



EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCIL MINUTES

**REGULAR MEETING
Wednesday, November 10, 2021**

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

Board Members in Attendance: Chair McHorse; Members Hosking Pulido, Gordon, Alvarez, Wren, Bliss Lima, Hedrick, and Conlin

Staff in attendance: Caitlin Oliver, Michelle Rodriguez

CALL TO ORDER – Chair McHorse called the meeting to order at 8:38 a.m.

CITIZEN COMMUNICATION: GENERAL

Amy Wong Mok provided citizen communication. Mok has served for 20 years as child care director at the Magic Dragon Preschool, a multilingual and multicultural early childhood development program at the Asian American Cultural Center in District 10. Mok shared challenges faced by child care programs and directors during the pandemic and the costs of keeping a program open. Mok asked the ECC to consider the following actions: 1) Draft a resolution to acknowledge the challenges and the stress of the service providers during the pandemic and to give thanks for child care providers' impactful contribution to the blooming economy of Austin; and 2) Set up a policy to offer property tax exemption to early childhood service providers.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES from September 8, 2021, meeting – Member Hedrick moved to approve the minutes from the September 8, 2021, regular meeting. The minutes were approved by a vote of 8-0.

2. NEW BUSINESS AND POSSIBLE ACTIONS

a. Policy Work Group proposed actions

i. Vote on memo to Workforce Solutions Capital Area regarding child care scholarship system

Member Conlin summarized the draft memo to Workforce Solutions that addresses concerns raised by community members over the last year to the ECC about Child Care Services. The ECC shared these concerns with Workforce Solutions (WFS) Capital Area Child Care Program Staff, and WFS staff led a presentation and discussion at the August 2021 and September 2021 ECC meetings. The intent of the memo is for the ECC to offer to collaborate with the Workforce Solutions (WFS) Capital Area Board to address community concerns. The memo will be sent to the WFS Capital Area Board of Directors. WFS staff attended an ECC Community Engagement work group meeting in October 2021 and were given an opportunity to provide feedback. There were no updates on the status of the customer service survey results nor the trainings list that the ECC members requested from WFS. The WFS Tiger team did not meet in October. ECC

members decided to bold the summary in paragraph 2 of the memo draft. Member Gordon moved to approve the memo, and Member Hedrick seconded the motion. The recommendation was approved by a unanimous vote of 8-0.

i. Vote on recommendation to City Council regarding child care scholarship system

Member Conlin summarized the recommendation as a communication to City Council that reflects the concerns and recommendations described in the memo to WFS Capital Area. The memo will be sent to WFS Capital Area Board before the recommendation is submitted to the City Council. The recommendation asks that City Council implement changes to City contracts with WFS that would track performance measures related to customer satisfaction. If City Council acts on this recommendation, Council would ask City staff to implement changes to contracts. Members discussed whether ample time has been given to WFS for response and whether there has been enough research done to understand the concerns about WFS Child Care Services and the child care subsidy/scholarship system. The ECC has kept WFS informed of ECC actions, and a staff member has spoken at two ECC meetings regarding these concerns. Members discussed that the recommendation is framed in a way that explains that an in-depth investigation has not been done, but that issues regarding the child care subsidy system have been brought to the attention of ECC members. Member Wren moved to approve the recommendation, and Member Hedrick seconded the motion. The recommendation was approved by a vote of 7-0, with Member Alvarez abstaining.

ii. Vote on recommendation to City Council regarding federal child care funding

Chair McHorse summarized the recommendation that relates to the federal Build Back Better social funding legislation currently before Congress. As the legislation is currently written, there is an opt-in option for states to offer a match to the child care and universal Pre-K funding in the legislation. If the state does not opt in, local municipalities can opt in. The draft recommendation asks City lobbyists to encourage the state to opt in and for the City to think about what ways they could secure funds should the state not opt in. Member Conlin moved to approve the recommendation. ECC members discussed including a recommendation for the City to conduct financial planning to secure funds. Member Hedrick suggested amending the last sentence of the draft recommendation to say, “And that the City Council further direct City staff to conduct financial planning to fulfill obligations the City might have in FY2023-FY2027 for securing funds.” Member Conlin moved to amend the recommendation, and Member Gordon seconded. The amendment passed on a unanimous vote of 8-0. Member Wren moved to approve the amended recommendation, and Member Hedrick seconded. The recommendation passed on a unanimous vote of 8-0.

b. Joint Inclusion Committee updates- Raul Alvarez

i. Review and provide comments on the draft list of priority issues for the Joint Inclusion Committee. (Action)

Member Alvarez shared that the Joint Inclusion Committee (JIC) has a proposed list of priority issues that center around equity for 2022. The issues are digital access, language access issues, community engagement barriers, health care, affordability, resiliency, public safety, immigrant legal services. The JIC asks that boards & commissions (B&C) let the JIC know if there is a topic within one of these draft priority issues that the B&C would like the JIC to support. As

well, the JIC would like B&Cs to let the JIC know if there is a priority issue missing on the draft list. Member Alvarez will report back to the JIC in December that the ECC members would like equitable access to affordable high-quality child care added to the affordability priority. Access to high-quality early care and education is part of the City's Strategic Direction 2023. Children at Risk has requested data from Child Care Regulation on child care licenses. Chair McHorse will send that data, once received, to Member Alvarez, to help build the case to the JIC for the need for equitable access to high-quality child care in Austin. Member Alvarez will also ask for clarification on what issues are part of the resiliency priority.

ii. **Decide if the ECC wants to hold a budget hearing on early childhood issues in early 2022. (Action)**

The JIC is offering to have joint budget hearings with other boards & commissions. If the ECC is interested in a joint budget hearing in January or February, the JIC will notify the City Budget Office. The JIC would staff the budget hearing, and 3-4 members of the ECC would need to be present at the joint hearing. ECC members decided to add a February meeting for a budget hearing, separate from the February regular meeting, for either the evening or on the weekend.

c. **Approve 2022 Early Childhood Council meeting calendar**

Staff liaison Oliver informed ECC members that City Council approved amendments to City Code section 2.1 (City Boards) with the intent to allow more flexibility for conducting remote/hybrid meetings. Most notably is the removal of the requirement for a quorum to be physically present. This adjustment means that only the Chair and Staff will still need to attend in person to manage the meeting. All other members will be able to attend in person or virtually. The code amendments will be effective February 28, 2022.

ECC members discussed moving the August regular meeting to a Saturday morning to engage more community members and families. Members would like to align the August meeting with a community family resource fair and pre-K enrollment efforts. Member Hedrick moved to approve the proposed 2022 calendar. There was a unanimous vote of 8-0 to approve the 2022 regular meeting dates. The ECC plans to meet on the second Wednesday of the month in 2022 at 8:30 a.m. at City Hall, except for in April and August when the ECC will meet on a different day of the week and at a different location. The time and location of the April and August regular meetings are to be determined. There will not be meetings in July or December.

3. STAFF UPDATES

a. **COVID-19 updates**

Austin-Travis County remains in Stage 3 of the COVID-19 risk-based guidelines. The hospitalization rate is not the only indicator the Health Authority and APH take into consideration. Austin Public Health has added Community Transmission Rate and flu indicators to the COVID-19 key indicators online dashboard. The community positivity rate is the number of cases per 100,000 in the past 7 days and is an indicator of how fast the virus is spreading and a predictor of future surges. The reason the Health Authority has not declared stage 2 is because the community transmission rate remains moderate to substantial. With the holiday season and flu season upon us, it is important to continue mitigation measures and to get vaccinated. The community positivity rate is 4.4%. CDC has recommended a Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine formulated for children ages 5-11. APH has begun clinics that offer the vaccine to this age group

and is coordinating with school districts for pop-up vaccine clinics. The vaccine is also available through local health providers and pharmacies.

b. KinderCare at Bergstrom Tech updates

A Child Care Regulations inspection of the KinderCare at Bergstrom Tech is scheduled for November 10, 2021. Pending successful inspection, KinderCare is hoping to open the center on November 29, 2021. The outcome of the inspection will also determine whether the ribbon cutting ceremony will take place on Friday, 11/19, 11 am- noon. ECC members and other community members are invited to the ribbon cutting.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

a. Census data trends

Member Conlin requested Census data trends be removed as future agenda item until the data are released.

b. Update about Head Start from Child Inc

c. Child care staffing shortage in Austin

At the next regular meeting in January 2022, the ECC members plan to discuss the two recommended actions from the citizen communication.

ADJOURNMENT – Chair McHorse adjourned the meeting at 9:58 a.m.