

City Council Special Called Meeting Transcript – 05/11/2021

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>> Mayor Adler: I now convene today's city council meeting. This is a special called meeting. It is 1:04. Today is Tuesday, May 11th, 2021. This is being held via video conference. Colleagues, as you recall, the purpose of today's meeting is to discuss issues regarding still operations, response and future actions. You will recall that councilmember Tovo led on a resolution setting up a process for the council to be able to daylight questions or concerns that we might have. Maybe we get answers, but really I think the priority here was to identify for the manager issues that we wanted to make sure were raised in the after action

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analysis that he's going to be doing. This process that we're in now is one of what seemed like multiple ways for us and the community and the manager to get feedback and answers and to look at what happened during the storm. In addition to this work by council, we know that the council has previously held joint meeting on this. We know that our water committee is taking a look at it. That Austin Energy is taking a look at it and has meetings going forward. We know there's a community task force that's been engaged and has now scheduled meetings and opportunities for the public to be able to directly

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engage. Obviously this event in our community was huge and hugely disruptive and very costly on so many levels. Some of those issues are here local. Some of those issues are state and statewide. But I think that everyone recognizes that we need to spend some time to make sure that we learn everything that we can learn and do better in future situations. And I think that's kind of the purpose of this. Manager, I want to ask you is if you want to say anything to start us off. I think it might also be helpful if you would consider creating like a single place on our website somewhere where people can go to about the storm and then tie back to the work that the various groups are doing so that if they go there they can access the public meetings or be teen a

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place that does so that someone doesn't have to hunt around to try to find the various initiatives. But I appreciate the work that cncilmember tovo has done both in the earlier resolution and then with an agenda today and we'll try to follow as best we can as kind of a general path that was promoted and that there is a guide that no one is limited for questions, only limited by time. We'll try to stay not to exceed the time in any one area to make sure we can work our way through. And manager, we did ask the staff to prepare any preparations for us for this by intention because this wasn't -- I would imagine there's going to be all kinds of presentations and things that come back from you at the end of this process, but we wanted to have everyone present. And colleagues, seven wasn't

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sitting here for a long period of time, I think we've tried to have the manager keep appropriate staff here for that blocked time period so they could be here for that generally speaking, which is another reason why to try and stay within those blocked areas. It seems as if over the last couple of years, every big event and crisis or challenge we have when it seems one can't get any bigger always seems to be preempted by something that seems bigger, but we'll double back now on the storm and see if we can stay focused on that. Manager, do you want to say something and then Kathie, I'll recognize you as well.

>> Cronk: Thank you, mayor and council, just really want to appreciate this opportunity to have this

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discussion. As the mayor pointed out, this is an ongoing process. This was an historic event that our community, state and country faced during that time and it was frankly an emergency on top of emergency on top of a pandemic. So there were so many layers to this, but the full comprehensive way that we're going to be looking at this both there the preparation process, what occurred during the response and then certainly the recovery as well. This will all be factored into the reports and work that

we're doing on the after action process that is well underway and I really look forward to having this conversation today to inform those future steps. But this is really in the spirit of transparency and making sure that we can constantly be evaluating our own work because as I've said before, we can and must do better when we know the next natural disaster hits. So this is not -- this hasn't been the first time,

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it won't be the only time. And as part of our resilience efforts this will be critical that we respond to and address some of the concerns that are raised today. So with that I'll turn it back to you, mayor.

>> Mayor Adler:

>> F manager, thank you. Do you think that staff will be able to get people to go to for these things?

>> Cronk: Yes, staff has told me they are working on that and we'll be able to accommodate that.

>> Mayor Adler: Great. Thank you. Councilmember Tovo.

>> Tovo: Thanks, mayor. I wanted to really start by appreciating my co-sponsors on this item, Mayor Adler, Councilmember Alter P Mayor Pro Tem Harper-Madison and Councilmember Pool. The resolution had different ways to look at this at this event that happened and hopefully it will be not duplicative of the other kinds of analysis, but really add to it. I know as I sat with my

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staff and talked about, reflected on what happened, we felt a strong desire to really better understand what it happened. And I realized as I was talking with many of you that we were all working so fast and furiously and intensely on our own -- on different elements of it that I don't really well know what experiences you all had. And there were all areas of the staff response that I'm not as familiar with. So as I started to have those initial meetings I know many of us kind of jumped right to some of the recommendations like we should really be able to do this in the future. And one way of approaching that I thought was to kind of begin by having this opportunity to ask questions and hear from staff about some of those areas before we kind of move into offering recommendations. So I really appreciate Jason Alexander on your staff,

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manager. He has spent a lot of time and effort working with the mayor and working with me on getting these work sessions organized in a way that would be manageable for us and for staff. One thing that's

changed in from the initial plan that we passed, exhibit a talked about a community piece where we would invite different members of the community in to talk to the council about their experience in is a series of issues. And when we really sat down and looked at the time we had available, two half-day sessions wouldn't allow for that to be done well and in a respectful way to those community members. So in conversations with the manager or with Jason and with the mayor we have cut that portion of the conversation and are instead encouraging those individuals and those volunteer groups that we know are active in the storm to please go and talk with the task force. So I think we had an opportunity to just really briefly last week to talk about the task force. They've met several times,

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but they've had one hearing. I think it was last week, councilmember Ellis came in and offered greetings and welcome and some additional information and then they had a small group of people coming and speaking about their experiences, but they were really very useful, productive testimonies about their experiences during the storm. So one of the things that my staff is doing is reaching out to some of the groups that we had mentioned in exhibit a and encouraging them to go to the upcoming task force meetings and share their experiences and their recommendations, their ideas and our city staff have issued some information about that in the form of a press release today. So I just want to call your attention to that. The next public session of the citizens' task force is may 14th from six to eight and there's information available on when you need to sign up to participate in that. They are no longer going to

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organize their meetings by council district. It's now open to anyone who wants to participate in those upcoming sessions and they've scheduled an additional four. So I know sometimes we've worked with some of the same folks, Austin needs firefighters, and

[indiscernible] And various others. So to the extent that we can get the word out I think we will have a fuller and richer conversation about what all the experiences were so we can learn from it and move forward. I think that's all I wanted to say. The mayor kind of covered -- I posted some of the questions that I had or heard but really we have promised the staff that we didn't require presentations and things of that sort. That we were just going to be topic driven and jump in and ask some of the questions that we may not have had an opportunity to talk about in the different sessions. As we went through I tried to eliminate some of the topics that I felt like we had covered in one of the committees and I'll try to do the same for next week too as we take on Austin

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energy and Austin water, those are really truncated discussions given that they've been discussed now in multiple forums and none of us I think we want to ask the staff to go over the same ground or to have the same conversations. Sue thanks again to all of the staff who have worked on this.

>> Mayor Adler: That's good. So generally speaking, the outline today is to start with emergency operations. We have Juan Ortiz with us who is our city lead on the eoc, emergency operations command. We'll start there and then we go to transportation and then we'll go to public safety. And then we'll wrap it up. Kathie, one more time I'll go to you first in case you want to start off with questions as we start off with the emergency operations. And Juan, thank you for

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being with us today.

>> Tovo: I don't need to, mayor, if someone has a burning question they want to jump into. I have lots as you saw.

>> Anybody want to start? Alison.

>> Pool: Again, thank you, Kathie Kathie for bringing this resolution. I'm proud to sponsor and I think it's an important set of questions and I'm looking forward to learning a lot today. I went back and looked at the emergency LAN. I forget the exact word for it. And it calls for council emergency training which I know I've never had or never been offered. I think it would be helpful in the aftermath of this, it would have been helpful in the aftermath of the pandemic so I would like to

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understand why that has not happened and what the plan is moving forward to make sure that we do have that training. We do know that council did a lot of really important work during this storm. I want to acknowledge that. I think there were also some things that each of us did at various times that made more work rather than less work and I think some of that came from a lack of clarity about our roles and who we were supposed to be talking to. And I realize that this was not a disaster per se that we had planned for, but I think we need to that training and we need to have that clarity and it needs to be updated and shared with new council members and it needs to build in the learning that we have from this experience.

>> So I don't know if that's for the city manager or for Mr. Ortiz. Congress.

>> Cronk: I'll start out, council member. I really appreciate that

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question and comment and could not agree more that this type of dialogue and training, even as part of the orientation process for new council members is critical. So whether it was for various reasons on availability of the trainers themselves, availability of time to schedule this, I'm sure there are multiple reasons why it has not happened, but I am very committed to ensuring that we find times in this calendar year to make sure that happens going forward. So really knowing that this is something that in my past experience in Minnesota, in Minneapolis, we did have both half day sessions and longer sessions with partners from FEMA, with emergency operation leadership, to talk about ways in which not only the operations at the city level are coordinated, but then the different roles and responsibilities that each of you play in this

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response. I look forward to scheduling those. I have committed to each view and many of you individually in one on one conversations that this needs to happen sooner rather than later and we've already started working on ways that we can get that on the calendar hopefully to this summer. Did I miss anything, Juan?

>> Spencer, no. I think while we've done some orientations but obviously we need to do more and I'm writing myself a note here to work energy setting appointments with different council members to make sure that we very quickly do a briefing and we work as part of sb23 as part of elected official training component and we should have that completed here this fall.

>> Mayor Adler: Councilmember Fuentes, are you on this topic?

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>> On emergency training? No, different question.

>> Mayor Adler: Let's stay here and see if other people have thoughts on this. It's an interesting thing in terms of training of councils because I think this event showed us that the training that's necessary goes beyond the vision or mission that is contained in our emergency plans. If it's just a briefing on the emergency plans I'm not sure it gets to the questions of really what is the role of the council offices in an emergency, which is not addressed really well in those plans. As people in community interacting with the city know their council offices. So that's often times the first place that they go and I know that the council member is trying to do right by their districts and want to be able to immediately get involved and to address

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so part of the training I think may very well involve thinking through what's currently not there that needs to be so that it expands and evolves. Training on what is that's written in a document doesn't get us there. There's another element that really has to be explored if in terms of what is the role of council? How do the council members get information? How do they convey that? How do they make their district needs known? What is that constructive interaction as a part and parcel of our emergency response? Which is an aspect that we have not had the best design.

>> Cronk: Appreciate you adding to that, mayor. I do agree with that as well. Knowing both the individual interests of specific council members and how that may evolve over time and the specific situations that different communities encounter. So hearing how different

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jurisdictions have talked about those roles and responsibilities, how they have adapted to different individuals and makeup of council. And then specific events. But I think those are all critical scenarios to work through as we would go through -- I agree, it's not less training, but tabletop exercises, if you will, as part of this process. So we will make note of that and make sure that it's included in the curriculum.

>> Mayor Adler: Okay. Paige, Mackenzie, Ann and then Greg.

>> Ellis: Quite a few hands here on this one. I hope that's going to be a feedback loop because I know that each district is different. I can speak specifically about mine in that it was not widely known that being the first if offline with water meant you were going to be the last to come back on. Some of our roads were not being cleared. They stopped at a certain -- midway through the district and the people at the far southern end were still having to drive on snow and

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ice long after others were able to drive on safer roads. I also only have one public facility, the library in my district. It wasn't open. We couldn't reach the warming centers. So I hope that that is an exercise that we go through together and it's not just about the hindsight of the winter storm, it's about the foresight of potential for wildfire risk that we'll need to know how to educate the people in our district will how to keep themselves and their families safe. The part of my contributing to the task force session that happened a week or two ago -- sorry, that time flies -- was that they had thought about taking feedback from specific districts on certain dates and some of my constituents reached out and said, I didn't sign up in time and I have something to share and I still hope we get an opportunity to do that. So I did step in and share the district 8 story in that specific circumstance, but I'm very appreciative that there's other opportunities for my district to provide

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that input. As far as training council offices on emergency response, I hope there can only be a level -- also be a level of taking our input and the scenarios of what districts may have in a situation like this and be able to incorporate that into the training process or a report or what it is we're supposed to know. And to make sure that that's flexible as we go through redistricting that we're going to update that plan when new districts are drawn and we have new boundaries to assess. So I do hope that that is a feedback loop.

>> Mayor Adler: Mackenzie? It.

>> Kelly: Thank you. I have been on both sides of this, in management and on emergency management, so I have both sides and I know there were some barriers to access to information. I know I had requested situation reports throughout the winter storm and it took a little while to get those so I sought them out a different way. But there are gaps in

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information flow that would have been incredibly helpful for many of our council offices and even a point of contact to know who and where to send information about what is happening in our district would have been completely helped and it would have gone faster if we had known the way that that information would flow. So I appreciate that. We may have opportunity to go through a tabletop exercise. I think that would be a great outcome and experience for my fellow council members to really see how the process works and to learn more about it in detail so that we can be more effective in our communications to our communities moving forward. Thank you.

>> Mayor Adler: Okay. I think it was Ann and then Greg.

>> Kitchen: Yes. I would just like to echo what others have said. I really, although training would be helpful, I don't really think that's what we're talking about here. I think we need to have a group conversation together about what the role of the

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council is so that might be in addition to training. I have been -- I'm just concerned that the council is not included in the process for emergency response. And so we all run around, you know, talking with each other some to learn about -- to learn from each other what we could do to help our constituents. We talk with staff and staff is wonderfully responsive in a lot of ways, but it's incredibly ininitiate.

-- Inefficient. And I think what I would like to have is an opportunity for us to talk together about what the role of council is and I would like to see our emergency plan revised if need be to address that role. And one of my -- so I'll

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just tell you what I think our role should be. Communication should be clear and open and transparent and we should be part of receiving that information. Not through special meetings or separate meetings or separate emails, but part of receiving incident reports and, you know, other kinds of reports. We should be in the flow, in the regular flow. I think that's important. I think that also I would like to see written into the response plan the community engagement portion. And that may not be the right word for it. Community -- community connection, I'll just use that for lack of a better word. In other words oh, is it on incident -- who is it on incident response on volunteer responsibilities, who is it on incident response that works with council members. We need a much more

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coordinated way to do that and so I would like to see that written and circulated so that we can comment on it and then have a conversation about it. I don't want to go through another emergency that we haven't figured out how the council is engaged in that activity in a formal way as part of the process. It's really felt like we're just sort of an add on while we're trying to be helpful in every way that we can. So I just really think that's important. I also think that our response systems -- well, covid is an example of a different kind of response than the winter storm. Covid is a much longer emergency than what the winter storm was, but even the winter storm is not like a historic coming through or a tornado coming through. So when you have ongoing multiple responses to it, it

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requires a different kind of level of engagement with the council. So city manager, can I ask that? Can we have a revision to the emergency response plan that is shared with the council members? So that we can review it and give our feedback? And then all come together with some kind of consensus on what that should look like?

>> Cronk: Thank you, council member. I couldn't agree more that having that ongoing dialogue between what those different roles and responsibilities are and they need to be part and parcel of the discussion that we would have both in reviewing the current plan that has been discussed and we can certainly make sure that that's available. It should be on our website, but I'll make sure that you have links to it.

And knowing that this is an evolving process and that we learn from these events and that's why we do these after

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action reports and if there are ways that we can make our response more efficient and effective, we want to be exploring that and coming to an agreement about how to move forward. So absolutely we will be looking at that as part of our next steps as part of this conversation.

>> Kitchen: So as part of the after action report we'll have a section on the role of council and we'll have a section on revising our plans to include that role and then we'll have feedback from the council on what we arrive at. Is that what I'm hearing you say?

>> Yes. It sounds like staff is agreeing with that and so I'll make sure if there's any changes to that we'll let you know, but that can be part of our report.

>> Kitchen: Thank you.

>> Casar: Councilmember Casar and then tovo and alter. You.

>> Casar: Are you able to hear me.

>> Mayor Adler: We can hear you, but speak up,

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though.

>> Casar: I want to pick up the thread where councilmember kitchen just left off because I do think that just a training on what has been in the past isn't as much of interest to me as us learning from this to reconfigure what the role of council members should be, especially in a district system like the one we have now. A lot of those days were a blur, but I do remember conversations with multiple of my colleagues here on the dais where words would be said pretty repeatedly am I the one that's supposed to be doing this? Or should I just do this or do I wait to see if the staff will do it? Or do you know what? I'll go ahead and do this. These were pretty repeated words. And I think that having a plan and reconfigured set of expectations about what it is that we are supposed to

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do, what it is that staff really will have covered and then with the decision-making process is going to be when something isn't covered and whether a council member is just going to organize volunteers and

communities to do it or whether or not -- how to make that choice I think could be really helpful because I think there were so many different times where there was uncertainty and it was unclear what that uncertainty meant if council members should fill that void because it's the right thing to do or if we have systems where that void doesn't exist or if staff members will fill that void. And I think that there were so many of those voids and so varied from district to district and from can you council member to council member, but it's just a phrase that sticks out in my mind that I heard from so many members of the dais during that crisis. And maybe part of the preparation is just tell us it there's going to be certain voids and we just

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fill them. I think we should go back and through some of these sessions, but also through our after time to identify some examples of what the voids were and then reconfigure the training and the protocol so that next time we know, do you know what, just go ahead and ship the water to that school and don't check in with the staff because they're busy and that fits into category C where you go ahead and do it versus do you know what? If you have -- if you have somebody call in with three 18-wheelers of Austin, they should always go to X person. But those sorts of questions I feel like were just asked hundreds of times around do I just go ahead and do this or do I check in with the staff and they're very busy and am I ever going to get an answer? And I think we just need to learn from those gaps so that we can fit in in a more efficient way and be a little more sure footed about the decision each council member makes.

>> Cronk: I appreciate that, council member.

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And certainly highlighting and identifying some of those themes did get brought up during this event, but knowing how unique it was and how each convenient will have its unique circumstances, whether it's impacting certain parts of our jurisdiction, our city, if it's impacting different types of individuals or natural resources, there's so many things that are specific to every event that we encounter, how to extrapolate some of the themes that we can take to the next process and really bake into our future responses. But we will always be learning from what happened here and in other events, but knowing that as you've pointed out, so much of this is very unique to what we saw during this event.

>> Casar: My last thought here, that it was a very unique event and I'm sure each other event will be

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unique. Part of what was challenging was to identify which things were a void because it's a unique event and so we should just take it as such and which things we really should have had a plan for. So I

think it could be really helpful for us to say, look, in these types of events, these sorts of things will happen, but then there are going to be these unique circumstances where you will feel uncertainty and you will should lean into that and work with that. I felt like there were many conversations where we could not identify whether the gap was related to how unique the event was or the gap was due to a failure in planning. And I just -- and I don't think that that-- that is not unique. What is not unique is that there will be some things we can plan for and some things we can't and we need that written down I think so that we are not feeling like we are making this up from scratch as council members every time that there's a disaster that has some parts we can expect and some parts that we can't.

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>> Cronk: Understood. Thank you for that.

>> Mayor Adler: Kathie.

>> Tovo: Thank you. Thanks all of you and thanks, councilmember Casar for really nailing what the experience so many of us had. I think at one point you said you were asking yourself whether you were part of the eoc and I think we all sort of this that experience of feeling at some point I did go through disaster training at one on point during my time on council and it was extremely useful and I went through it with not other elected officials, but others participating in the ctec training and found a lot of value in it. It had not a huge amount relevant to an elected official's position but it was pretty clear within about two hours on Monday that we were all stepping -- at least I'll speak for myself, stepping is way outside of the role that had been prescribed in that disaster training. And I think some of that,

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councilmember alter, you nailed it. We were probably creating more work for the staff and the kind of calling -- and some of it was critical and potentially absolute -- definitely critical and definitely necessary. And getting resources to people who may not have had them otherwise. So thanks councilmember Casar for really articulating like we need to sort out what that decision-making apparatus. I would like to highlight a couple of areas that are very related that we hopefully will have time to spend talking about today. One is the communication structure and the kind of incident command structure and whether -- what I'm hearing from people who were involved in different ways, either in the eoc or in other ways is they too were having the same experience that I know I did, which is I didn't know who to call. I doesn't didn't know who to forward needs to. I didn't know who was our designated point of contact. I know from talking with some much you guys that you

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were having some of the same experience too and it's not efficient for us to be calling department directors or others who are involved, engaged and responding to the emergency to get the information just because we don't know to whom we should call. Councilmember Kelly mentioned previous reports and agencies and we have gotten those. And I have heard from some people that were involved in the response that they were not getting them either. I hope we can spend some time drilling down into the communication and what that was like for others who were involved in the actual response. With regard to training, one of my training questions involved the city staff. And I wondered if one of you could help us understand how many of the city staff have gone through emergency training. I know we've had a fair amount of turnover within our emergency operations and elsewhere, and I have heard -- I haven't

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triangulated this information, but I've heard that some who were in the emergency operations were doing a great job, but they were also going a job that they had never performed before. So could you speak a little bit to, one, is statewide R. Citywide how much of our staff have gone through emergency training and then of the staff who were in the eoc, how many of them were performing roles, have been through previous emergencies and if you could talk about it -- this may be too many questions all at once. If you could talk about it in terms of the org chart that was distributed, I would like to spend a little bit of time on this and know whether these were contractors, whether they're city employees, county employees, and again just some more information while we're on training as it applies to those folks in the eoc and more citywide.

>> Cronk: I'll turn it over to Juan in a second. I know that we'll compile as much as we can. I don't know if we'll have the exact numbers on staff that have been trained so

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far but that will be part of our report. Juan, if you want to expand both on the types of trainings that we provide our staff and then also the organizational chart that was put into the backup for that context. Director Ortiz?

>> Yes. Councilmember tovo, let me start describing the different levels or different types of training. You have training to be able to know how to coordinate in an emergency and that's what we classify more of the training and the national emergency management system and the different levels of emergency courses they need to take as well as 40 hour courses that need to be completed. And that is a certain level of foundational training that not only are oec personnel, but personnel in different city departments that are utilizing disasters and emergencies, need to complete this training.

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This-- like the city manager said, we'll get you those numbers at a lighter time, but you have that basically core foundational training that needs to happen. In addition to that, in addition to that, in eoc we call an eoc emergency orientation training and in addition to that there are several different courses that we specifically offer or coordinate that deal with more of the specific functional approaches when we set up the emergency operations center. The organizational chart that you saw breaks it up into what we saw an operations, planning, finance and logistics situation. So there is very specific training that needs to happen in those courses. In addition to that we also facilitate training to allow folks to become what's called an incident management team member. And there's a long certification process for that. And about a year ago we made

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an application to go to a very unique training course where we took 70 members of a community both between the city and the county, but it also can included the city manager, the mayor and then the county judge to the national training center for the integrated emergency management course. And on which we went through a week long course training on conducting drills and specifically on the subject of responding to a winter weather event. So those are the kinds of trainings that we look for and we try to offer and coordinate. I would say is that individual departments back in the field have even probably a longer list of training the day that their employees go through and complete and not to also forget that this event was very unique and the fact that part of the difficulty that we have was the fact that we have been responding

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to a pandemic for close to a year at that point in time, and then also when you add the winter weather conditions it made it extremely difficult for a lot of the personnel that normally would respond to the eoc to get there. So there might have been other people that had to respond but even if there was a first time that someone is reports to the eoc, we have a process where we work them there and orient them very quickly and we utilize personnel as best as we can because we know that there's always going to be a constant change in personnel. Always new personnel that get promoted, new personnel that move on, retire. So we constantly have a series of experience, intermediate experience and novice people working in any emergency. So we try to make sure that we have a process or procedure where we take

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every help that we can get and point in the right direction and make sure that we are able to then follow it up with more specific guidance in their operations.

>> Thanks, director Ortiz. Thanks for that overview and then I look forward to the kind of follow-up about who among our city staff, if we have those kinds of events as we did this time where you had people coming to the eoc who may not have had that level of specific training, it would be difficult to know, manager, too, as you look forward whether that is going to be integrated at least a one-day training integrated into more of the staff responsibility. Director Ortiz, could you speak to -- we got the organizational chart which I appreciate. It's dated 2-25. So I don't know if you had an opportunity to see my questions that I submitted, but I was wondering if this was the organizational structure that you utilized for the entire storm or whether this really just is

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the organizational chart as it was on 2-25. And if you could give us a sense, there are quite a few positions that aren't noted with a name, and I was wondering if these are some of these individuals contractors? Are they all city staff? Are they all county staff? Is this my understanding there were different people involved in leadership positions within the o'clock, some of whom -- within the eoc, some of whom may have been contractors. I wanted to get your sense of whether that's accurate.

>> Yes, that organizational chart that you received, it's part of what we call incident action plan. So let me take a couple of steps back to explain that process. So we want to make sure that from the eoc our entire community both city and county, because we are in an integrated emergency operations center with the county, so it's a

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city-county emergency operations center. We want to make sure is that everybody is working out of the same sheet of music, so we have a process of where we develop an incident action plan that identifies the goals and the objectives and identifies the different key functions that need to be established and those supporting functions. And that's a living document. So we have what's called an incident operational period so we develop this incident action plan for a specific period to ensure that we guide everybody involved with the disaster and knowing what's going on and make sure that we all are going in the same direction. Sometimes that is challenging because the event changes very quickly so there's a process of how we will update that. What you saw there was a snapshot in time during the entire event of what an

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organizational chart will look like and that will expand and contract depending on the functional needs operation. I will say that at the beginning of the incident, the entire incident action plan was very short, two pages, because we were identified what needed to happen and start establishing the functional approach and as the event progresses it will grow. It can become -- during the pandemic that incident action plan became a 20 page document, right? And as the event begins to slow down or reduce in size, that incident action plan will then get smaller. That organizational chart will get smaller. And that's what we use. And we train on that process what we call the planning it P to ensure that we identify everything that's going to happen and from the eoc we're coordinating with all the different agencies that have a role to play in the

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disaster and it's intended to kind of guide everybody in what direction we're moving.

>> Tovo: I do understand the purpose of the organizational chart and the incident command structure. So with the --

>> And council member -- and I'm sorry, I'm -- I forgot to cover one part. During this disaster, we utilize city and county personnel, temporary employees, contract employees as well as volunteers. We threw everything we could at it to be able to ensure that we were doing the best that we could to respond to the incident. We had a lot of contract employees that were supporting the pandemic that during that period of time those pandemic activities stopped. So we shifted them from the pandemic response and put them to be able to participate and respond to

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the winter storm uri efforts to identify holes. We had a lot of holes we had to cover and we threw everything we could at it. So yes, I would not be surprised that in some of those specific areas we had a temporary employee, a volunteer or a contract employee in addition to city and county leading those efforts and coordinating with the different agencies that were involved in trying to make the best decisions to help our community during this event.

>> Mayor Adler: Before we go to Alison let me go back to Vanessa because I cut you off earlier. We've broadened the topic a little bit. Then we will go to Alison. It.

>> Fuentes: Thank you, mayor. Speaking of Travis county, one of the questions I had was around the coordination amongst the if Austin disaster relief network, red cross, the community partners that were involved

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in our response efforts. So for example, in district 2 we were able to stand up three shelters, one at the [indiscernible] Rec center, one at Mendez middle school and then the third one that was operated by the county or was operated by the Travis county fire chief at the del valle high school. And so what I -- what was interesting to me in understanding at different levels we had an adrn representative at one of the shelters. Another one was run by city staff and the third one was run by Travis county. So can you walk me through what is that coordination like between assigning different partners in those roles and how can we better improve upon the communication? Because I know there were times where the del valle high school was left off of our communications plans and so we had to quickly pivot and say no, this is also part of our joint effort,

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our joint response between Travis county and the city. So I think that is one area I want to flag in general that I've seen with the response and with the winter storm is how we can better position our joint efforts and collaboration between the city and county because we're both doing a lot of good work and we're supporting each other, but often doesn't get presented together. So if you can speak a little bit to that as well.

>> Yes, councilmember Fuentes. Again, we work very closely with Travis county. We operate a joint emergency operations center at the ctec location. We do have areas where we have different priorities, and that's why we have that incident action plan to kind of bring us together. It does not mean that sometimes just because we have been all nice and pretty and incident action plan that sometimes certain

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things get confusing out in the field. But as soon as we find that there's a misalanement we address it very quickly or we try to address it very quickly depending on the circumstances and as soon as we become aware. It is not surprising to me that you will have different response agencies running different shelters because that's a exactly what we need. When we have a disaster, when we have a catastrophe phi like what we experienced during the February storm, we need all hands on deck. We need everybody to help and coordinate. So what we do from the eoc is strive to make sure is that we match them up. As we find out that aid is going to open up a shelter or a community city has been identified as a shelter location, we try and make sure that we identify what resources are necessary?

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Who is going to provide them, who will get them there. And it's really a partnership because every shelter was supported by the community and the community is made up of the city, the county, county volunteer agencies and the public out there itself. So that's probably the best way I can describe it. Are there situations where it emergencies happen? Yes. We have a joint information system and that is run in cooperation with the city and county and multiple agencies. This is a disaster that really tested our ability to stay focused and communicate and that's why it's important that we do this after action report to identify those areas where we can improve. How can we improve? I think we need to conduct more drills and more exercises because we need to figure out how to continue to collaborate. We don't want people to get

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to know each other the day of a disaster. That is the worst time to be engaging business cards. We have to get people to in know each other before it happens.

>> Fuentes: Thank you, director Ortiz. I couldn't agree more and I am really looking forward to the work we're going to do around the community resill lens hubs because it falls in line with identifying not only the physical locations, but also the individuals in the community that will be part of that joint disaster response effort and really making sure that we have a coordinated system and response effort for the next time unfortunately. But yes, so I just want to flag that I think this really dovetails really nicely with that effort around our community resilience hubs as well.

>> Mayor Adler: Alison.

>> Alter: So is we moved on a little bit from the initial conversation, but I did want to close the circle a little bit on that and councilmember tovo raised

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part of what I wanted to raise again, which is that we also have to recognize when we as a council did stuff that made it harder to get stuff done for staff and yes, we have to term what our policy is but there are times when getting council involved may seem slower and affects things and we have to allow for that too. And figure that out. So in my view it is both we need the training and we need to have the discussion on the policies so that we are adopting to the new world of -- adapting to the new world of district representation but we need to have the clarity of, you know, this is who we're supposed to start with with an emergency and this is how we get our information and these are the plans that the city manager is making to address the fact that we need better information flow and it has to be efficient and timely and it may butt up against some quorum rules

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and we may have to deal with that in emergency sessions and we may have to get okays from the county attorney in advance is for that. I want to also push back on this notion that I felt a lot of the same things at the beginning of the storm that I felt at the very beginning of the pandemic and I understand that we were still in that emergency. But as we -- as we transition, you know, I think that there were lots of the things about not knowing what our role was, not having adequate information, not really understanding how we could be most helpful, feeling like we had stuff to contribute, but not know kind of where -- where to channel that -- that sort of the repetitive from the initial stages to the beginning

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of the storm. And I wanted to pick up on wildfire and that may be a good tabletop exercise to be part of what we are talking about. As one thing, we don't know with wildfire if it will be the same, like, the whole state is on fire type of situation. But I think that it would be a good example. And to my question, which is one of the things that the pandemic and the storm had in common was that they were both situations where our normal redundancies, which are an integral part of our emergency planning system failed, because it was a state-wide or a country-wide situation. And so under normal times when we would plan for an emergency that hits the city like a tornado or a hurricane or something like that, we're planning on taking advantage of the other cities and the state government to help us. We didn't have that in either situation. And we were not particularly,

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you know, prepared for the need for water, even after having gone through, you know, the water boil. You know, so we could have had a stockpile of bottled water and learned that lesson from the boil order, but we didn't. And so I'd like to ask, you know, what are we doing to prepare ourselves, you know, in terms of supplies and action plans for when that redundancy is not there? Because, clearly, with climate change we need to plan that way.

>> Thank you, councilmember, and I couldn't agree more that those two events that you were describing and typical natural disasters, you are relying on your jurisdictional partners and other help from the state and federal resources, but with both the outside of the pandemic and then with the storm, there was a lot that was just dependent on our community and how we were going to respond to it.

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And so the resiliency and the need for those redundancies became very apparent in ways that we had not seen in -- as intensely as we did during these two events, but, certainly in the manner that they played out over the last two years. So I don't -- this will be part of our response, especially looking at what our after action report was from the boiled water notice in 2018. And what were the things that we did or did not do in preparation, you know, as a response to that that would prepare us for future events. And, if not, why were those not in place? And so that will be part of our description when we compile that. But I think that the other lesson that I learned and as I was talking to my colleagues across the state was, how do we also educate and inform our entire community so that they can have their own preparedness kits, if you will, within their homes. We have never been through an

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extended winter events like this in Texas, at least for generations. So people just hadn't had that on their radar that they needed to be having an emergency prepared kits in their home for these types of situations. So really doubling down on some of those outreach and engagement activities as well as described in the description and resolution on the resilience side. I'll see if director Ortiz wants to add anything to that.

>> Spencer, I think that you hit the nail on the head. There is a partnership, and we need to figure out how to ensure that we all as a community are as prepared as we possibly can be. We don't know what the next disaster is going to be, and there's things that we can do. But even when we take those protective actions and we are as prepared as we possibly can, we don't know what the impact is going to be state-wide,

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nationwide or even worldwide, right. Doing this event very quickly we were able to secure over a million gallons of water. Unfortunately, unlike 2018, where it came from a water plant in saguine, texas's, this water came from 47 other states across the country and Mexico. So to describe the complexity of the situation, what we had to deal with, and I would say that in my 27-year career in emergency management I never would have thought that we were going to be dealing with such a magnitude of a disaster and to be able to secure water. We need to do a better job, but we node to make sure that we are all realistic of what we can do from a preparedness standpoint. And we don't know when this event will happen again, but now that we know that it can happen, we need to do everything that we can to prepare.

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>> Alter: Thank you that. I appreciate that, and I do want to call attention to our climate emergency declaration and still waiting for the report back on what has been done and what hasn't been done which relates to our preparedness. And as we think about the climate challenges and the emergencies that we're going to be facing, it's likely that we're going to be facing more of these and there are several things in that resolution that point to direction that was provided that would put us in a better set, and so I would really like that update on the status. You know, we are going to need to be prepared. I think that, you know, the other thing that we really need to make sure that we're doing is that wildfire preparedness and the resilience which was an integral part of that resolution. And so I just really encourage you to make sure that we are moving forward with those steps so we can be prepared. Thank you.

>> Thanks, councilmember. And, certainly, we'll be -- I know that staff is updating that resolution and providing some

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additional responses for you and the council, but knowing that the scenarios that we have been under, you know, even when we did have access to water -- or when we had a supply of water, getting access to that was a challenge. So as we saw even withstanding up shelters, I mean, we had a shelter that was stood up and then a pipe burst or the electricity went out. And so we had to move people from one place to another. Those were circumstances that we hadn't seen before, but this is exactly the type of thing that those recent efforts that you are describing will help to mitigate in the future. So thank you for your leadership on that.

>> Mayor Adler: Councilmember Renteria and then the mayor pro tem.

>> Renteria: Thank you, mayor. You know, my biggest concern during the freeze was, you know, that the message that was sent out about the rolling blackout, which never did happen here in Austin.

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And I was just really concerned that the information was -- that bad information was given out. On Monday night they said that it should be back on by Tuesday. And a lot of people took that message and stayed home thinking that the energy was going to come back on, and, you know, decided they could survive one more day. And this apartment complex felt that they could survive another day, and then we had to send emergency vehicles, fire trucks out there to evacuate some of the seniors that lived there. So the information was very -- I mean, the way that it was coming out, it almost felt like Austin energy really didn't know what they were doing, because, you know, that was the kind of

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information that people took to heart. Saying, oh, well, it's going to just be out for a couple hours and come back on the way that they were rolling it and then it never happened. And then the other miscommunication was downtown is that they left every light on, and there were lights flashing in the hotels and everything else and people from across 35 looked across the street and could see all of those lights and they weren't getting anything. So there was a lot of planning that you all need to make to make sure that everyone is involved. And when these things do happen, that we cut down on our power usage just like they told us to do, just leave one lamp on, to see if your energy was going to come back on. And then gradually turn on your appliances, but not all at one time. So, you know, I have a response to a couple of these in my lifetime here in Austin, so I knew where my cutoff valves

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were. And I went to the grocery store and we stocked up the refrigerator. But we didn't have any energy. You know, so that -- you had to get to things that we need to be kept up with so they can be prepared. Especially the important things like where is your cutoff valve, because when your pipe busts you're going to have a lot of damage done if you can't cut your water off. And there's a lot of waste going on that happened because of the pipe busting, and people didn't realize how to cut off their water. So there's a lot of little things that -- that needs to be put out into the public so that people know exactly how to handle the situations, you know. . But the communication was horrible. Thank you, mayor.

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>> Mayor Adler: Mayor pro tem.

>> Harper-madison: Thank you, mayor, I appreciate it. I think that my colleagues have covered most of my questions -- well, preliminary questions. I do look forward to us digging into the more granular details but I will just echo the sentiment around communication. For one, I don't even want to know how many times I called you, that would be an embarrassing transcript to look at, because I called you a lot. And I believe that councilmember Renteria said that it wasn't effective to contact the director of emergency management to ask questions. It feels that it should have been directed elsewhere. To say though that one of the things that I felt I asked people a lot, do you have a cellphone number for -- I don't know how that would look like. To offer people privacy but to have an emergencies only phone system, that would have been helpful in a lot of instances. And chain of command -- I know

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that we covered that briefly, but really just having a clear outline and figuring out who to contact and under what circumstances. Trigger it's -- that's something that I kept saying. Like, I can't believe that nothing got triggered, and so I will bring up mount Carmel, which, by the way, is still not back online. All of those folks that have evacuated are still not home. That to say, I brought up, you know, the fact that Austin -- that Texas gas turning off their gas. The gas for a hundred unit apartment complex, there's nothing they have to report. There's nothing that would have triggered for us to know that by the certain day that the gas has been off already for over a week. You know, I just wonder how we can sort of activate some triggers, not just for those -- like your Austin energies or

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your Texas gas, or, you know, people turning off critical utilities. We really need to know. So speaking of, it came up during the conversation about mount Carmel, there were some assumptions about us having known that their gas was off and not doing anything. One of the reasons I found that that came to pass was that our emergency management folks were out at mount Carmel a week before I found out that their gas was off. And nobody contacted me. And I don't know -- I think that the assumption was that if the city was here, that we knew, but I didn't know, even though the city was there. Nobody reported to me. And I don't know that that is a requirement currently. It certainly -- I don't know if we want to build it in as a requirement, but a really important courtesy to let the councilmember for the district to have certain staff that is responding to know, hey, this is going on in your district.

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I don't know what that looks like, but it's certainly something that would have been helpful in so many instances. Something else that I wrote down... Um, was the procurement process. My office has been contacted here in the last couple days by a person with warming stations and a couple other places. So now that they're going through the procurement process, you know, really reconciling their invoice, they're being told that some of the things they did, including the time is not eligible for repayment. And I find that really problematic and I would like very much to sort of talk through how we make certain -- because there were folks who volunteered and they knew full well they came to volunteer. There were folks who were getting paid, you know, they were on the clock. And then there were a lot of folks who came to us sort of on an emergency contractor basis.

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I want to make certain that we don't -- that on this side of the emergency -- I mean, when we needed them, we said do whatever needs to be done at all cost. And now on this side of the emergency that we neglected to compensate them appropriately. I want to make sure that that is not happening. And then

one of the very last things that I'll say and I don't know how we as a body address this with a private industry, but there were multiple occasions that I was told by organizations that were trying to help folks to get into hotels that they were asked specifically -- like qualifiers. One of the qualifier hotels was asking, are they homeless? And as a result, many of those hotels said they didn't have a place for people to go under an emergency situation. And I think that it was entirely tied to the person experiencing homelessness, which I find problematic also. And certainly have a list of very specific questions and kind of granular concerns, but those

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are some of the ones they jotted down while my colleagues were asking their really good questions. So that's all for now. Thank you, mayor. And thank you for your leadership and your hard work. I know that it was probably the most difficult time of your 28-year career in emergency management, because, yeah, I talked to you on multiple occasions where you were flying in a hundred different directions. And I think at that point you hadn't been home in over a week. So we really appreciate your service and your commitment and your role, in addition to us all just being able to respond proactively. I think that it will also help you and your staff with the work that you all do. So I look forward to that -- to us being able to ease a little bit of that pain and pressure. And I will echo the sentiment about Jason Alexander Spencer. He was extraordinary. And even when he had every right

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to be frustrated with me, he never treated me like he was, so I really do appreciate all of the staff that showed up and stayed overnight in offices and in trucks. I mean, it was just -- even though we have a lot to discuss, it was extraordinary to see the length that people went to just based on their commitment to service. It was extraordinary.

>> Thank you for that and I may echo the last sentiments, I continue to be impressed with the incredible selflessness that our city staff went through during this event. As you know, they had their own families and their own personal lives they sacrificed to try to make sure that they were giving everything they could for our community. And, you know, as you referenced, they spent days, if not weeks, away from their families, sleeping on floors, you know, trying to just do whatever it took to make sure that we were responding to this unprecedented event in the best

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way possible. There were so many unknowns. There were so many variables. There were so many things that were thrown at the city and at our community from different directions and believe you me that we

did everything that we could to respond, knowing that we were not perfect. There were things that we could doing the best with the available resources that we had. But just appreciate you saying those words, mayor pro tem.

>> Mayor Adler: Councilmember kitchen and then councilmember gallow.

>> Kitchen: I want to thank you and hope that our staff understands whenever we're bringing up things that we would like to see perhaps different or perhaps some improvements, it's no reflection on your efforts. We know -- we know that -- we appreciate how much effort everyone put into this.

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>> Mayor Adler: Councilmember Kelly.

>> Kelly: Thank you. It was brought to my attention that Texas emergency management actually has training for elected officials related to emergency management and city manager -- if you could look into g200 and p402, the Texas public officials workshop and the review for executive and senior officials, I think that might be very valuable to bring to council as something to offer us so that we could have a higher level of understanding on how this process works. Thank you.

>> Mayor Adler: Thank you. Councilmember tovo.

>> Tovo: Yeah, thank you. Thanks, mayor pro tem, for making sure that we paused to really thank the staff for their extraordinary efforts. And, manager, I think that, you know, it would be -- I assume that you will probably embed that within the report, but it would be useful to know, you know, what some of those -- for the community to know as well -- what some of those extraordinary

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efforts were and just how challenging it was, and how many people we had sleeping at their units and other things. I know that Austin energy talked a little bit about that in one of their meetings. Mayor, I don't know if it's appropriate to change to a different topic, it's not entirely different, but it's in regard to communication. I wonder if we could focus a little bit on what the communication structure was like. Several of us have mentioned situation reports. I know if the past, for example, those have been distributed regularly to council. You know, in talking with staff and with some folks who were at E.O.C. In different roles they also weren't getting situation reports throughout the event. So I wonder, director Ortiz, if you could speak just a bit to how you organized -- how you organized the communication plan for the event. Was it different from how it was organized in the past? And several of us had said,

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like, we didn't know who to contact. You know, I also was on the phone pretty much all week. I mean Jason Alexander may not have been our designate the point of contact but that's whose phone I was blowing up all week long just because I didn't have any idea of when we had a need for warming shelters, you know, I called the Asad facilities. So what -- how did you communicate I guess -- you know, it's not clear to me whether it was sort of council who didn't have the list of people to contact, or whether -- I heard that was true for some other folks too. So director Ortiz, I wanted to give you an opportunity to talk about how you organized the communication and who those designated points of contact was and if it was done differently in terms of getting the situation reports out to a broad range of people. Why -- was that a factor of just the number of staff that you had

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out and the kind of multiple challenges? Or if you could address those issues. And I understand that it was a very unusual period.

>> Yeah, let me -- see if Jessica has joined the panel here. This was a little bit unusual in the sense that we were doing it in addition to the response to a pandemic. So some of the normal staff that would be -- who pointed to the E.O.C., we still needed to maintain as best as we could social distancing requirements. So a lot of our E.O.C. Was actually spread out throughout the entire community. I would say even throughout the entire region. So that introduces a certain level of challenges when the information is changing very quickly and we're having to work virtually and in this team environment, or using other

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video conferencing capabilities. So those are challenges that -- that came up. We have a lot of information that we send out, like, for example, in the current response to the pandemic, there is a situation report that goes out as well as a more detailed report that goes out on a weekly basis. And it has contact information to us. I think that what I'm hearing is that we need to highlight how -- if you have any questions, how you can get ahold of us and ask those questions, or if there's anything else that you want -- or like to introduce and how we can provide you with that contact information and how and where you can find that information. I have made a note here of how after this call we'll communicate with you and let you know how -- we have a duty officer that is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year,

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and when the E.O.C. Is activated, we can let you know how to contact us. And how you can find that information at your fingertips and the information and communications that we're already providing to the council already. This was challenging. I will say that in the early days of the winter storm, part of the challenge was the impact to the infrastructure that knocked down the connectivity to a lot of our staff and probably even some of you lost power, and, therefore, lost access to internet. We're not in the days that we have copper lines in our home and we may not -- you know, my kids probably don't know what I mean when I say what a copper line is, right? But the point is that we have to figure out a way of making sure that we -- make information

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available and accessible, so you can contact us if you need to. As well as how to -- where you can go and get information. Maybe some of the old systems that we had in place where we had a hotline that could be made available where people could call in and get information. And maybe a specific line that we could make available for information. Jessica, I'm not sure if there's anything else that you want to add to that?

>> Sure. So this was, you know, and you hear us say unique and unprecedented and historic is probably a true word that I really want to lean into. In all of my years, and, granted, I have been with the organization for over 15 years, but I think that there are many people in the organization that never saw this happen in 30 plus years of their time with the community. This was incredibly different than what we have ever

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experienced before. So from a communications perspective, please keep in mind that we have the covid response as was stated. With the covid response occurred, we activated the joint information system so we have been operating under a joint information system, which is a team of people, communication pros from across the organization. So this is not a brand-new team that we hire and bring on board. These are seasoned communications members of the city organization right now. So we utilize the existing resources within the department, pulling them from the departments to have them to assist in the response. They were dedicated to the covid response and then when the storm hit, we leaned on many of those members to help us, but so many members in our entire organization lost power and lost connectivity. And to be honest with you, it was really hard to find out who had power and who didn't. Many members of my own staff, the cpio staff, we had to go to

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our cars and charge our phones so that we could send messaging from -- and send text messages as well as engage through teams as well as work online and send social posts. So the vast majority of our social posts in many ways was sent from cellphones. We had three members on our immediate relations team. All three members did not have power. They were working from their cars, charging in their cars and then sending the text messages or engaging through that process. So I know that many of you also experienced connectivity issues right now without a storm situation. How many times have we had problems with just internet access and being able to participate in meetings as a result? And connectivity became a huge issue just in terms of getting knocked off of calls and knocked off internet access across the board. So the first step for us was to assess who was readily available and who could assist at a 24-hour seven-day-a-week

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capacity because we had so very limited numbers of staff available. Many of us worked in excess of 100 to 120 hours within one week's time because wiper non-stop trying to get information out. And the information was also ever changing. So as much as we tried to access information, within a couple of minutes it would change because we would find new information -- the shelters as manager cronk expressed, we had one situation where a shelter was stood up and then we were starting to move people and then a pipe would burst or the power would go out. And then we would have to move them again in very harsh unsafe conditions. Hundreds of people in buses that were very limited with limited staffing for those buses. So that information, one of the challenges that I think that we could do better in terms of communicating with the public is that reiterating over and over that the information could change. You need to stay connected.

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Here are different ways to stay connected. And here's how we can communicate with you. So from that, we stood up a secondary pulling from staff of all departments to help us to share and to communicate to the public as best we could and we used our own resources. I was posting on my own neighborhood thread as often as I possibly could and I was sharing information and just texting and being my own personal ambassador to my residents and letting them know what was going on. And that is something that I think that the more and more that we can do as a community to connect ourselves to each other and remember that especially in catastrophic situations like we went through, that we have to help each other. It is so important to check on your neighbors, to check on each other, to get water for each other, and to support each other through these times, because the reality is that we've got to get critical infrastructure up and running, and to the degree that

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we can manage on our own. And then we need to do the best we can. So the more that we started communicating about using snow to get water, and use different resources, generators help, and people started helping themselves and each other. Things started to improve or people felt more empowered to address their concerns. So in many ways, we have to start being our own first responders in these difficult times, and one of the key things that we absolutely need to invest in and to listen to -- because I know that our team has tried many times and now we have people's attention, but central Texas, gaining access to information -- reacting when we ask people to react. There is a large storm coming. We gave a week's notice. Multiple communications went out Monday in advance. And not just from the city, but also from Austin energy and from

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public works, from transportation. Every department expanded their reach to really try and to get the community to take those steps that in many places many people did, and some didn't. So those who weren't able to, we have to help each other, and we also need to equip people to do that. So as we can start to look into those resources, I'm looking forward to the after action report that will really allow us to delve in deep and to build out communications that will support these needs.

>> And, Jessica, if I can add -- and you hit on something that is very key -- it is a partnership. The communications that we provide is not just from the city or the county, but we also have this partnership with the weather service and all of the local broadcasters from both TV and radio as well as social media. We all play a part in making sure that we share as much information as we possibly can.

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So as we would find information that was out there that was not correct, that our joint information system team would reach out and to address it and correct it. And because we needed them to send the correct information out to the recipients. And their recipients are members of our community. It doesn't matter if they're hearing it directly from us or hearing from somebody else, what matters is that the information that is getting out is correct.

>> And one additional thing, Jason Alexander and I were locked at the hip in many ways. He was officially assigned to be your council's point of contact once we were able to establish some consistency in who was available. I'm going to share and he will probably not share this, but Jason did not have power either. He lost water as well. And he was able to carefully to traverse his way closer to my

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neighborhood to access the resources that he needed in order to do the work. But we would not have made it through in terms of being able to communicate with you were it not for the fact that we had -- we were fortunate -- we were very blessed to be able to have the resources that we needed in order to do our jobs, but a lot of the organization didn't. A lot of our communications staff didn't. And they did the absolute best they could with the information they had to get it out as quickly as they could in a very changing and dynamic situation. And so I just want to say as the interim director of communications, I applaud all of our communications team because

-- and I try not to cry -- but, they worked their tails off. And if it weren't for them -- oh, my gosh -- I just really appreciate everything that they did. So if you're listening out there, thank you, guys.

>> Thank you, Jessica.

[2:32:53 PM]

>> Tovo: Thank you for that really detailed response. I really appreciate it and I thank your team from us.

>> Mayor Adler: Colleagues, other things on the emergency operation command while we have Mr. Ortiz with us? Alison?

>> Alter: I'm curious what we are learning from other cities at this point? And how we're going about learning those lessons?

>> That's a good question. Actually from the -- because of the pandemic, I had a meeting every two weeks with the Texas big six large cities in an effort to ensure that we're coordinating with each other. And during this winter storm we shared a lot of information because everybody was being

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impacted, and what we're seeing is that this winter storm we would categorize as a low permeability and high impact winter scenario. And even though we may be in Texas in the southern part of the country and we don't deal with this very often, but when we do it has tremendous impact. And everybody is in the same situation. We need to realize that our normal avenues for resources, what we're all finding out is that we want to help each other out but our priorities is to our communities. We're not able to help anybody until we take care of those needs. So you're going to have what you have. And, therefore, we need to make sure that we're as prepared as we possibly can be and really be looking for solutions outside of the box. So when we have a plan, but don't be surprised that the events can force to you come up with solutions outside of the

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box and try to share as best as we possibly can what those lessons were. And the lessons of the boiled water crisis, I received a phone call from San Antonio asking us for what did we learn in the 2018 experience. And we shared that. And why did they want to know that? Because they're about to issue a boiled water crisis and to be in the same situation that we were finding ourselves in just minutes away. And just having that -- I think that what we're learning across the state is not only do we need to have a communication line within our community, we need to be having the communications line with all of our cities and counties around the state of Texas to ensure that we can work off of each other's experiences. I know that the city manager was having the same experience talking to his peers in other cities. And my counterpart in the county was having the same talking to other counties and trying to see what information and what impacts we were experiencing and

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trying to figure out what -- how we can help each other, or more importantly, to learn from those experiences. That's really probably the biggest lesson that we're hearing across -- across state.

>> Alter: City manager, when you do the after-action report I hope that you will include some comparisons with some other cities and some lessons that maybe they're finding in their reports that we may want to pay attention to, particularly interested in understanding better whether they were or were not able to roll the blackouts and which ones were, and which ones weren't. I still do not have straight what the facts are about what other cities were or were not able to do. And I think that it's important for us to have that sort of comparison. I think that it's been very helpful to have the comparisons with respect to covid and our

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death rates and our infection rates, etc. And, obviously, we're doing really well on that, but I think that it's helpful to understand how we fared and figure out if there's some measures to help us to understand where there were some things that we maybe could have handled better than others. I would venture that our private sector community folks really did step up. And I'm sure they stepped up all over the state, but I imagine that we would find that, you know, in Austin they really did double duty and that we can be really proud of that. But there may be other areas like not having been able to roll the blackouts that we didn't do so well. Which would point to the areas of concern.

>> Agreed, councilmember, and I'll do that. Certainly, as I'm getting feedback in real time from other jurisdictions across the state, but then one of those as you described the unique situations that each city was going

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through, but how can we both compare and then contrast to those experiences of the host cities. So thank you for that.

>> Alter: Thank you. And, mayor, I have another question if I may, or if it's time to switch to someone else, it's fine.

>> Mayor Adler: Go ahead.

>> Alter: Thank you. Looking through the emergency report, if I'm remembering correctly, it's been a while since we did it, it does cite extreme cold, a winter event as an emergency to prepare for. However, I was struck by the fact that in our climate resilient infrastructure report and some of our other reports, that cold weather is not even mentioned as like something that we're preparing for. And I think that there's a whole set of issues that could go with cold weather not being something that our infrastructure is preparing for in our climate resilience report, and I'm looking into some of those things, but I want to better

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understand, Mr. Ortiz, you know, you have, say, cold weather as an event to worry about in your emergency plan, but then how does that get sort of propagated for the other departments to plan? Because you seem to identify it as an issue, but it wasn't in these other plans. You know, they list wildfire and drought and flooding and I think that there's a fourth one. I don't remember what the fourth one was. But they are listed as the key areas that they don't even touch cold weather, yet you have that. And so it seems like we kept finding that we weren't really prepared for this. So I'd like to know how you are propagating that or is it simply like you're preparing cold weather shelters?

>> I believe that you're talking about the city climate resiliency action plan?

>> Alter: Yes, but there are other plans like we discovered

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the Austin water emergency plan didn't have cold water --

>> And, actually, yes. In our emergency operations plan, and then also in the city's hazard mitigation action plan, when we do our hazard analysis we do it and then apply winter weather as something that we plan for. And the document that they're citing, it is not located -- that's a document -- and correct me if I'm wrong, or if I say something incorrectly -- it looked at the statistical data to determine what the

-- so it identifies the likelihood of that having an impact from a climate resiliency standpoint. I would say that we have been in conversations with the office of

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sustainability to look at how we can modify that plan and talk about what I just described moments ago of this low permeability, high impact. Even though the data doesn't necessarily show that this is something that happens very frequently, what we are realizing -- and this is important to note in this plan -- is the fact that it may happen very rarely, but when it does happen it's not just an impact to the city, really a state-wide impact. Therefore, we need to make sure that we're planning accordingly. And Lucia, if you are available, I don't know if you could talk a little bit more about that.

>> [Speaking at once]

>> She's on the attendee list but not moved over yet.

>> But I will say that is something that we have

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identified and we're working through to look at how that can be incorporated. And, again, it's really that action plan that is really needs to be -- in my opinion -- I don't want to speak for the office of sustainability, it's a really living document, right. So these are the areas that their data has identified. Based on our experience I think that we need to incorporate it, the impacts of the winter weather. And then also to make sure that we're open to look at what other impacts that we may suffer from a climate resiliency standpoint.

>> I would just like to add on if I may, the chief sustainability officer. The climate models that we have run in the past, we specifically in the past have contracted with Dr. Katherine hayho, a climate change expert who has also been involved with the national climate assessment.

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And she used the same methodology to develop climate models for Austin for us some years ago. At the time that we ran those models, extreme heat, flooding, drought and wildfires were the four climate extreme weather risks that were identified as a part of her research and analysis and models that she ran. Extreme cold and winter events like the winter storm uri never came up as a part of that model. So we are now considering updating the model and working with Dr. Hayho again to do an update to look

more closely at the potential for extreme cold weather events as a part of our climate change projections.

>> Kitchen: Are.

>> Thank you, I appreciate you bringing up the data issue and the models don't predict it, but it happened and now we are building our infrastructure and making our plans based on

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assumptions that don't include the cold weather. And we know that this can happen, we just had the experience, and so we do need to pivot and adjust and make sure that we're planning for that. And I understand that Dr. Hayho is an expert in this and the models, but it does make me concerned to know that our climate models are that far off of what reality is, recognizing that it's a low probability/high impact event. So I just think that in the after-action report we really need to plan for how we're adjusting that. That's not to take away from the fact that we have these other events, like wildfire -- and I really want people to understand that this is a high probability/high impact event. So we really, really need to be prepared. So I don't want our cold weather preparedness to take away from the fact that we need to prepare for these high-impact events. But we do also need to be factoring in that cold piece.

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But, Mr. Ortiz, part of what I was trying to understand is -- I mean, is it simply that the model deferred? But how is it that one plan says that we have to worry about cold weather and the others -- and one is based on models and the other wasn't? And then there's subsequent things that happen, you know, you have the climate resiliency and you have those models that Austin water submitted their plan to the government for their emergency. It doesn't include cold weather. And I don't know where else this happens, and yet yours has cold weather. So can you help me --

>> Yes, and so, you know, the emergency operations plan takes an all-hazards approach, right? And there's specific standards that the state requires us to prepare for. And winter weather is one of them. And in the process of doing our hazard analysis, we do identify winter weather as a potential.

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We do classify it as a low probability/high impact. And that's why we do have plans that deal with that. And in our past experience, winter weather is something that we have dealt with, and not at this magnitude. Because of the planning for winter weather, we have come up with other more specific plans like the cold weather shelter plan that provides overnight shelter during -- when we had

experienced certain weather conditions that are met to ensure that everybody has a warm place to sleep. And prior to this day, for this year, we had already arkt activated, in seven other instances. So winter weather -- yes, it is something that we plan for, it is something that we prepare. The difference in this event is that this was an extreme cold weather scenario, that according to the national weather service,

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6 degrees was -- that we experienced on one of those days, ties for third place as the coldest recorded time in our area. We would have to go back to 1949 where we experienced negative 5 degree temperatures. So, yes, it can happen. It doesn't happen very frequently, but -- but cold temperature is something that we plan for. The difference here, again, is just the extremeness of the cold weather and those cascaded impacts is something that we are realizing that we need to make sure that we're more resilient to combat.

>> Mayor Adler: Thank you. Before we move off of the emergency operation center, I would like to make three observations they think that other people have already touched on, but I just want to emphasize them too. And part of it comes from the kind of the unique positioning that the county judge and I have because of statutory obligations

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and procedures with respect to the role of this office and the statutory scheme for emergency situations. I think that the first of getting the council a lot more involved in emergency training and those programs makes a lot of sense, but I also am not aware of training that's going to actually work with the expanded role that I think that council needs to have in these kinds of things. I think that part of it is going to be working with the council to create that. But a year ago in February of 2020, the manager remarked on a moment ago, there was the FEMA training for the emergency operation command. And there were 75 people that went down from Austin, the people who man the desks in the emergency operation command for

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an exercise for a week. I think that two things about that that I think are historically notable. The first one is that the challenge that the federal government and FEMA decided to give our E.O.C. Was a cold winter storm event. So this was the event that the E.O.C. Trained on. And the way that those events work is that they set up a kind of a fact pattern and everyone gets thrown in and then they try to make it more and more extreme. And then people have to then react to the extreme condition. And then they

make it even more and more extreme. And then they just really press the limits of reality, and they even make it more extreme for that team to work with. And with every one of those things they didn't match the

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extreme nature of the winter event that hit Austin. This is them trying to press the limits. Two real things that really stand out that were not planned for in that extreme scenario was, one, doing it in the middle of a worldwide pandemic, which changed lots of stuff. And the second one is a catastrophic loss of power that didn't become an element of that. Both of which probably in retrospect should have. But I just thought that it was interesting. And the second thing is that while that group of 75, 85 people -- I don't remember the exact number -- were in Virginia planning for that, and in the middle of the exercise that was being ramped up on the winter disaster, we were just beginning to hear about the pandemic. So the E.O.C. Actually stood up

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its first meetings on the pandemic while they were in Virginia on a planning exercise for the winter event. I just think that's interesting and goes to the point of how these things kind of layer on each other. And the second thing that I would say and it goes back to the point that a lot of people have made is that we have to figure out how it is that we deal with issue and culture of people helping one another, because every time a community group or a neighborhood or an individual stepped forward to get something done -- I say every time -- in the hundreds and maybe thousands of instances that I saw, it was incredibly well -- it was really important interventions that were being done that saved people. Some instances saved lives. But saved people along so many levels. But there was a feeling while that was happening is that every time that happened that there

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was a failure of the system. Why is it that somebody needed to step forward to do that. And I don't think that's the right way to look at that, and several people have touched on that. In this kind of disaster, the community has to step forward in order to be able to survive. Now when the community does that, it's not evidence of a failure of a system necessarily, although there are thousands of things that we need to learn from and to do better. It does not necessarily mean a failure of the system, just that some challenges are so great that you can't build a system around that. Except for building in some kind of open-ended way to recognize that in this level of activity that there's going to be a need for thousands of people to step in. So we need a system to be able to organize that and to communicate with that, celebrate

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that, but recognize going into the event that if we reach to that level that is part of what a successful system looks like. Though we haven't planned for that, we haven't designed around that, and I think that we need to. And then the last thing that I would conclude with this, just another person to get in line to remark on what it was that the staff did. And it's not just city staff, although they were incredible, it's county, but it's beyond that. It's so many of the regional people that are at the desks of the E.O.C. That are not present. It's the private partners that are present. It's the depths that the grocery store took, and it's everybody coming in and it's the red cross and so many people that are getting conflicting issues from not only what they're seeing on the ground, but what they're hearing nationally in terms of what they can do or not do as

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people are sorting through that. And I'll tell you that those folks worked for days. There were a lot of people who volunteered and sent food to that -- to the E.O.C. And for people all around the city, which is an incredibly nice thing. But it gets really old after four or five days, the kind of food that can be delivered. But just everybody in an environment where so many people are scared, in an environment where there are so many people that are not getting what it is that they need. People who are just literally dying on the inside because they're not able to actually to get the -- to meet the needs that they see. And they are trying their best to try to make that happen is the environment that was operated in. It's hard. And I just want to add my thank you to everybody, in the private

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and otherwise, and the volunteers and people that were out to help this community to get through this. I think that it's past the 2:45 point and I will return us to transportation at this point if people are ready to move on. Council Fuentes did you have something? Councilmember tovo?

>> Tovo: This is a bridging thing and not directly to E.O.C. Manager, I wanted to ask you, so I had compiled a lot of information that we were not able to address. Some are very straightforward about who received the situational reports, general levels of trying things that are just very routine. I wonder what might be our way moving forward? And maybe I'll just throw the question out there and we can come back to it in the end in the wrap-up that is scheduled. But, mayor, when you and I were talking with Jason Alexander, talked about these being good opportunities to raise issues

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and to address in the after-action report. So that's one of the things that we're doing. But I wonder if we could also create a process that I think that you all suggested where the councilmembers can submit questions after these sessions too, to become part of that. And I think that the best way to do that is the system that we already have of doing it through the q&a process. So what I would like to suggest is to set up a q&a process for this, understanding that at the moment you are deep in the midst of finalizing or continuing to work on the after-action report and some of those questions aren't going to be answered for a bit. And some of them might be answered in those reports. But I do think that -- I think that having a very clear and transparent portal would be of help where we could submit our questions, see what others have submitted, and get those answers either in that setting or in the after-action report. So that's my request. And the other request that I have and maybe we can cycle back to it at the end. There's a very good after-action

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report done after hurricane Harvey that I had been glancing over this morning, but I would like to ask that to be added as back-up material for our next session since it deals with recommendations. It's a large body of recommendations, and, manager, as you are preparing the after-action report, I am also interested in knowing how many of those recommendations have been implemented in the years since 2018? So I'll add that to my questions when I submit my questions, but just wanted to make that request and back-up. And, mayor, thank you for adding those. And I'll add thank you to council staff. I know that most of my staff also had lost power or water or both, and, you know, continued to work through that week. I know that many of my colleagues' staff and some of my council colleagues were in that same situation. So, clearly, some of these things probably won't repeat

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again, but they certainly were extraordinary. And I echo the -- I'm very interested in the conversation that we have about how well we can equip ourselves and each other to face some of the other ways that we have done that in the past or that other cities are doing. So some of those questions are things that we haven't had an opportunity to touch on, and that's one of the reasons that I'm especially eager to have a portal where we can have some of those answers.

>> Mayor Adler: Greg?

>> Casar: I really appreciate you bringing up the issue of volunteerism in all of this and I want to connect it back to the conversation that we had earlier about people being unsure what the government should be doing and what things it's right for them to be stepping into. So I hope that between here and the next disaster that we're able to tell folks and maybe even use this example to say

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these are the things that we knew that we could do. These are the things that we wish we could have stepped up and done as a local government. And here are the things that everyday people did that we needed them to do, and we'll need to you come back and to do again. Here are places that you can seen up to do that. And we'll have an organized way to really celebrate and uplift that, again, because there were a lot of instances that folks said should I organize this water distribution and food distribution or is that something that the city is supposed to do. And what we want for the next disaster to not have that question as much and to step into and celebrate and get done what it is that they are supposed to do, while knowing what it is that we are doing. So I don't mean to really just repeat what you said, mayor. I think that it is both for emphasis, but also I think that the communication thing for folks to know what their role is. And where it is that they can go. I mean, I really, really appreciate all of the hard work of all of the staff, but there

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were, of course, many times where people didn't know where to drop off things that I could drop off or where to volunteer where they could volunteer. And the incredible work being done by some of the existing volunteer networks. They can only manage so many people. And so, again, I think that these issues are linked, what you just raised and what we talked about at the beginning of the meeting. And before I close out, of course, my extreme gratitude and thanks as always to everybody that worked so hard during all of this.

>> Mayor Adler: All right. Juan, thank you, and next time you communicate to the E. Omple C., express -- E.O.C., express our collective appreciation to that wide ranging group. And the mayor who co-led the E.O.C. With you, the county employees. Make sure that he receives that special thanks for joining you

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in leading that effort.

>> I sure will. Thank you, mayor, and thank you, councilmembers, for your support. And it's been said that there's always an opportunity to learn, and to improve, and that's what we are here to do and to make sure that we're ready for whatever comes in the future. Thank you.

>> Mayor Adler: Okay. So let's spend the next half an hour or so talking about Austin transportation. Manager, if we could move to that topic.

>> Staff are being moved over. Certainly, we can do a broad overview, but I think that the point of this as you referenced, mayor, and councilmember tovo, we're prepared to answer questions.

>> Mayor Adler: To answer questions (indiscernible).

[3:02:27 PM]

Kathie, want you like to go first?

>> One thing that I am interested in and my constituents and you are all interested in is just the general - the general procedures with regard to streets. So director spillar, what were your preparations like before the storm in terms of identifying streets? Did you pretreat some once the storm hit? Well, I am told that I ask too many questions at once, which is always try. So I'll stop there. But I'm interested in the whole subject of that, and how did you decide which ones to treat, could you treat more streets?

>> That needs to be pitched to our public works director. Who can better speak to the pavements. When we get to the recovery, I can certainly add information on

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which streets we helped to address first. I think that Richard is on.

>> Good afternoon. Good afternoon, councilmembers, the director of public works. Thank you for your question, councilmember tovo. Yes, pre-event we had been watching the weather forecast with all of the emergency response departments and our preparations actually began at least two or three days prior to the forecasted first drop of freezing precip. And so those preparations are primarily around implementing our snow and ice response plan. Public works maintains a snow and ice weather response plan, and updates it periodically. And one of the first things that we do is that we initiate our department incident command

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structure. So we assign and an incident commander and then the department heads over operations, logistics, finance, all of those training components as outlined in the national incident management system to ensure that we have roles and responsibilities to fully implement our response plan. So in the days ahead we start preparing our resources that we anticipate that we'll need to provide that response in terms of personnel, equipment, and material. For personnel, we place our crews on notice that they will begin -- for that event I believe it was on that Saturday morning -- requiring to report to rotating 12-hour shifts to provide 24-hour coverage. We also do an inventory working with our department of all of our necessary vehicles that will be required for that response.

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And for the city of Austin that's primarily these 16 dump trucks and sand spreaders. Unlike many cities up north, we do not proactively pre-treat our roadways and bridges with a salt or brine solution to prevent the formation of ice or freezing precip. What we do is that we apply an aggregate material called dulomite once we observe the first formations of ice particles. And these are typically on our elevated structures like bridges. What that material does is that it works with the vehicle traffic to break up the ice and increase traction. So we ensured that those equipments were fully serviced, had plenty of fuel. And then, of course, our material stores we operate out of three primary service

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locations throughout the city, north, central and south. And we checked our inventory. Actually, those inventories are checked in advance of the winter season. So we ensure that we have adequate stores before the first forecasted freezing day occurs. Make sure that material is ready, so that when we do anticipate after watching the forecast closely that those first freezing particles, be it snow or ice, we also have crews that go out -- out on site. They are assigned vehicles. They go to those locations that we know from experience that tend to freeze over first, and at the first signs of that precip, then we mobilize those crews. So our preparations begin days in advance of when we anticipate the first winter weather

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precipitation. The challenge here is that for this specific weather incident, you know, this is a reaction -- reactionary mobilization. We monitor the bridges, and we are also responding to calls through the E.O.C. To provide this material to ensure safe access around critical facilities like our fire, E.M.S., hospitals. Ultimately even to our water treatment plants we responded to a number of calls for that as well as our own Austin airport. And so our crews were placed on 24-hour shifts. A total of 140 alone. And not only involved in treating slick roadways and bridges and critical

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infrastructure, but also supporting the other relief efforts, providing treatment ahead of transport for individuals to warming centers, providing the delivery of water once we started experiencing the wider outages. And then all of the other requests that came to public works through the emergency operations center. That's just a broad overview of our operations. I will add working closely with rob and his team, once we realized that the duration of this event was going to be prolonged way beyond what

we have ever normally experienced recently, that we had to turn a lot of our attention to our critical roadways. And we were supplied a list of high-priority arterial routes to ensure that our emergency

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services could reach our population. And those totaled about 200 miles of roadways. We concentrated efforts midstream on placing treatment as well as clearing those roadways which we were successful in doing.

>> Richard, this is Rob Spillar, and I can add additional detail because I know that is one of the questions, how we identify roadways. Richard mentioned they responded to specific requests, fire stations were in the report, and hospital facilities and so forth, but our critical roadway network is our network that we use to go to the arterials identified by those that have the highest transit ridership and the vehicle usage. And so as you can imagine it is the larger roadways, you know, Lamar and the 15th streets and the Weatherford drives, and

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slaughter and cannon. I can provide you that exact list. But it really spans the entire city, including M.L.K. And Pleasant Valley and Springfield. It is really based on the volumes of both transit routes and transit ridership as well as cars, because we know that is a good indicator of where people are collecting and wanting to travel. So we use those as -- as our -- if you will, makeshift identified routes for plowing, especially during the recovery. We don't have a list of streets that are prioritized specifically for snow removal, because it is such a rare event, but, obviously, we use something that was similar that we thought that made sense. In regards to the signals, we have almost 600 signals in the city, and as many, we lost power to those signals for multiple days. In terms of preparation we had

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been installing battery backups for our signals, so we have about half of our signals equipped with battery backups. But those only last six to eight hours so they're really designed to be for the high impact events. After that initial six to eight hours we clearly ran out of power and those signals either went dark or to flash for some period of time. I will say though that with the other technologies that we have been implementing, more than half of those signals came back up automatically and back in operation. And we were able to get the rest of that half very quickly based on Richard's plowing of those critical arterials back up and running. Because those bigger arterials were a concern, obviously, because of more cars going higher speed is a higher exposure for crash rates and so forth. Our camera system -- you may also than we operate a large

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number of cameras, so we were able to use those and our preference was that people not be on the road quite honestly, because of the infrequency of our Texas drivers -- no matter how many times they get a chance to go skiing, they're just not good snow drivers, it's just a fact. And we were really encouraging people to stay off the road. As we got into the recovery I was actually making a Twitter videos from the road to encourage people to drive safe if they had to get out on the road, but otherwise to stay at home preferably. We did see some bicyclers trying to cycle and we encouraged cyclists and pedestrians. I actually took a pretty hard fall during the event, so you didn't even have to be in a car and you could be walking across the pavement and lose it. So we encouraged everyone to try to stay home as long as possible.

>> Mayor Adler: Thank you. Excuse me.

[3:13:45 PM]

Colleagues? Yes, mayor pro tem and then councilmember Fuentes.

>> Harper-madison: Thank you. So y'all will have to let me know whether or not this is not the appropriate type of transportation, but my question is around our fleet.

>> Mayor Adler: Go ahead.

>> Harper-madison: That's the question, more or less -- how do we justify preparing our fleet given that, you know, that the limited frequency with which we will handle this? Like, how does that work? We just have it in case we have the equipment in case we need it? I guess that I'm just trying to figure out what that looks like and then how do we account for the expense of needing to, you know, to make certain that our fleet is prepared for -- you know, I watched -- and you probably did too -- I watched fire trucks and E.M.S. Really struggle out there. And so just trying to make sure

[3:14:45 PM]

that we don't find ourselves in a position again to where, you know, our hard-working first responders don't have what they need in our fleet.

>> Councilmember, I can -- we utilized for the response -- was that not dedicated snow equipment. It was dump trucks and frontend loaders and bobcats and graders are typically used for roadwork. Not ideal equipment like a snowplow, but since we don't utilize them on a very frequent basis, you know, that fleet is not just used during the winter for storms and we use it year round for all of our street

[3:21:34 PM]

>> My question is around how we communicated about the road conditions. Did we get updates and if so what did the updates look like? If we didn't, is that one of your recommendations or will this come up in the after-action report? In my neighborhood we had neighbors posting photos of the road conditions and let us know how it was looking like. I think it would be good for us to have some form of coordinated information to get the information out there

>> Through our mobility management center, as well as our presence in the eoc we were putting out information using Twitter and other mechanisms.

[3:22:36 PM]

Knowing some people don't have access to Twitter we used that because the news station pick up that information and rebroadcast that and put it out. Again, with so many people out of power we thought that was the best way to get the information out. You know, I can't speak specifically about, you know, if it was ready or safe. We recommended people not travel until they decided it was safe. Many people couldn't get out of their driveways but the roads were rather safe once you got to the roadway. I will tell you we are in the process of installing weather stations, a management center and we have three that we're moving to deploy that we'll talk about -- will talk about roadway or detect surface friction as well as temperature and precipitation. We've not typically had those because I don't think we've had

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a lot of cold weather activities. We rely on txdot who has weather stations on their system to give us a general understanding. We're looking at private entities to put more weather stations out there. The purpose is to help decision makers make good decisions on when to cancel school or shut down elements to give better information of what parts of the community are freezing and when. I think that will help in the future as well. Not in response to the existing storm but really as a planned improvement Richard, do you have anymore to say?

>> Quickly. Council member, definitely communicating out to the public the status of our infrastructure in terms of their condition and more specifically which bridges and thoroughfares public works had treated or cleared would be

[3:24:38 PM]

an area for improvement. At this point we were only reporting numbers to the eoc, joint information center, in terms of we've treated this many bridges, this many lane miles. I did stand up an internal gis mapping of depicting those roadways that we plan to clear and had cleared. However, right now it's on an internal server. We're looking to that as an improvement going forward. Many cities utilize avl, vehicle location and gps services to depict real-time status of the road-clearing activities, and that's certainly something that we'll be looking into. I'd like to --

>> I'd like to make one point. I think I want to piggyback on what Richard Mendoza was talking

[3:25:41 PM]

about. We are installing avl service across the entire fleet and we have 700 of the 7,000 assets deployed and are moving to another 2200 of them in the next month or so. Expect to have the fleet completed deployed with avl gps that uses Google maps in this kind of predictive road analysis so you can see road clearing and conditions for our own fleet. I just wanted to make sure you were aware of that

>> That's great to hear. I'm thinking that map would be helpful for the community to be able to go online and see where the hot spots are, the hazardous conditions are located, and, you know, if their bridge is safe again to travel. That's the type of information that we want for our community. A comment I would like to make

[3:26:41 PM]

is when we designate our community resilience, if we can make sure we're flagging the roads around that hub as critical infrastructure so we can make sure in times of emergency they are on the priority list to be treated and cleared as well.

>> Thank you, council member. That's a great idea. Again, public works is taking calls from those different emergency points and making sure the hospitals and fire stations were accessible but clearly as we move into a more volatile climate situation, we'll need to add that to the critical list. We repurposed a critical arterial list that we use for every-day operations for the plowing, recovery so -- but that's a very good point. Thanks.

>> I think my question will lead back to council member

[3:27:43 PM]

Fuentes' point in a minute but I think it would be useful to hear reflections from you all at fleet and public works on the transition from telling folks really to stay at home and to stay off the roads to what it was that within the city we started thinking that the appropriate communication was to tell people to go get to a family member or friend's house because the water wasn't likely coming back soon or the power wasn't coming back any time soon and we knew the people were starting to leave their ovens on. Can we reflect on that moment? If I remember right some of the communication on that started to be after dark. I know there was an internal struggle about when and how to say that, but I think that was a question we were constantly getting, was when do we tell folks it is safe to drive and how to communicate to people that they could.

[3:28:47 PM]

>> Let me provide an answer. Again, I think we were in a quandary to say that the roads were safe because they weren't safe. We were telling people, listen, if you don't have to travel, stay where you're at. But if you have to, show extreme caution because, again, it wasn't just the driving surface as they came to these larger intersections -- that's where the risk of a crash is, regardless of the surface conditions. So we were being careful to encourage people not to drive but if they had to to be careful and in fact we did make that communication, I think at one point to say, listen, if you have to make a move, do it before it gets dark because conditions deteriorate once it gets dark. We tried to give the best information without saying the roads for quote, unquote safe. We did say roads were open but drivers should use caution.

[3:29:48 PM]

So just point of clarification

>> Most certainly. That's going to be a very tricky judgment call, and even the cities up north, they don't clear the entire roadway network. They usually resource only to clear arterials and collectors. But then again, my experience with driving here is that many of our folks are inexperienced and even a cleared roadway in an ice storm will have some winter precept on it. And for those not accustomed to driving on that material, it can still be a challenge.

>> I just want to say that even when we got to the end of the -- that was thought to be the ice storm on the 19th of February, there was still dangerous spots all over the place, underneath the bridges and overpasses that

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even if you did give that all-clear and the roads were safe, there were hot spots or spots you could get into where you would find yourself quickly in trouble, so I think that message of caution and don't go out on the roadways was being echoed across the entire community for a very long period of time and needed to continue even after we thought the roads were actually clear and it was warming up

>> And just a point of clarification, I'm reminded by our very qualified emergency management and communications staff that we were providing that message from the beginning to the end. I should have said we re-emphasized that fact. Council member?

>> And council member, you hit on a challenge that was extremely impactful for our community, but really where there were no good answers. I mean, these are situations

[3:31:51 PM]

where every individual had to take that level of a risk assessment, if you will. You know, is it more important to get to another place or what are the conditions that I can be in my own home, if I can stay here even if I don't have heat or water but the nuances of that is difficult to communicate. I know our team did an extraordinary job to try to tell people to stay off the road but if you need to go to a shelter or access a friend's house, do so during these hours if possible. Knowing every situation is different those were some of the messages we tried to convey but I see Jessica King is on the line. I know the joint information system struggled with how to communicate that and at what points in time Jessica

[3:32:51 PM]

>> We had friends and family who were concerned about their ability to get their medication or access their medical devices. All these issues -- the guidance we provided is if you are able to stay at home, stay at home. If you must -- "Must" has been to be borne by that person but if you must travel take these precautions and we provided them -- we provided them with guidance for how to travel, knowing that it was possible they could get stuck on the road or on their way to a safe location. Bring extra blankets, water, emergency kits -- everything they needed to get to their destination safely was a critical part of our messaging because in the end the decision was theirs to make that move. But in many ways one of the things we encouraged people to do as they made that decision

[3:33:51 PM]

rested with help us protect our staff, help us protect the police officers, firefighters, everybody who would have to respond if an emergency occurred and reducing the likelihood of injuries along the way. That was the message we had until the roads became clear and movable

>> This is the -- the point of being able to communicate to people -- this is what we know about roadway conditions could be helpful -- I think for many folks trying to scroll through a Twitter feed -- they don't know if that's relevant now or not. If we don't have some of that information, really telling folks that we -- what we don't know. I do recall that, you know, there was a point where we did start emphasizing what Ms. King

[3:34:51 PM]

laid out about bringing blankets or having food and those things with you. I think there was a period of time between the beginning and that point where the messages seemed mixed and where people didn't know what the rules were. And so I think that -- I think learning from this is when -- is for us to try to really get that out front with folks, whether that be the mayor and managers' press conferences or laying out to people when it is that we decide you should go to a friend's if you think that risk is that great because I think there was a middle point in time where it was really -- we were getting constant communication from people that they were unclear whether we were telling them stay at home no matter what. I think people need some information about a sense of what the relative danger is. I think we have to try to give that information as explicitly as it is, even if it's bad news

[3:35:52 PM]

on all ends

>> Vanessa? And then Alison

>> This is a comment to go off with the council member is saying. I think it's important that we have these live maps available to provide important information to our communities, not only from the conditions of our road but to our water system, to our electric system -- all those are critical pieces of information. But I also think it's important that our approach should always be meeting the people where they are and saying that -- I mean, texting them information. Here's a link to find a map. Here's the latest information. Because, you know, to -- it's a lot to ask a community member to find a Twitter profile or find that website, to find the map. You really have to lean in to text messaging as a vital tool

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to get this information out to the community. We have that across various departments -- we have the reverse 9-1-1 call system that we've been using -- or I think we've been using for vaccines. It needs to be a coordinated tool across multiple departments on how we really lean in to that as a method of communication.

>> Council member, if I could speak to that briefly. There is a system we utilize. It's based off right now the warn central Texas system. But I think -- we say reverse 9-1-1 I think there is an expectation that the reverse 9-1-1 system hits all cell phones and land lines. There is a lot of complexity that I have no business trying to explain but I know it is something we have talked about very frequently, and we are looking to towards a long-term

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solution that will allow us to text message our residents' information and use that more broadly. So that is part of the after-action discussion that we are already -- that we have included, at least from a cpio perspective and from a comm's perspective, that is something we would like to look into as well.

>> Sounds good. Alison, do you want to close out this section?

>> Might be a bridge to public safety. Mr. Spillar, in a prior forum when we talked about the storm after math, I asked you about txdot and 183, I think it was in particular, being kept open. And it happened that our district rep for txdot was on the line and answered and basically said they wanted to keep the road open, to keep it clear. At the same time, I know that we

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had our fire department personnel having to respond again and again to the same spots for accidents over and over again, and there were no mechanisms to try and put off-ramps or to cut off, you know, any mechanisms there that were contributing to those accidents that just kept putting people in danger and putting our firefighters in danger. So I'm curious if you have any additional information to share on that and/or how you plan to have those conversations with txdot so that should we be in that situation again we can take some action that would be, you know, useful to protect both people and our firefighters when we don't control those roads but it can use our resources in ways that may not be productive

>> Sure. You know, during the storm I

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made several personal calls to discuss directly with txdot engineer -- about sharing services if you needed help or if you needed help back and forth. That's pretty standard. It was a frustrating situation because we were seeing the crashes and trying to communicate that need on the state roadway. You're right. I don't have authority on the state interstate system. I know the police have some additional authority and with appropriate notification can close ramps if necessary. So I think that's an area to look

at and I would offer to invite tex bot to be part of our after action thinking because it does need to be multiagency since different agencies operate within our jurisdictions here. I think that's the way to get at it, invite them through the eoc to participate in the

[3:41:01 PM]

after-action report

>> What kind of communication was happening?

>> We were communicating through the eoc. I had staff at the eoc full time and that's the place where that communication to occur there. The specific communication on this -- I don't have that information right now, council member. I can get that for you but I know I had staff active in the eoc throughout the storm. In fact, we shouldered some of the responsibility for the entire transportation units because I had staff that could walk to the eoc and fortunately were able and trained.

>> I would like to ask that they be -- someone else was trying to respond

>> Go ahead

>> I would just really ask that txdot be part of those conversations and the after-action and that you bring in some of those -- the

[3:42:03 PM]

battalion, or whatever the appropriate term is for the firefighters that were dealing with the crashes again and again and learning from the experiences that they had during that time and, you know, the efforts that they needed to take to address the challenges that they were experiencing and seeing. You know, you could keep the road going but close off ramps and that could be a solution, but that wasn't an option

>> Council member, I will certainly reach out to the district engineer working with Mr. Ortiz and the city manager to request txdot participate. I think that's a great idea

>> I know at the fire department we had engines on city park road, which is not a city road. I don't know if it not being a city road had anything to do with it getting those engines

[3:43:05 PM]

unstuck

>> I can't speak to the specifics

>> Right. I think some of these examples -- I don't expect you to give the specifics right now. I'm just addressing I think these need to be looked at because there are cross-jurisdictional issues that are affecting potential responses for our first responders in particular, in this case

>> Understood

>> We'll move on to the next topic before we do, kind of following up on Alison, another historical note, one of the things that were most disrupted for our community about transportation and the inability to use the roads was the fact that while we had grocery stores in our city that sold out on supplies and then -- some of our grocery stores had warehouses that were

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full of product and they couldn't get the product to us. There was a warehouse that everybody was looking at and calling to check on up near Waco. That was the HEB warehouse. And we had txdot ready to escort 18-wheelers to us with food but they couldn't get off the site and they had no tools or equipment that would enable them to have cleared the 18-wheelers so they could just get off the warehouse site. I would add that to the list of things that somebody needs to be prepared to do so that we're not missing that stream. But that also points out in this situation, like we were dealing with, a lot of what we need in terms of supplies are not here

[3:45:08 PM]

locally, which gets us really part and parcel of what's happening around us. Those kinds of things get exacerbated when you're talking about, for example, in the pandemic our ability to get food out of other areas is in part dependent on the activity level and what those other places can be doing in other cities, regardless of what condition we're in. That's the first time we saw that. Second time was with getting the 18-wheelers off site. So I'd ask that to the list of things to talk about to txdot and -- let's move to third area, which is last one we're going to cover today -- public safety Kathie, I'm going to recognize you to lead us off again. Helps orient people

[3:46:10 PM]

>> Thanks very much. Maybe we could start talking about some of the range of incidents and involvement that public safety was talking so. Some of these were raised in the conversation about the fire department and the roads. I think one of the disugshes that some of us -- discussions that some of us on council -- the ways in which medically vulnerable individuals had to be transported and how you

did that but, you know, also some of the challenges that our public safety folks faced as the storm unfolded. So maybe we could start with -- shall we start first with the fire department and then move on and talk to the chief and ems? We could go one by one and you could tell us about some of the

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ways in which your staff were responding to the emergency and some of the challenges you faced

>> Absolutely. Thank you for this opportunity, council members. I want to start off -- it's important that I thank Ms. Walls from fleet and Mendoza from public works and Ortiz from emergency management and some of the state departments that provided the services we needed. In the -- over nine day period we responded to over 5,000 calls -- water main break, gas leaks, et cetera. Some of the challenges -- we worked very well with the eoc -- emergency operations center as well as the department operation center. The challenge with working with the eoc is trying to get our stakeholders to follow the plan, call into the eoc when you need things done versus trying to work on your own to get things

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done. So we had in this ice storm -- the fuel began to gum up. However, fleet overcame that. We had some staffing challenges. Members couldn't get to work. For those who tried to come to work whose cars got stuck, they ended up walking to work and some civilians gave them rides to the fire stations to get to work. Some of the firefighters worked 48 to 96, if not longer, hours. They volunteered to stay on because many firefighters couldn't get to work. When the firefighters came to work -- some came before the storm because they knew they would not be able to get to work. The fire fielter -- the firefighters really came through. We say our name go beyond our mission. For example, when the generator

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went out and some of -- the firefighters went to pick up the vaccines and relocate them to places with generators so the vaccine won't spoil. We became creative when the water main began to freeze. We used a five-inch hose line to bring the water main above the ground. Our apparatus -- became ambulance. We had to transport patients to the hospital because the ambulance couldn't get up the hill. Even when our snow chains would break, I later learned we had firefighters going to the local Home Depot buying chains to make their own snow chains. This really became unusual for us. The challenge we had -- for example, we had chemical facility that

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the water line for that plant broke down so we had to get water from smaller departments to bring in water so we could keep the chemical plant system cooled down so we wouldn't have to evacuate the whole community. The list goes on and on. Hospital water line broke -- had to make sure we got water to the hospital. Battalion commanders put blankets, water to make sure they had those. We had staff -- warming station was needed. Water line breaking. Various industry. I think if I'm not mistaken, some facilities that had water line that broke, we had to remove the water so those business -- it would not have a major impact on the phone.

[3:51:21 PM]

I think it was AT&T. We respond to trees down on the road, trees in houses. Another challenge was responding to fires in the neighborhood with low water pressure, in some cases no water at all. And then have the firefighters come back to that same location after to make sure that those resident homes was boarded up, safe, covered with tarps, plywood to minimize the damages -- like I say, the damages to the residents. It was a challenge for us but we turned as many challenges as we could to opportunities and I think we worked pretty well with our partners. I'm going to pause here and allow the others to add on in case I missed something

>> You did a good job of covering a lot of the things that were done. There were major things -- keeping the boilers running for

[3:52:26 PM]

hospitals, dialysis clinics -- some folks were several days past getting dialysis. Crews did a lot of other things that folks haven't heard about, as far as -- like individual homes when someone was running low on oxygen. They were given oxygen bottles to take care of their need or a regulator because their oxygen was hooked up to something that required power and no longer had power or left the generator behind so the oxygen worked for them when everything else was working in their environment. Transporting folks to someplace where they could be warm, even off duty doing things voluntarily where they could work additional shifts because other of their fellow firefighters were unable to get in due to be stuck at home -- the roads were frozen, they weren't able to get in. The -- the list goes on. Very phenomenal, the work they

[3:53:29 PM]

did to take care of all the Austin community and all the people in it, from -- whether it was minor medical issues to major ones. Lot of situations where there was rbj power tower -- tower where they ran out of power. They were hoping to move them to the bottom floor where there was heat and once the power was returned to the building, to move them back to their individual residents where they could be more comfortable. Setting up shelters for warming that turned into full-time shelters and working through logistics that come with that. That's not the normal sheltering operations we experience with hurricanes. The chief mentioned about tire chains breaking, finding solutions or mcgooifer -- just

[3:54:29 PM]

making something to continue doing the job they wanted to do

>> As far as the response, I think you covered it very well, the various things. If I can cover the before. We started preparations days before it was coming and that was ensuring we had tire chains. That was talking with the eoc and the other public safety partners, making sure we had a plan and we were prepared. We had to bring in a number of fire trucks that reside outside due to station construction and get those covered because we knew the weather was coming. We tried to plan as much as we could for that to take care of the fleet, knowing we were going to put them in full use, even with an up-staffing plan. We put trucks code three capable and put two people on it to

[3:55:30 PM]

handle the numerous -- what we thought the water main breaks or line breaks usually come with a thaw. That's what we normally see in Austin. It freezes and when it thaws we get the water main breaks. We were happy we put the teams together early. We had a plan in place for that. We set up not only a person at the eoc for all the coordination. We had full-time representation there. We also opened up our department operation center, which included myself and our shift commander, 24/7 at the shift commander's office so we could try to handle the needs and work those either through our operations or push them up to the eoc such as the numerous fire stations that went down without power. Because we were affected as well. The water line breaks, fleet was incredible at fixing the

[3:56:30 PM]

numerous apparatus as they were going down. I have to remind y'all. It was so cold that our apparatus, even though they were running constantly, the water was freezing in the pumps and lines, despite the heat from the large engines. That's how cold it was. Fleet was incredible, doing what they could to keep them running. Council member alder mentioned about the fire truck off -- we had a number of fire trucks that slid off the roads. Public works did everything they could to get to it. The roads were not safe

enough to get the large vehicles out there to tow them off the side of the road. They had a plan and knew the moment they could get to it because we worked through the eoc and our partners, there was a plan set in place. I think working through everybody, working through the eoc, our members, and the other

[3:57:30 PM]

agencies did amazing coordination -- trying to cover all the challenges thrown at us

>> Thank you. Again, you know, I want everyone to understand how important it was that fleet, public works, they really came to the fire department aid and rescue in the storm, making sure the fire station generator was working as properly as could. Making sure we had enough sand or salt. My hat's off to Juan Ortiz. I don't believe we understand how blessed we are in Austin to have an emergency operation department within the city. I mean, my hat go off to Juan. He was pulling rabbits out of a half and did a great job. I'll pause for any questions anyone may have for us and we'll do our best to answer.

>> Colleagues?

[3:58:35 PM]

Mayor pro tem?

>> Thank you for that, chief -- chiefs. I do have kind of a question about just recognizing how many calls y'all were making for water mains. I just wonder by way of best practices nationally is the deployment of our fire department the most efficient way to handle a big water leak like that? I mean --

>> It is, ma'am. Think about here in Austin we have almost 55 stations. So they enhance -- and we have the tools and equipment on the fire apparatus to turn the water lines off that are busted. I think what helped even more is we had some type of information for the homeowners to turn their water off. The large water main -- the best plan of action is to send the fire department out.

[3:59:36 PM]

Unfortunately in this case we were overwhelmed with the number of water main break. Of course we can get there quicker than the water department can because we have more apparatus and station located. We can teach the homeowner, give them advanced notice on how to turn the water off, to come to their home. The fire department is really one of the best units to use -- departments to use

>> Thank you. I appreciate that. My other question is about the situation that y'all had with the fuel. I think you described it as the fuel got gummed up. Just curious. What's put into place so that doesn't happen again

>> I'll let the chief speak to that. Let me let him speak who have more expertise in that area than I do

>> If and when we should find

[4:00:36 PM]

ourselves in another situation similar to this to where we have a week to prepare, do we siphon the fuel out of our engines and replace it with something -- I want to know if we can pre-empt it

>> I don't know that we want to do siphoning. But maybe a bigger discussion -- we're using biodiesel, which will gum up at a certain temperature. While we had not seen the temperatures this long doesn't mean we can't have it two or three days and run into the same problem, which was extremely challenging. I think what we need to explore as a city and maybe for the departments that have to respond during the emergency is biodiesel something that we should be using for the warmer months and then maybe for a three-months' period when we see the cold weather -- December,

[4:01:37 PM]

January, February -- maybe -- it's kind of weird to say "Clean diesel" but go to the more traditional diesel and not biodiesel. That way you don't have to plan for is it going to freeze for three days or four days we just know in a three-month period we use a clean diesel. I think those are options that we need to have discussion about that.

>> I think if I could elaborate a little further. I fleet recognized that on this occasion and did plan ahead and did get the regular diesel in place. The part that wasn't recognized was the biodiesel in the current vehicles hadn't processed through and put us in a situation where the tanks were full of regular diesel. So the intent was there. It was just lessons learned along the way on a few other components put in place. And I think what the chief spoke to about maybe looking at an annual plan of rotating the

[4:02:38 PM]

diesel out at a certain point, that way there's not even an issue at all and everything can run smoothly through even cold weather without having to make emergent decisions or adjustments along the way

>> This is Rick Harhand with fleet services. I agree. The lesson learned, we had biodiesel in the tanks and needed to add something to help those vehicles out. I think with the chief -- you guys, there -- that's a

great point. I think we move to a seasonal change from biodiesel to a number two diesel that has a lower clouding or jell point on it. We believe those are good points to make and message received on this end here

>> Thank you.

[4:03:40 PM]

>> Thank you. I appreciate that. The one last question I'll ask -- I'll start with a massive compliment. The chief put out a thing that said, hey, union members, lot of you have four-wheel drive vehicles are adept on driving -- from states for acclimated to this kind of weather and Austin firefighters responded to the call. Not them in uniform -- I mean on their personal time they still for operating from a position of service and answered the call. I just want to know, moving forward -- I guess -- let me figure out how to articulate what I'm trying to say here. My thought around that was, is there a way for us to have a -- a directory of sorts.

[4:04:40 PM]

You know, asset map. An asset map. Like, these are the things we do well. These are the things we may have in case of an emergency. That was a moment of thinking outside of the box, which helped a lot of people. That said, though, I wonder how we can operationalize it or that was a one-time thing, you know, in case of an emergency we happen to have that benefit show up for our community

>> We do. We have eoc who have the assets and who can get the row sources we need from the state and local level. I want to caution us on using off-duty personnel. I don't know that come with workman comp issue, legal issue or how that play. It did not hold the city in harm's way. I'm just caution in using -- for me as fire chief or city official to call anyone to come in off duty, if we're call them

[4:05:43 PM]

they're not off duty. If I call a firefighter to come in -- the issue is can we do it legally and what responsibility the city will have to those members who I call in. That's why it's so important to go through the eoc, so we can document it, make sure we have the right documentation of reimbursement and have the right legal box and workman comp box checked, et cetera, et cetera

>> That's very helpful. Thank you, chief

>> There was somebody. I don't remember --

>> I think it was Greg

>> It was me. But mayor pro tem handled most of it. I did have one other question, which is, you know, we did have a significant number of people get sick from carbon monoxide poisoning and public data showed over a third of them were in the

[4:06:45 PM]

area where you have electric appliances but people bringing in gas grills and other carbon monoxide powered -- other things that make carbon monoxide to stay warm. Since we are going out and installing smoke alarms and detectors in people's apartments and homes, are we installing ones that detect carbon monoxide? Many of us on council in 2017 voted to require those carbon monoxide detectors in homes that have gas appliances, but I think we had a lot of people get really sick from electric appliances but they were in older homes and brought in grills and the like. So we have taken a look at that and what can we do to not just educate people but frankly to get more carbon monoxide

[4:07:46 PM]

detectors

>> That's a great question. If I'm not mistaken we have the combination carbon monoxide with smoke alarm. I need to check before going on record. I believe -- not a hundred per cent sure. As -- I think we can add those notices in the water bill or power bill and let people know -- give them some public service announcement about carbon monoxide poisoning. I think the chief is going to add to that. Did you say something

>> There was a joint effort with code compliance in the Austin fire department and there were a large number of detectors purchased that are not only smoke alarms but also co detectors as well. It's an all in one. Those are what we install. We can do that and put messages out, like chief said, in the notices from the gas department, electric department as well as

[4:08:48 PM]

our own social media to let folks know they're available and we'll be happy to bring them to them

>> The one we've been installing are fire only but we now have a shipment of ones that are fire and co

>> That's correct

>> I think it's an important reminder about even in homes where you wouldn't expect a co detector, there's still risk associated with carbon monoxide. So thank you

>> Yes

>> Colleagues?

>> Can I jump in? It's on the same topic

>> Go ahead, Paige

>> I looked that up. I wonder if we read the same article. Even though the same company makes the one that does fire and carbon monoxide, the ones in my apartment don't have that. So to that point, if you can assist people with installing

[4:09:48 PM]

them, can you help apartment renters with that or would it have to be the landlord that -- you know, a homeowner or landlord of an apartment building that would need to apply for that? Can you tell me how that might work

>> The apartment complex -- it would have to be the apartment owner. The fire department don't go into private own residents -- not apartment own location. That does not mean we can't educate apartment owners on what they should do or make recommendations. I'd be willing to do that

>> Completely agree with that. Since the code is written, we don't have gas appliances -- it's fine to have the fire alarm. It seems like that something that came on everyone's radar. I hope they have the same access to homeowners

[4:10:49 PM]

>> Anybody have questions for the APD

>> I was hoping he could do the same kind of overview, but if my colleagues have specific questions, I know we're running short on time. I guess I would ask the chief if he could do at least a short overview of the kinds of challenges that your officers faced

>> Certainly, council member. Thank you, mayor, council members. Interim chief of police. So I just want to give you -- because in the interest of time -- a high-level overview of some of the things we ran into during that week and we've been working on our after-action reporting since the incident occurred and are working with teams to report that out as part of a larger after action.

[4:11:50 PM]

We were present in the eeoc. We were standing up our own doc that helped -- as we had needs in the department that we could fulfill ourselves or that we pass through the doc to get to the eoc. One of the things chief baker led with which I think is important is having departments that really are familiar with incident command structure and emergency operations center and are all kind of doing things the same way and we don't have things that duplicating effort. That has been an issue in prior emergencies like this and the fire department has always kind of led the way and been the expert ins doing that because of the way they work fire scenes. I think we are getting much, much better and we I felt like did a good job in this incident of following the incident

[4:12:51 PM]

command structure. The type of incidents -- collisions and road closures. We saw a lot of collisions that were occurring and we had to manage a lot of those over the phone having people -- we didn't have the resources for as many as were coming in to be able to send. We were working those that had the most serious injuries and helping people over the phone for those who didn't. My hat's off to other city departments that -- others that prestaged barricades on roads we knew would have hazardous conditions and are prone to icing so when we got the reports our officers were able to block those off. A manpower and resource intensive request auz security as shelters and water distribution sites. This is different than what we normally get in cold-weather events, which is 12-hour

[4:13:52 PM]

request. This was 24 hours around the clock for eight days, and because of the -- how big and widespread this event was, we had to have many, many officers that we brought in as many as we could that were off duty to man those and then later had to bring in others that were on duty to assist with it as well. One of the other important things I feel like we did was providing emergency transportation for those who didn't have it. You know, the normal modes of transportation for, you know, public transportation were curtailed because of the road conditions, and we brought in units such as our swat team, our highway enforcement units such as motors and others in highway enforcement that were specifically tasked with getting with communications to find out

[4:14:54 PM]

those who might be stranded somewhere on the communication side, talking briefly about c-tech there were a number of logistical issues, not the least of which was staffing and making sure we could get people to work. Those that got there, many had to stay because they couldn't leave because of road conditions. The food situation -- we have worked out a good deal with some of our partners at HEB and so forth that significantly helped us during this incident as well as having enough fuel and water --

potable water and water to run facilities on hand for a number of days. We were supposed to have a cistern that lasted several days. It only lasted for two. Staffing in our department was challenging. Many of our officers could not

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get on the roadway because of the road conditions, and then others, as I said -- we set up cots and just - we rented hotel rooms for officers so that they could just be very close to work and were -- many were working around the clock, including our officers at the airport finally, with regard to our -- the vehicles. So it's been mentioned already fuel availability -- because of power outages -- because an issue. Flares and cones became scarce and tire chains were a problem. Some of our makes and models of vehicles performed better on -- performed better on ice than others. We are working to diversify our fleet to help with this in the future I'll stop there and see if there are any questions or something else I can answer.

>> Mayor pro tem?

[4:17:00 PM]

>> Thank you, mayor. I think that brief overview was sufficient

>> Alison? You're muted Alison, you're muted

>> Can you hear me now?

>> Yes

>> Okay. I wanted to just acknowledge some officers and unfortunately didn't get their name who, you know, were doing as officers regularly do -- asking what's needed of them that's appropriate. At the time that the water came back on I was walking in my neighborhood and -- had an alarm go off and they had a water main break and they were trying to turn the water off and some officers were there and it was, you know, some really strong and persistent officer that was able to turn the water off and save

[4:18:01 PM]

the destruction from the temple from the water leak that had just appeared and they were very gracious about it. I'm sure it's just one of many examples of our officers doing odd things during the storm in their daily work. So I just wanted to thank them since I didn't get their names and acknowledge their assistance

>> Thank you, council member. I appreciate you mentioning that. Much like our counterparts at fire and ems we were challenged but I feel we rose to the challenge. Our officers without complaint did the best they could under extremely challenging conditions. Thank you for mentioning that

>> Colleagues? All right. Those are all the topics Kathie?

>> Sorry to ask this question but I'm still confused about -- thank you, by the way, chief, for the overview and all the

[4:19:01 PM]

work your officers did. And thank you to both AFD and APD for highlighting the role of fleet. I think that's not a story that has been told really, and so thanks to those -- sounds like the efforts helped so many departments continue to function we haven't heard from ems yet. If we don't have time to address it, maybe this could be in the Q and a but I'm still confused about what happened with the chains. Were they insufficient? Was it that they -- the conditions were so much more than the chains we had available? Again, if it's not -- if it's too complicated to go into here, maybe we can about it in the after-action report. Those are some of the questions that continue to linger

>> I can answer really quick. For us the chains worked really well. It was the duration of how long we had to keep them on.

[4:20:04 PM]

When we saw ours start to break and had to do repairs. More of the duration of it instead of just a one-night issue

>> Thank you.

>> Chief? I'll let you finish the answer to that question and I want to get to ems

>> I was going to say it was much of the same for us. The duration and just the number of chains that we had, we were unprepared for the length of the event.

>> Okay. Let's hear from ems.

>> This is chief of ems. I'm going to give a brief overview and turn it over to chief brown for a little more detail. First like to recognize the incredible staff at the ems department. They did some super human lifting during this event. The same is true for all of the

[4:21:05 PM]

other employees of the city who pitched in and worked in areas doing things they don't normally do to get us through this. Some of the significant things that happened with EMS is our volume of calls increased four times. We were getting 1600 calls during the winter storm, which is significant for us. That's a huge leap in volume. We had a lot of trouble with personnel getting to work because they couldn't travel in the storm and ice and snow. We had the loss of electricity -- was a big issue for many of the residents of our community because many of them are dependent on medical equipment and they struggle to maintain their health and well being if they don't have use of the equipment that provides oxygen and medical care for them. The loss of heat caused people to defer to other unsafe methods

[4:22:08 PM]

to create heat, like bringing in grills and burning and stuff that increased carbon monoxide exposure. And then there was the loss of food and community couldn't get food because of closure of the stores and all that we talked about. Same was true for the first responders. We had a difficult time finding food for everyone. The most significant thing was the loss of infrastructure we experienced -- loss of natural gas, electricity, water, medications, mobility -- all the things we rely on every day to make our lives go smoothly. I think most people in community and first responders included, we can manage the loss of one or two of those things but we sustained long periods of most of that infrastructure for a long period, which caused a lot of people trying to get help -- having trouble when they needed

[4:23:08 PM]

it. I'm going to turn over to chief brown and let him talk about some of the things we did in the event. Chief brown?

>> Thank you, chief. Chief of staff. Thank you, mayor, mayor pro tem, council. Before the storm we deployed our four by four units we have available. We have several administrative vehicles that are four by four capable. We deployed them so we could respond to emergencies that our ambulances would not be able to respond to. As the storm progressed, we actually as the chief mentioned started seeing a large increase in call volume and it wasn't traditionally as we've seen in previous storms of just slips, falls, traffic accidents and things like that. We were seeing very sick patients as time went on due to the lack of dialysis or methadone clinics being closed.

[4:24:09 PM]

We were pressed into service to provide medications that could bridge some people over from their missing dialysis or even personnel that were suffering withdrawals from other things. We did some

things to help those in most need. Our staff did an amazing, if not spectacular job. We're doing an after action report to see what we did good and what we did bad and what we could improve in the future. We've gotten feedback from internal staff, office of chief medical officer. We'll put together an after-action report and begin to see what we can do in the future to make sure that we are better prepared.

>> Thank you.

[4:25:10 PM]

Colleagues? Alison?

>> This isn't specific for ems.

>> Mayor pro tem?

>> I don't recall raising my hand

>> Okay. To all three of you, please convey the appreciation of the city to the ranks. It just seems like you guys were everywhere during that period of time, and I know everybody got stressed. You guys as much as anybody else, being on the front lines. Please thank them for us. Alison?

>> I also want to add my thanks to all of your units and all the staff in the city who helped us

[4:26:11 PM]

navigate this storm. I don't know -- maybe this is covered somewhere, council member tovo, but I had a question on the finances in FEMA and how that was working because obviously if we have all of these units 24/7, extra overtime and all that, which was absolutely necessary, that is potential big financial hit and I just was -- I would like to better understand how this is approached with respect to FEMA and reimbursements

>> That's a good question. We have Juan with us

>> That's an excellent question. To date, we only have category B, which is emergency protective measures as an eligible item through FEMA. To date we have about 1.8 million dollars in expenses that we're working with FEMA to

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process and that would be reimbursed at 75 per cent. In addition to that there are an additional 7.1 million in other categories of damages that include debris removal, building and equipment, utilities and

parks and recreation facilities that we provided that information to the state and the state is working with FEMA in hopes that those additional categories become eligible to the state of Texas and eligible to the city of Austin as well. We're still working through that recovery process but only to date what we have eligible is 1.8 million like I said and 75 per cent reimbursed

>> Thank you. If you can keep us posted as we learn more about that and if there's anything about that that we can do, talking with our

[4:28:13 PM]

delegation, etc., please let us know

>> Sure will

>> Thank you. Managers, you want to -- have any concluding remarks of any kind? We're down to the last few minutes

>> Thank you, mayor and council. This is a critical conversation for our community of how we take a historic event and doing everything we can to take lessons from it and respond better in the future. We know there were unique circumstances that existed here, but that doesn't mean we can't be more resilient in how we approach more events because we do know we'll see more in our future. I appreciate the discussion and dialogue today. Lot of these comments will be incorporated in the after-action reports. We're setting up a Q and a opportunity much like we do with our council meetings.

[4:29:14 PM]

We're working to set up that process so we can respond with anything that hasn't been discussed today for the future and as you mentioned, setting up a web page where all this can be consolidated in one access point for the public. I'll end on the acknowledgment and appreciation for the staff, the community and leadership of council. Each of you played a significant role in supporting our team and community through this event, and hopefully we won't go through something like this, but we know we will go through something significant in the future and we will get through it together and we will be stronger as a result. Thank you, mayor

>> Mayor Adler: Colleagues, anything else? Mayor pro tem?

>> One last thing I was thinking was something along the lines of a psa to talk about some of the things we discussed

[4:30:15 PM]

that people should know how to do. A real comprehensive -- stop, drop roll, click it or ticket -- things you never forget. I wonder what that will look like on our end -- not bringing in grills. Everybody should know you can't do that under any circumstances. You'll make yourself sick, you could die if you do this. I wonder what that will look like for us as we move forward

>> Mayor Adler: Okay. Anything else? Juan, thank you for being with us this entire meeting manager, thank you. Rest of the staff, thank you

>> Just a last reminder that people can sign up. Again, if we can encourage community members or volunteers to speak at the community task force meetings I think that will

[4:31:16 PM]

be a valuable piece of this on going conversation. So thanks to all of you

>> Mayor Adler: Thank you. Last, colleagues, we're going to go to the Q and a board with other things. You want to make sure the manager includes in the after action that -- with that, at -- this special called meeting is adjourned. We'll gather back -- see you guys then.