



EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCIL MINUTES

**SPECIAL CALLED MEETING
Tuesday, November 17, 2020**

The Early Childhood Council (ECC) convened on Tuesday, November 17, 2020.

Board Members in Attendance: Chair McHorse, Vice Chair Worthington, Members Gordon, Alvarez, Wren, Huston, Paver, Bliss Lima, Burson, Cortés-Castillo

Staff in attendance: Rachel Farley, Donna Sundstrom, Cindy Gamez

CALL TO ORDER – Chair McHorse called the meeting to order at 3:34 p.m.

CITIZEN COMMUNICATION- Residents Laura Olson and Michelle Mejia provided citizen communication. They highlighted that Go Austin Vamos Austin is working with families who are struggling during and after having COVID with lingering health and mental health issues. Many parents they support have lost jobs and/or child care due to the pandemic and are trying to helping their children with remote learning. They thanked the City for supporting child care providers through the COVID-19 Child Care Task Force and through COVID relief funding.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES from October 21, 2020 meeting

Member Huston motioned to approve minutes. Member Gordon seconded the motion. The minutes were approved with no changes by a vote of 8-0-0.

2. PRESENTATIONS

a. Leonor Vargas- AISD Administrative Supervisor of Parent Programs, Parent Engagement Support Office

Ms. Vargas works with AISD's Parent Support Specialists (PSS). In their work they use a Dual Capacity Framework from Harvard- Relational model that is interactive, collaborative, linked to learning, and focused on development and cultivating trust. Parents have been and are experiencing anxiety and fear about going to work and sending kids to school during COVID-19. AISD has Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and counseling teams and offers workshops on self-regulation and stress for parents. The PSS's work closely with licensed mental health professionals, family resource centers, SEL teams, PTAs, and the refugee office. Key areas of focus between March and May 2020 were increasing communication with families, getting meals to families, providing telehealth services, and distributing technology to families for remote learning. They are partnering with Free Net to bring technology to families, including those living in Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA) sites. The PSS's partner with Partner with ConnectATX and 211 through UWATX as key tools for finding resources for families. There are 62 PSS's, 54 of whom are 50% funded by the City of Austin. An ECC member asked if families are still having trouble accessing WiFi and how the City could help. Ms. Vargas said it is still a challenge because: many of the families they serve are very mobile

which can make it difficult to locate them to provide the needed technology; WiFi hotspots can be slow if many in a family are using them; when families are tight on funds, they drop their internet service. She highlighted the San Antonio model as something to replicate in Austin, where WiFi is available in neighborhoods that need it through connections with the street lights. Member Alvarez could bring this idea up with the Joint Inclusion Committee.

b. Family Friendly Workplaces and Austin’s Best Places for Working Parents – Brooke Freeland, Consultant for United Way for Greater Austin and Early Matters Greater Austin

Early Matters Greater Austin (EMGA) is an alliance of business professionals focused on the relationship between access to high quality early childhood education (ECE) and our community’s long-term economic success. EMGA 3 pillars: 1- Promoting Best Places for Working parents- family friendly workplace policies; 2- Influencing Public Policy- advocacy on local and state policy related to ECE; and 3- Advancing Innovation- incubate, pilot, and scale innovative solutions to challenges of access and affordability in the early childhood sector. EMGA is launching the “Best Place for Working Parents” in Austin, a business self-assessment, promoting research-backed policies that benefit working parents and business’ bottom line. Early Matters groups in other cities are involved and working to spread the initiative throughout Texas. The initiative engages companies to take a 3 minute confidential online assessment across 10 family-friendly policies and gives them immediate results and how they compare to other local businesses of similar size and industry. They can then receive a designation as a Best Place for Working Parents. The assessment focuses on these policies: 1- Company paid healthcare coverage; 2- Paid time off; 3- Parental leave; 4- Onsite child care; 5- Child care assistance; 6- Backup childcare; 7- Flexible hours; 8- Remote work/work from home; 9- Nursing benefits; 10- Best place designation. Ms. Freeland shared data on benefits to companies and families of family-friendly workplace policies. She asked the ECC members to spread the word to businesses that they can do the assessment from Jan. 11 through Feb. 12, 2021.

3. NEW BUSINESS AND POSSIBLE ACTIONS

a. Approve proclamation and ECC letter honoring Jacquie Porter

Member Alvarez spoke in honor and memory of Jacquie Porter. He read the proclamation language aloud- November 17, 2020, is hereby declared Jacquie Porter Day in Austin. Thanks to Matt Worthington and Mayor Pro Tem Delia Garza’s office for working to make this happen.

b. Community Engagement Work Group updates- focus/purpose, meeting time, next steps

Member Alvarez reported that the Community Engagement Work Group met and he read the focus/purpose statement they drafted for the work group. Paola Silvestre from United Way for Greater Austin (UWATX) and Laura Olson from GAVA will participate in the work group. Member Gordon will coordinate the group. The group can talk with Leonor Vargas of AISD about ways to engage with families and AISD Parent Support Specialists.

c. Chair Updates – Cathy McHorse

i. City of Austin Economic Development Corporation (EDC) timeline

The Economic Development Department (EDD) is reaching out to identify organizations that will nominate board members for the EDC. EDD UWATX to serve as nominating agency for the early childhood representative seat. Recommendations are due to the city by 11/20/2020. City

Council approves the nominating agencies on 12/3/2020 and the goal is to approve board members on 2/18/2021.

ii. Reimagining Public Safety community conversation hosted by Success by 6 and 2-Generation Coalition

This conversation was held today and there were 24 participants. ECC members will think about how to lend an early childhood policy voice into the conversation.

iii. ECC member communication with Mayor and Council offices

Chair McHorse shared a template created for ECC members to communicate with the Council and Mayor offices that appointed them after each meeting.

4. STAFF UPDATES- SAVES Resolution update

The SAVES Resolution passed by Council allocated \$5 million in relief grants to child care providers. The EDD completed the interview process for third party to administer the grants and are working on a contract now so that the grants can be dispersed as quickly as possible.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS- none noted

ADJOURNMENT – Chair McHorse adjourned the meeting at 4:58 p.m.