

Winter Storm Review Task Force Final Report

(Resolution No. 20210325-067)

Presentation to City Council
August 24, 2021

Winter Storm Review Task Force Members (cover p. 2)

Commission	Representative
African American Resource Advisory Commission	Miriam Conner
Asian American Quality of Life Advisor Commission	Molly Wang
College Student Commission	Jeffrey Clemmons
Commission for Women	Rebecca Austen, Vice Chair
Commission on Seniors	Sally Van Sickle
Commission on Veterans Affairs	Manuel Jimenez
Early Childhood Council	Aletha Huston
Hispanic/Latino Quality of Life Resource Advisory Commission	Ricardo Garay
Human Rights Commission	Sareta Davis, Chair
LGBTQ Quality of Life Advisory Commission	Kathryn Gonzales
Mayor's Committee on People with Disabilities	Jonathan Franks

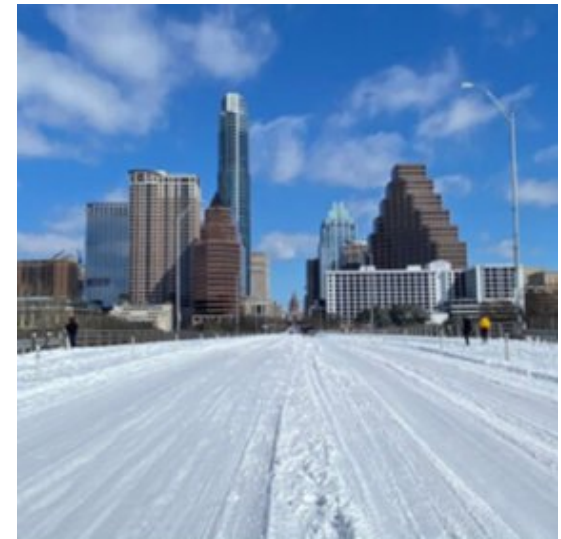
Task Force Meetings and Outcomes (cover p. 2-4)

- Five public listening sessions
- Eight operational meetings (kickoff, debriefs, report planning)
- Work group meetings to synthesize findings
- Comprehensive outreach and communications
- Report published to City Council July 30, 2021

Meeting	Date	Additional Information
Administrative	April 16	Council Member Kathie Tovo welcomed and provided the purpose of the Task Force. The TF developed their schedule.
Listening Session 1 of 5	April 29	Council Member Paige Ellis shared the impacts of the weather storm in District 8. The TF heard from 4 speakers. The TF read aloud written testimony from 2 individuals.
Debrief	May 7	The Task Force discussed the input received on May 7 th and heard from 1 speaker during Citizen's Communication.
Listening Session 2 of 5	May 14	The TF heard from 8 speakers. The TF read aloud written testimony from 1 individual.
Debrief	May 21	The TF discussed the input received on May 14 th .
Listening Session 3 of 5	June 2	Council Member Alison Alter shared the impacts of the weather storm in District 10. The TF heard from 2 speakers. The TF read aloud written testimony from 7 individuals.
Debrief	June 4	The TF discussed the input received on June 2 nd .
Listening Session 4 of 5	June 11	Council Member Ann Kitchen shared the impacts of the weather storm in District 5. The TF heard from 4 speakers.
Debrief	June 18	This meeting was cancelled.
Listening Session 5 of 5	June 23	Council Member Vanessa Fuentes shared the impacts of the winter storm in District 2. The TF heard from 7 speakers. The TF read aloud written testimony from 10 individuals.
Debrief	June 25	The Task Force discussed the input received on June 11 th and June 23 rd and heard from 1 speaker during Citizen's Communication.
Report Planning Meeting 1	July 9	The Task Force discussed the framework for final report and next steps.
Report Planning Meeting 2	July 23	

Summary of Findings (p. 2-3)

- Communications
- Transparency of Information
- Loss of Community Trust
- Failure and Breakdown of the Electric Grid
- Water, Food and Essential Supplies
- Lack of Accountability and Services
- Infrastructure Breakdown and Failures
- Access to Shelter/Lodging
- Role of Nonprofits, Community Organizations and Neighborhood Groups
- Need for Mental Health Resources



Communications (p. 4-5)

Feedback

- Lack of access to information provided on internet/social media – no power/wi-fi
- Text/radio options were under-utilized
- Neighbors used phone trees, visits to check in on each other
- Lack of translated communications
- Lack of information and resources for people with disabilities, homebound, elderly

Communications (p. 4-5)

Recommendations

- Use all available forms of communication to reach citizens, use interpreters (e.g., at shelters), translate all emergency communications
- Coordinate and improve communication and response planning for vulnerable or isolated citizens including:
 - Non-English speakers
 - People with disabilities and medical needs
 - Homebound, unhoused
 - Seniors, students, families with infants and young children
- Use early warning systems, educate community on emergency preparedness

Transparency of Information (p. 6)

Feedback

- Information on storms known in advance, yet lack of preparedness
- Inadequate or inconsistent communications about power and water outages, shelters, distribution of food and water, how to protect plumbing, who could access what resources when and where

Recommendations

- Disseminate information quickly and accurately
- Plan and prepare better for future emergencies

Loss of Community Trust (p. 7)

Feedback

- Inconsistent and incorrect information led to distrust of authorities
- Discordance and loss of solidarity seeing city officials with power/heat, unoccupied downtown buildings/garages fully lit, when citizens were without power and water

Recommendations

- Coordinate with QoL commissions, community organizations, school and faith based-leaders, others with direct and trusted access to their communities

Failure and Breakdown of the Electric Grid (p. 8)

Feedback

- Racial, ethnic and socio-economic inequities regarding loss of power
- Remedies have been proposed in the past for more efficient and equitable access to power, which have not been acted upon
- Lack of conservation – e.g., unoccupied downtown buildings fully lit

Recommendations

- Provide widely-accessible charging stations that can use alternate sources of power
- Plan and prepare for responding to grid outages year-round (likely also in summer)

Water, Food and Essential Supplies (p. 9-10)

Feedback

- Lack of water, inadequate access and distribution systems for food/water/supplies
- Sanitation issues – using melted snow and pool water to flush toilets, couldn't boil water due to no power
- Issues exacerbated for elderly, people with disabilities and medical conditions, families with babies/young children, food-insecure communities
- Food at shelters inadequate, unhealthy, not culturally appropriate
- Neighbors, community orgs, restaurants and bars, nonprofits rose to the challenge and provided water, food and supplies; some organizations were not reimbursed
- Inhibited access to fire hydrants for water

Water, Food and Essential Supplies (p. 9-10)

Recommendations

- Establish emergency dispatch operation, coordinated among city, community and nonprofit organizations
- Consider access to cash, given some stores could not process credit cards due to outages
- Maintain adequate emergency supplies of food, water and essential supplies, distributed around the city
- Ensure distribution is healthy, environmentally sound, and culturally competent

Lack of Accountability and Services (p. 10-11)

Feedback

- Absentee property managers for renters, no responses, lack of emergency supplies
- Difficulty getting through to 311; emergency responders were tapped out
- Confusion about decision making authority and who should be providing services – city? county? state? federal?
- Positive feedback on responsiveness of CoA and community individuals and organizations who rose to the challenge – recognize them, hold others accountable

Recommendations

- Plan for emergency services, and plan for what happens when those fail
- Clearly document and communicate plan for coordination across community, city, county, state and federal authorities for disaster preparedness and response
- Refer to CRT report for details

Infrastructure Breakdown and Failures (p. 11-12)

Feedback

- Lack of equipment to clear roads, lack of training and equipment for emergency vehicles to drive in ice/snow
- People with disabilities could not access transit – lost access to caretakers, medical supplies, groceries, etc
- City resources exhausted, took longer to restore power and clear roads
- Residences and businesses not built for extreme cold, considerable damage

Recommendations

- Emergency services equipment, training and procedures for severe weather
- Coordinate transportation and resources for vulnerable citizens
- Update policies and codes for apartment buildings, plumbing protection
- Provide assistance for those who experienced damage and/or need to upgrade for future protection

Access to Shelter and Lodging (p. 13)

Feedback

- Hotels full, overcharging, inaccessible for unhoused people
- Mixed adequacy of food and supplies at shelters
- Warming shelters only open during day and limited locations, citizens stranded for overnight
- Concerns about using shelters due to pandemic, inadequate or inaccessible for people with disabilities or other needs, people reluctant to leave pets

Recommendations

- Need emergency shelter plan that is more accessible and better resourced for citizens with a variety of needs
- Coordinate with organizations who can help place vulnerable people in an emergency
- Address validated reports of price gouging

Role of Nonprofits, Community Organizations and Neighborhood Groups (p. 14-15)

Feedback

- Many nonprofit, community and faith-based organizations responded to community needs for food, water, supplies and shelter
- Many of these organizations were already funding- and resource-constrained due to the pandemic – stretched further by the storm, without relief

Recommendations

- Need organized dispatch center and procedures to coordinate and respond among the city and these organizations – before, during and after emergency situations
- Strengthen relationships and funding with community orgs and nonprofits
- Involve JIC/QoL commissions in planning and preparedness
- Understand and build on interconnectedness among the city, businesses, nonprofits, schools, etc to be able to act together during emergencies

Need for Mental Health Resources (p. 15)

Feedback

- The storm created or compounded stress, anxiety and other mental health issues for citizens, many of whom were already impacted by the pandemic, school closures, job loss, financial insecurity and other challenges

Recommendations

- Provide adequate mental health resources to respond during a crisis, and in the aftermath, especially to individuals dealing with damage and displacement
- Establish a system to check on vulnerable and isolated residents, with capacity to increase during an emergency
- Consider preparedness for animal welfare, rescue, and service animals

Community Resilience Trust Synopsis and Recommendations (p. 16-25)

- The Winter Storm Review Task Force Report contains extracts from the CRT's draft report, which complements many of the findings
- Please refer to the final CRT report for their full recommendations