



EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCIL MINUTES

**REGULAR MEETING
Wednesday, April 14, 2021**

The Early Childhood Council (ECC) convened on Wednesday, April 14, 2021.

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

Staff in attendance: Rachel Farley, Cindy Gamez, Leila Lawson

CALL TO ORDER – Chair McHorse called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m.

CITIZEN COMMUNICATION: GENERAL - None

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES from March 10, 2020 meeting - Member Paver moved to approve the March 10, 2021 meeting minutes and member Conlin seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by a vote of 8-0 (Vice Chair Worthington off the dais)

2. PRESENTATIONS

a. Briefing and discussion on the Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Action Plan Community Needs Assessment

A team of City Staff (Rebecca Giello, Deputy Director, and Katie Horstman, Senior Research Analyst, Housing and Planning; Laura La Fuente, Program Manager, and Helen Howell, Public Health Program Coordinator, Austin Public Health) presented on preparations to submit a grant application for federal funds, a portion of which go to services for families with children. Neighborhood Housing and Community Development and the Planning and Zoning Departments merged into the Housing and Planning Department. Department work groks include: Zoning & Urban Design, Inclusive Planning, Displacement Prevention, Finance & Administration, Program Delivery & Real Estate Services.

We are entering year 3 of the 2019-2024 consolidated plan. The application is for funding from the following grants: \$7.8 million- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), \$3.1 HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME), \$699,870- Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), \$2 million- Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA). The team described the following programs and activities: assistance for homelessness assistance, special needs, renters, homeowners, homebuyers, and housing developers, and other community development programs. Child Care Services funded by \$500K from the CDBG fall under Special Needs Assistance. Presenters described the child care services provided in FY20-21 which include the Early Head Start Program (Child Inc.), the Teen Parent Child Care Program (Austin ISD), and the Bridge Child Care Voucher Program (YWCA) and the number and demographics of those served. CDBG COVID funding is being used to provide emergency child care for low to moderate income essential workers during the pandemic through Workforce Solutions Capital

Area. Presenters also described the \$15.5 million in Coronavirus Relief Funds that have been used for rental subsidies through the Housing Authority and the additional funding expected from the federal government for homelessness and relief for renters and homeowners.

During discussion, ECC members asked about the impact of COVID on the number of children served through child care services (providers are on track to reach their goals), whether the American Rescue Plan will include funding for early childhood (Housing and Planning can return to present a report on the plan), for more detail on the funding amounts for each program in the plan (staff will provide that). Members also asked about family friendly housing locations (staff will provide a memo on high, medium, and low opportunity areas) and the relatively small number of housing units going to people with no children. Housing and Planning is working on how to better reach families with children with the next round of funds. ECC members noted they recently passed a recommendation that Council maintain current funding for early childhood programs. The ECC policy work group will discuss next steps.

b. Pre-K Enrollment messaging- Laura Koenig, Senior Director of Community Solutions, E³ Alliance

Pre-K enrollment in Central Texas is significantly lower than in the previous 5 years. In Travis County roughly 35% of pre-K students are not enrolled compared to last year (about 3,000 fewer students) – a larger drop than in Central Texas and statewide – 70% of whom are Latinx, 40% of whom are English learners, and 90% of whom are from households with low income. The reasons parents have expressed for not enrolling are concerns about safety during COVID, time management issues, concerns about how well remote learning will work for young children. Area school districts, E3 Alliance, and Success By 6 Pre-K Work Group members are doing a Pre-K enrollment push now (<https://e3alliance.org/pre-k-in-central-texas/>) with messaging focused on emphasizing why Pre-K is important and that it is more than just academics but is also important for social and human connections. This week is Pre-K enrollment week; but families can enroll any time throughout school year.

3. NEW BUSINESS AND POSSIBLE ACTIONS

a. Council recommendation about Pre-K enrollment messaging

City staff noted that Pre-K enrollment is being promoted through social media and a planned text to WIC participants with 3 and 4 year olds. ECC members did put forth a recommendation.

b. Council resolution endorsing Success By 6 recommendations for use of American Rescue Plan funding

By a vote of 7-0 with 2 members abstaining (Cathy McHorse and Anna Lisa Conlin), members amended the draft resolution to include a summary table of the funding recommendations. By a vote of 7-0 with 2 members abstaining (Cathy McHorse and Anna Lisa Conlin), members passed the recommendation that the City of Austin incorporate and adopt all “Recommendations for Transforming the ATX Early Childhood System” submitted by the Austin/Travis County Success By 6 Coalition in the spending framework for COVID-19 relief and recovery and American Rescue Plan Funding.

c. Policy Work Group Updates – Anna Lisa Conlin and Chair McHorse

- i. Meetings with Mayor and Council offices- Council office visits are scheduled
- ii. Displacement Prevention Division of the Planning and Zoning Department- not discussed
- iii. Proposal to invite Austin Public Health to present about plans for COVID-19 vaccinations for children- staff will submit this request

d. Community Engagement Work Group updates- Eliza Gordon

- i. Presentations from parents and community members – The work group heard from parents and community members about challenges they have had with child care subsidies.
- ii. Proposal to invite parents to present at the May ECC meeting about their experiences navigating the child care subsidy system – ECC members agreed to add this to the May meeting agenda

e. Select budget priorities that the ECC would like the Joint Inclusion Committee to endorse

Member Alvarez shared with JIC members the budget recommendations passed by the ECC in March (maintain current early childhood funding and shift unused Pre-K start-up costs to Pre-K partnership hubs) and will ask that JIC endorse those two recommendations and the recommendation passed in this meeting in support of the Success By 6 recommendations on the use of American Rescue Plan funds.

4. STAFF UPDATES

a. Vaccines for child care workforce

Staff continue to make COVID-19 vaccine appointments for child care staff who would like help with this. Staff can also schedule their own appointments online with APH or through other area vaccine providers.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

ADJOURNMENT – Chair McHorse adjourned the meeting at 10:00 a.m.