



## **EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCIL MINUTES**

**REGULAR MEETING  
Wednesday, February 10, 2021**

The Early Childhood Council (ECC) convened on Wednesday, February 10, 2021.

Board Members in Attendance: Chair McHorse; Vice Chair Worthington; Members Hosking Pulido, Gordon, Alvarez, Wren, Huston, Paver, Bliss Lima, Cortés-Castillo, and Conlin

Staff in attendance: Rachel Farley, Leila Lawson

**CALL TO ORDER** – Chair McHorse called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m.

### **CITIZEN COMMUNICATION: GENERAL**

Dr. Choquette Hamilton provided citizen communication, saying that she is a member of Equity in Childcare and Education, a local grassroots coalition whose mission is to lift community voices and advocate for policies and actions that drive anti-racist child care and education in Central Texas. She asked the ECC to request that City Council members prioritize proposals for the St. John's Redevelopment project and other redevelopment projects that include a high-quality child care center. She highlighted the lack of high-quality care options available for families in St. John's in District 4, noting that there are 5 or less TRS child care seats per 100 children of working parents living 200% below the poverty line. She said Equity in Childcare and Education sees the St. John's redevelopment as the optimal opportunity to increase child care access.

Proposals are due February 18, 2021. ECC members noted that they could raise this topic could be individually with their appointing Council offices and also revisit it in the next meeting.

- 1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES from** - Member Paver moved to approve the minutes of the November 17, 2020, and January 13, 2021 meetings, member Huston seconded the motion. The minutes for both meetings were approved unanimously by a vote of 11-0-0.

### **2. NEW BUSINESS AND POSSIBLE ACTIONS**

#### **a. ECC 2021 Goal setting discussion**

##### **Achieve- What do we want to do that we are not doing?**

- Consistent 2-way communication between Council offices and ECC
- Have families and organizations participate and use ECC as a conduit to influence City Council
- Working with Equity at the Center
  - Operationalize equity when considering policies- is data/impact broken down by race/ethnicity
  - Examine City plans to analyze to see the impact on racial equity in early childhood
  - Create avenues for community voices- Identify people active in the community on issues of equity and early childhood and invite them to ECC so we can hear from them; help people understand what role we have as a bridge between community and city; engage with child care providers to hear their voices;
  - Establish avenues of communication with stakeholder groups
- Communication with Community stakeholders to be sure we are hearing from them about their needs

##### **Preserve- What are we doing well that we want to continue?**

- Influence City investments in early childhood education via Austin Public Health
- Advocate for policy related to child care

**Avoid- What do we want to prevent?**

- Conflicting with Community Strategic Plans
- Focusing on topics that are not in the purview of the ECC

**Eliminate- What are we doing that is not effective?**

- Reacting to opportunities rather than being proactive when possible

Members discussed having a set of higher-level guiding principle goals and revisiting more specifically how they can be operationalized each year with SMART (measurable, actionable) goals. The group focused on the following as guiding principle goals: (1) Center efforts on Equity; (2) Improve communication with Council; (3) Improve how we are informed by the community by making community aware of the role of ECC and actively seeking out community participation; (4) Stay within the guardrails of community strategic plans, the City's Strategic Direction 2023, and the ECC bylaws; (5) Be nimble so that ECC can be both proactive and reactive

**b. Policy Work Group Updates – Anna Lisa Conlin and Cathy McHorse****i. City Budget recommendations**

ECC members discussed potential budget recommendations to Council that could be voted on in the April meeting, including:

- Maintaining current early childhood funding, which includes Ready Families Collaborative funding through Any Baby Can; Austin Community College Teacher TRAC; Child Inc.- summer and after school care; direct child care and child care quality funding through Workforce Solutions Capital Area; lease for child care space at Bergstrom Tech Center; and start-up funds for pre-K classrooms).
- Requesting that a portion of the Pre-K classroom start-up funding be shifted to support a Pre-K partnerships management hub if not all funds are needed by area school districts or asking for additional new funding for this purpose

Members also noted interest in the City continuing to fund and look for opportunities to locate child care programs that accept children with subsidies in new developments, and in providing stabilization grants to child care programs, including exploring the potential for City funding for child care providers in Travis County but outside of Council districts. Moving forward, members would also like to learn more about the budget of the Economic Development Department and whether that could be a new avenue for early childhood funding. It was noted that \$1 billion in federal child care relief funding will come to the state through the Texas Workforce Commission over the next three years and that the community's Success By 6 Coalition is engaged in advocating for how that funding will be allocated.

**ii. City Council advocacy visits timeline (March/April)**

It was noted that Success By 6 can help schedule meeting for ECC members with Council and Mayor offices.

**c. Community Engagement Work Group purpose and priorities**

At the last meeting, the work group discussed challenges community members encounter in accessing child care subsidies. The work group would like to hear from community members having difficulty accessing subsidies; think about ways the City could share information with the community in ways that could help make the process of getting subsidies easier; and may request that Workforce Solutions Capital Area come to speak to the ECC and walk members through the process for receiving subsidies as they were parents using the system.

**d. Topics to bring to Joint Inclusion Committee- none discussed****FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

- Pre-K enrollment campaign
- WIC- March meeting

**ADJOURNMENT** – Chair McHorse adjourned the meeting at 9:59 a.m.