. And last week council, you've already approved suspension of all the coa utility late fees and coming forth tomorrow are provisions associated with the waiving of the \$20 service initiation fee for impacted customers. Residential customers and a \$10 bill credit for Austin energy residential customers as an off set to the customer service charge. In addition to that as part of the bill relief efforts, we've expanded the definition of the hardship to include customers impacted by the storms to the plus one additional monies, as you are aware, Austin water and Austin energy provide an additional \$10 million to the bill relief efforts associated with covid-19. We also are making those

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provisions through the hardship of the storm available to our customers as well. Next slide. So I'll just summarize this very briefly. We are available to answer any questions you may have, but this is how customers can reach us. They can call us at any of the numbers listed on the slide. They can continue to contact us through the Austin bill help.com. We specifically have agents and third-party represented there to take any information that customers need. We also have our coa utilities.com website available to provide information to our customers. I will note in this slide we missed the -- the utilities is misspelled right there. It's coautilities, so we'll send a slide corrected so is hyperlink will send you to

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the right place. And we also will be available for customers who need to see us in person that don't have access to computers or the internet, they can also visit with us directly at our north Austin utility

customer service center. And the address is listed here as well. Again, we'll stay available, they can always call in our main contact center is the 512-494-9400 number. 512-494-9400. And we'll continue to bring other updates in terms of bill relief in the days to come. >> Pool: This is great. Thank you so much, Mr. Overton. I did promise that I would land this plane by 2:00 P.M. We are a little bit over. I appreciate the generosity of Austin water utility oversight folks to let us use some of their time today.

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I know that this raises lots of questions and that was a major intention of this meeting was to start centering us in our council discussions on what happened, how things are and how we're going to improve our processes throughout. And it will be a continuation of a discussion, and thanks again everybody for being here for this now. I hope you will stay and listen to the presentation from our water utility staff, and then when you have a free milisecond, look at the reading list and all the links part of the message board post. It gives you a really good flavor of what happened from some pretty smart people with regard to the energy regulatory structure in our state and the piece that Austin was in that - in that 12-day period. So thanks very much and I

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will adjourn the nearing portion Austin energy portion of our joint session