

Public Health Committee Meeting Transcript – 04/13/2022

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[9:33:08 AM]

>> Tovo: The public health committee and I call this meeting to order at 9:33 A.M. And we will get started with public communications and I believe that we have one speaker. And that is Marinda Robella, is Ms. Robella here? Okay, thank you. Well, not seeing that speaker and we'll move on to our next agenda item and that's the approval of the minutes. A motion to approve the minutes? And Fuentes with that, and kitchen second, and harper-madison and mayor Adler off the dais. Next is a discussion regarding the sobering center appointments and so for this we'll go into a very brief executive session and we'll come back out. Our order of business today after we handle that agenda item is that we'll start with our briefing and our discussion on issues related to homelessness

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and then we will move into our discussion on early childhood investment. So thanks to all of our staff and our community members who are here to participate. So, the committee will now go into executive session to take up one item for the government code and the committee will discuss personnel matters with the discussion and action for the city's appointee to the sobering center board of directors. Any objection to going into executive session on the item announced? Hearing and seeing none, the committee will go into executive session at 9:34.

[9:46:30 AM]

>> Tovo: Today will be an update on the heal initiative. So we typically have been briefing council monthly on this and we did not brief last month and so the update today encompasses the activities of the last two months. Since that time, we have resolved an additional two encampments. One, west Bolden creek, along the creek bed and the railroad track there, near butler park. And in the St. John's neighborhood partially in the St. John's neighborhood park. From those two encampments, we relocated a total of 65 unsheltered individuals into our two bridge shelters.

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And in the last two months we have placed an additional 26 individuals into permanent housing through our rapid rehousing program. So they are now in their own apartments. I think that also importantly we are pleased to report that we have hired our permanent program supervisor for the north bridge shelter, who started on Monday. And we also have our position posted for a program manager one who would be handling really the front end of the heal in initiative, coordinating outreach and the process of moving folks into shelter once those encampments are identified as priorities for the heal initiative. Next slide. And as you may recall, the goal that council set for us for fiscal year 2022 was to relocate a total of 200 individuals from unsheltered encampments into -- into bridge shelter, connected to housing resources. And through the end of March.

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So precisely really at the mid-point of the fiscal year, we had relocated 99 folks. So we were one person short of that exactly 50%. So we are on target at this time. And since the heal initiative was initiated, and our first encampment resolution which took place in June of 2021, we have relocated 247 individuals. Next slide, please. So one thing that council asked us to track in particular is our demographics around people who have been relocated with a particular focus on race equity. Because there was some concern that by targeting encampments that we might disproportionately serve one group over the other, and, of course, with the particular focus on our African-American citizens who are experiencing homelessness since they are

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disproportionately impacted by home littleness. We have been tracking very closely to the population within that category with these two last encampment relocations, 40% of individuals served have been African-American. Slightly above the population average. Among those experiencing homelessness. And we do still have questions -- and this is one of the things that we'll have some of our new staff work on -- around the hispanic and the latinx population. We think that there's some deaggregation that we need to do around race versus ethnicity, because, of course, in some cases, you know, white is reported

under race and hispanic and latinx should be categorized under ethnicity, but that is something that we'll be looking at because right now it does show us -- serving slightly less than the population -- of the population experiencing homelessness. We have a fairly even-aged

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distribution and we'll look at that with the population experiencing homelessness. I would say that we do trend older but partially because it's uncommon that we find children in encampments and, of course, they comprise a significant portion of our overall homeless population. Next slide. Our shelter acceptance rate remains high at 90%, so that's the percentage of folks offered a transfer into shelter and connection to bridge housing. Our current bridge shelter census at the end of the month was 111. And a couple of the other things that we are tracking is making sure that people have completed their coordinated assessment. There is a time element here that I want to discuss. So, we hope that when people -- that people have coordinated assessment, even when they're experiencing unsheltered homelessness, right, but we know that is not always true. So it is one of the first tasks

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we have as someone transfers into shelter and not yet had a coordinated assessment, we then make sure that is completed quickly. Remember at the time of these numbers, we actually relocated an encampment in the last week of March. And so many of those people did come in with a coordinated assessment, but that 10% you see should be corresponding to that last encampment relocated. And in the same way the enrollment into a permanent housing program -- so people come into shelter, they're referred to our service providers predominantly family eldercare at this time, and we want to make sure that enrollment happens fairly quickly. We did have a lag in the beginning of the initiative. We're at 65%. And our last encampment relocation was I think around 35 people. So that's mostly those folks with some people from probably the previously relocation that we still need to get enrolled and we expect that to happen in the coming weeks.

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We can move the slide forward, please. On the permanent housing effort side, I mentioned family eldercare who is our main rapid rehousing provider at this time. Integral care, we have a small contractor with integral care. We have rehoused a total of 58 individuals to date and there are 70 additional individuals who are enrolled in the housing program, rapid rehousing program, and seeking their unit, getting their documents in order, etc. I'll remind that you when we spoke to that sort of -- the need to make sure that people get enrolled in a housing program quickly, that council in approving the arpa spending framework asked us to set aside a certain amount of money for help in that. So our

current -- there is a housing stability solicitation that went out through Austin public health on January 31st, I believe. In that there's an overall \$38

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million for rapid rehousing, and of that, \$6 million is set aside for the heal initiative. Those proposals are in, and they are currently being evaluated, and I believe that the timeline is that by the end of the month, or early next, we would have identified our intended vendors under that solicitation. With a target for July contract execution. Next slide. And I'll take any questions at this time. >> Tovo: Colleagues, questions. Thank you, Ms. Gray. Councilmember Fuentes. >> Fuentes: Thank you. Just a quick question that I had. For the \$38 million that we have earmarked for the rapid rehousing, what is the capacity that we think that that will yield for us in terms of being able to move people into -- >> You're going to challenge my math skills, councilmember. So let me think about that. We look at roughly \$27,000 a

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year for that service. And so I need to do that quick math. But I think that we're probably talking -- no, I'm not going to answer you. Let me get back to you. If I give you a number it undoubtedly would be wrong. >> Tovo: Would you mind repeating the question. >> Fuentes: For the \$38 million, that is earmarked for the rapid rehousing what is the capacity that we think that will February for this? >> Depending what the proposals look like, I mean, this was a very substantial sum of money, right. And we are also in parallel working with some organization whose are building capacity currently. We have anticipated that it could be possible that we don't exhaust all of those funds in this first solicitation. And, if that's the case, we would re-release later. Was your question -- when you

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say traunch -- >> Fuentes: Specific to the \$38 million, but now that you mention it -- >> We initially anticipated accepting that traunch of funds I think in February or March of this year and it has been delayed and so we won't, you know, my assumption is that most of the funds related to homelessness were in the second traunch of the overall spending framework. And I believe, and we'll certainly accept correction from budget or contracting if needed, that we would need as a city to accept those funds before we're able to issue the contracts. >> Fuentes: Right, right. Are there any additional federal dollars that came online from the Biden administration regarding homelessness that we are eligible for? >> So there are funds that have come -- and a couple come to mind. One is that the home arpa dollars but that is something

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that we have talked about as part of our framework and discussed yet at the housing committee is that in the American rescue plan, but it was a direct allocation to housing and planning departments, and that is \$11.4 million. So we -- housing and planning is in the process of formally requesting those funds and laying out a plan for using them and we anticipate those funds actually being received in the fall. And the American rescue plan act had vouchers through our housing authorities which we have been leveraging. Those are the ones that come to mind right now, councilmember. >> Fuentes: Wonderful, thank you. >> Tovo: Councilmember kitchen. >> Kitchen: Thank you. And once again, thank y'all for, you know, just amazing work with heal. Very much appreciated. So, one question that then -- I just have two questions. So the -- in the enrollment in the permanent housing program,

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which I think that is at 65% now, and you explained why, so I am assuming that we should be running at 100% all the time. >> Well, I would say -- >> Kitchen: Well, let me clarify. I don't mean in any particular time because you've got people coming in. But I guess what I mean is that 100% of the people that -- that come in through the bridge shelter should be enrolled in -- in a housing program. >> That's correct. >> Kitchen: Okay. And, then going from a housing program into some sort of permanent housing, 100% of those that come through heal should have dollars attached to them to go on to, you know, with what is appropriate for them in terms of permanent housing, right? >> Yes. And, thank you -- may I clarify. >> Kitchen: Sure. >> I'm glad that you brought that up. When I say enrolled in a housing program that means that there are dollars attached to them and available to them for that

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ongoing rental assistance. >> Kitchen: Okay. So, help us understand -- and, you know, I could name some reasons but for just all of us and for the public -- what's happening in that time between them actually being in the bridge shelter enrolled in a housing program, and then ending up in their place? >> Correct. >> Kitchen: Was there a time difference and what does that mean? >> Absolutely. I mean, there are some process things that happen there in terms of getting their documents, you know, figuring out, of course, what their housing plan is, as well as what other needs they might have -- their case managers are working with them. But I would say that the single most important contributor to the time between enrollment and moving into a unit is just finding that unit. >> Kitchen: Okay, um-hmm. >>> And applying and being accepted as a tenant. And we have -- tenant. We have those who are very aggressive looking for units and

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it's always, of course, been quite a challenge because our tenants come with non-traditional profiles in terms of their job history, their credit -- you know, etc., obviously, and their incomes are very, very low. The recent changes in the rental market have had a very important impact on how long it's taking us to find units. And, so, on a separate track we are moving some funds to help with additional landlord incentives, you know, double deposits that kind of thing. But that is a huge challenge that we're encountering right now. And our time -- when we had folks in pro lodges, very similar population, we were averaging around 90 days from enrollment to housing. I mean, we would have liked to have seen that compressed to, say, 60. But instead, we are seeing the time extending from that sort of average of 90 days at present. >> Kitchen: Okay, so that's not because there's not money. In other words, they've got

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money to pay for, you know, that particular individual has money to pay for a unit. The problem is finding a unit, right? >> That's correct. >> Kitchen: It's not because there's units out there that we can't afford, right? It's just that there are not units out there? >> So there's something to the affordability. You know, because we do have some limits as to the amount -- >> Kitchen: Yeah. >> As to the amount of rent that we can pay, you can imagine. But it's largely, yes, finding those units that sort of fall within what we would consider a rent reasonable level. >> Kitchen: Okay. >> And then, you know, -- and then at present the landlords really do have a lot of choice and a lot of competition for every single unit and that's being experienced, you know, across the population of people looking for rental housing. You know, with a history of homelessness or not. >> Kitchen: Okay, all right, thank you. >> Tovo: Mayor. >> Mayor Adler: Again, I want to express appreciation for the way that you're rolling out the heal

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program. Obviously, key issue in our community as people look around and see people in tents and they want us to be doing as a community -- to be doing a better job. And we should never be satisfied as long as we see people in tents. We need to get them out of tents and into better, safer places, with the services that they need. So I appreciate this work. You know, it's taking a long time to do this. People would like -- and I would like -- us to just be able to do it overnight. It's not going to happen that way. It's a long time to get here and it's going to take a while for us to be able to get out. And I appreciate that we're actually looking at a kind of a three-year time frame to really to be able move through the heal process to get people and get almost everybody into a better place and then have a system that operates at that kind of equilibrium point. But it's going to be hard

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between now and then, because we see the need, and we want to do something about it. I appreciate that what you're trying to do is hard, especially in a market with rapidly rising housing prices and limited supply. But that's why homelessness is a challenge for us that if we don't fix now, is going to overwhelm us in six to eight years with a poster child for rising housing costs and lessening supply, which is one of the single biggest drivers for expanding populations experiencing homelessness. So I appreciate the work. We just have to stay steady. And make sure that the emergency stuff that we're doing is at scale to the other parts of the system so that we move someone into an emergency shelter, but also have them on a track as heal does into actual housing. So I appreciate everything that you're doing. We are hearing a little bit

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increased communication from people in the community that are applauding our ability to begin to close down some encampments and to move people into housing that are now seeing people moving back into those same places. And one of the tenants in heal tenets of heal isto not have people to move back. Can you address that for a second? >> Sure, and I think that it is important to -- to remind folks that city wide of the encampments that have been cleared, heal is a small minority of those, right. Most of the encampments that have been cleared have been cleared without direct access to shelter and housing. And what we really want is to see that proportion increase. So, most of the encampments that have been reoccupied are those where we were not able to offer direct access to shelter and housing. Now, that doesn't mean that it hasn't happened at all or it

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won't continue to happen, and it is a conversation wherewe're having with our public space partners, kind of looking at their resources, the staff available to do this work, and how we balance going into new encampments, you know, intervening in -- excuse me -- going into existing encampments and balancing the energy that it takes to ensure that those that have been resolved stay that way. >> Mayor Adler: Okay. So I guess we're -- and that's an important thing for the public to understand too, and I appreciate you pointing that out that -- that we are intervening in encampments in two different programs. There's the heal program, which is when we intervene and we're putting into a housing track and they're being moved out. And those people, most of them, are staying off the streets and are involved in the housing process. We also have some encampments mentsthat we're intervening into in

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pursuant of the proposition that we passed that we would intervene in encampments. When we intervene or close them down without the housing component of that -- >> They're far more likely to be reoccupied, yes, sir. >> Mayor Adler: I understand why that happens. Please continue the work and we'll continue to try to build out this three-year program to get us to a really good place. And I appreciate the work that you're doing, thank you. >> Tovo: You have some questions and I'll circle back around to you, councilmember kitchen. Yes, thank you, really, for the tremendous work and the tremendous results and the presentation and continuing to brief our committee on these issues. I have a couple of quick questions and then one that sort of circles back around to what mayor Adler was asking about. So with regard to the heal demographics on page 4, I'm afraid that I missed the intro to what you said, are those the overall heal -- that is demographics or just the one from the last two?

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>> Overall. >> Tovo: And you did comment specifically on the last two and I wasn't sure that I captured what -- whether the last two were in line with this or you were just saying that these included the last two? >> I think that the numbers have shifted a bit, not dramatically, because, of course, that's only about 15% of the overall folks served. We do see different, you know, different -- differences by encampment, absolutely. But overall the numbers have been tracking relatively consistently. We did have a slightly lower acceptance rate at one of our last two encampments if you will recall -- and I wouldn't necessarily expect you to remember the number -- but we have been running at about a 93% acceptance rate and so we had a slightly lower encampment that had been in place for a very long time. So we're still at 90 -- which is still very robust, I think. >> Tovo: I do too, and I think really helps to answer one of the questions that we hear from the public a lot.

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Would you be willing to share which encampment that was? >> Boulden creek. >> Tovo: That's very interesting and that leads to one of my questions. So in that area we also had -- after the encampment was -- and those individuals were housed through heal, there was actually a fire very close to that area, was it in the same area of the encampment? And do you have any information about whether -- whether it was individuals who had returned to that area or some other situation? >> I have not heard about that fire so I would want to defer to them for details on that front. >> Tovo: We have sent off questions to various folks about that because we have gotten questions from neighbors on what happened there. I know that there is sometimes a period and, in fact, we had been notified that there would be a period of several weeks before that encampment was cleared, even after the individuals -- >> Correct. >> Tovo: Had been housed in bridge shelter. And so I don't -- I believe that it fell within that period.

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So to -- you know, to the point that you were raising, mayor, about what we do with encampments afterward, it would seem to me -- I think this is an example of what and how soon that needs to happen -- because well, we don't know, but I do know -- I mean, what I do know says an observational fact is that there was a fire in that encampment area very soon, I think within a week, after that encampment - - after those individuals were housed through heal. And that kind of leads me to my next question about whether -- you know, I know that we have charged the manager with really developing that streamlined team. And it's not just falling on the parks department to manage a lot of that when it's on parkland and it's not just falling on you, but that there is a really coordinated effort. I've had several situations recently where -- well -- let me just say that at least one situation where the parks department responded, but they didn't involve the fire department, which needed to be

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involved in the conversation about the level of risk, and so it -- we're really in need of that. Can you give us a timeline? >> Sure. So we currently have work groups working on that front and, absolutely, it includes pard, AFD, and APD, and resource recovery, public works. All of the various departments that may, you know, touch in a substantial way a particular location, either because they're the land holding department or because there are services, cleanup services, etc., that might be needed on the site. And so the sequencing question is something that we're really looking at. We know and in most cases we have been able to do a cleanup of the site very soon after either heal relocation or enforcement has occurred. But, you know, as I have reported to council previously, we are straining rest sources at the various departments, and so I think that -- I want to check

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with opm, office of performance management, and we may be able to give an update. I don't think that we'll be finished by may but we'd be in a position to give council a sense where we are. And we are working on a similar prioritization that we have used with heal because there's hundreds of encampments and in terms of identifying those encampments where we need to bring the resources and the enterprise to bear, we're going to have to have a way to triage those and to make decisions. So that's another of the primary tasks of the group that is working. >> Tovo: Thank you for that. I do think that it is important, and I would ask, mayor, if we could have an update about that at our work session, because one of the things that I think we need to probably do better as council offices is communicating with the -- it's not always clear who to communicate with. You know, we communicate in my office through the caf process because we have volumes of constituent email coming in about issues and so that's the most time efficient way for us

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to communicate. But, you know, in the circumstance that I'm describing, where we had reports that there were individuals with, you know, gasoline in an area where it could be prone to fire and they had witnessed gasoline -- >> Right. >> Tovo: What is the word -- cans. Thank you. You know, we communicated with pard when perhaps we should have communicated with fire. But I think that the council generally needs to know who the one-stop-shop is, you know, I don't want to be communicating with you because I think that you have a range of issues to deal with and maybe you're not the first call on those issues. But we don't always know who the first call is. >> Sure. That is something that we hope to do is to make it a lot clearer what that information flow should look like. >> Tovo: Great, well, we look forward to that. And I have one last quick question. >> Mayor Adler: You are asking for a briefing on where council and the community should go on that information flow issue?

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>> Tovo: Really asking the manager to report back on the process of this stream -- on where we are in the streamlining of the process of managing this. And as a part of that, what additional resources do you need? You know, we do have outside contracts as I know that all of us know to help with those encampment cleanups, are those doing the job? Or as you mentioned are we straining the resources of all of our individual departments? But one thing that I know they have worked on for a long time is to streamline that process with an interdepartmental approach and I think we need an update on sort of where they are and how quickly that will really be in place, which will tell us how and who we need to communicate with as council. >> Mayor Adler: The process -- >> Tovo: Sure. >> Mayor Adler: I want to make sure that we get the briefing that we want. So are you asking for kind of a report on -- on campsite intervention generally and how that process works? Or are you looking for a more specific information flow kind of being this particular

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challenge, for example, and -- and how those are being resolved. And how does the council and the community raise that? >> Tovo: More of the former, I think. There was a presentation that I think we had maybe here or in our last big work session and maybe was in our last big work session and there was several pages about the streamlined public space management team. And it's that that I think that we really need -- yep. >> Kitchen: Could I -- >> Tovo: Councilmember kitchen. >> Kitchen: So, mayor, in asking for that briefing, I agree with what councilmember tovo is asking for. I think it will be important to differentiate between the cleanup process for enforcement and the placemaking process that is part

of heal. Because those are two different things. And I'm concerned that they're getting blurred, and I'm concerned that the heal

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process -- I'm concerned that we've got to get the placemaking, which is what heal identified, not just cleanup -- but we've got to make sure that piece of the whole heal continuum occurs. And I think that one of our challenges for that is -- it's multiple challenges. But when we get -- when we get a briefing on this, I want to make sure that we differentiate between the two. Because they are different. And one of the things to understand as part of this, one of our challenges in the placemaking piece -- and by placemaking what I mean -- not just cleanup, I'm talking about how is that place reconfigured so that it is a -- a more of a community asset in terms of its use. And part of our challenge is with placemaking -- and I've been working with atd on placemaking as well as with Dianna Shaw. Part of the challenge there

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is -- both a challenge and an opportunity that we need to take some more advantage of or figure out how to, is that a number of those locations are not on our property. They are under overpasses and they are txdot controlled property. So txdot has some challenges in terms what they can authorize, so I think that some efforts -- and, mayor, I would love your assistance with this and yours too, councilmember tovo. Part of our challenges is working with txdot to get to a place where they can -- you know, I know that they want to be partners but where they can be more partners with us with heal in particular, so that we're going through a process of identifying heal locations, offering folks bridge shelter, offering them housing, but at the same time, also doing the work that needs to be done in that location. So that it becomes placemaking, not just cleanup. So I think -- >> Tovo: I think that's a

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helpful distinction and I would say that it probably depends on the encampment. And with the west Boulden creek greenbelt, I'm not sure -- I think that the solution to that is probably going to be a little bit different. I'm not sure that it's really cleanup in that area or placemaking because it's -- you know, it's a greenbelt rather than an overpass. But in any case, I think that is a very helpful distinction and we can incorporate that as well. >> Kitchen: Let me speak to that for a second. Greenbelts are placemaking also. So in the terms that I'm using -- you're right, I mean, it's a different -- different set of -- set of solutions. And it is different people that work in the greenbelt. But it is still placemaking. >> Tovo: Sure. I guess that I'm just pointing out that it's going to have to be different and it's really the parks department in this case and the community has taken on a lot of the responsibility for that greenbelt, and really it is more of a cleanup and a figuring

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out how to keep folks from coming back to that area than it might be at an underpass or something like that. >> Kitchen: When I use the term placemaking, what I mean is not just a cleanup. What I'm talking about is thinking about how the space is used. >> Tovo: I totally -- we're in agreement, councilmember kitchen. I'm just pointing out that the solutions are going to be different in different -- I mean, our heal locations have just been very, very different kinds of places. >> Kitchen: Well, I've had heal locations in the greenbelt too. >> Tovo: Okay. >> Kitchen: So I get what you're talking about. >> Tovo: So let me move on to my last question and I saw that there were a couple other questions, and we're rather behind and we need to have a lengthy childcare presentation coming up. So let me just ask my quick question about the bridge shelter operations and the coordinated assessment. So, to be clear -- so I understand the numbers that were being presented. Do you have a sense of how many -- what the percentage --

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or could you provide us with the percentage who had participated in coordinated assessment before they participated in heal? Is that a number that you could provide us with? >> It's not a number that I have off the top of my head but I think we can either look at what we know or certainly something that we can begin to track going forward. >> Tovo: Yeah, that would be interesting to just know how many of the individuals in encampments that we are working with are already -- and I think that clears my question. Councilmember kitchen, I think that I saw your hand up? >> Kitchen: That's all. I wanted to comment on the placemaking and I already did that. >> Tovo: Great, well, thank you very much, and thank you to your team. We appreciate your work. Okay, so let's see our next and final presentation of today is the briefing on American rescue plan act funds for early childcare investments and pending unmet needs. And for this we have our director director Sturup, and we're joined by mayor pro tem

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alter and thank you for participating at this point. And our presentation is going to be delivered by Kathie mccourse. So if you would, as you come up, identify, if you would introduce yourself, thank you. And we have, colleagues, we have allocated about 30 minutes for this item. >> Great, thank you, councilmember, and good morning, mayor and councilmembers. I am Donna sumstron with Austin public health, one of the assistant directors and with me is the vice president at united Way and also representing success by six coalition. And also I want to recognize that we have two other critical staff within Austin public health. Cindy gómez and Rachel Farley who really focus and really help us to move

this worked for. And then also the United Way. I would like to say that we have been asked to provide a briefing, a short briefing, on the American rescue act

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investments for early childhood. But, first, I want to just say thank you to recognizing the needs and also prioritizing this area. We were excited. We were asked last month to represent city of Austin at the national league of cities conference. And really highlighting this support and they recognize that as being a leader in the country of seeing this area being prioritized. And so we were proudly doing that, but it wouldn't be -- we wouldn't be able to do it if we didn't have the support of the city leadership, county, and the community. So, I want to start off with -- with addressing gaps in childcare for families. And this is through the workforce solutions capital area contract that has been executed. That has workforce solutions, and our workforce board in the area.

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So it was investing into providing direct childcare for families and additional seats that could prevent childcare disruptions and also move children off the wait list and into care. Currently, we have about 1,700 children who are on the wait list for childcare scholarships. Also through this process, we also identified that there's opportunities to really proactively to engage with families who are on the wait list and having a navigator staff that can really work with the families to see if any of their -- any of the children who are on the scholarship wait list would also qualify for some other programs that might have seats available. And we can move them into them quickly, instead of them remaining on the wait list, and just not understanding how to access some of those programs. So we're really trying to leverage that coordination of care by something with community

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engagement navigator staff that can really work proactively with families. Next slide, please. Also included in the workforce solutions capital area contract is recognizing the childcare essential workers throughout the pandemic and throughout covid. We all know that childcare is part of the critical infrastructure, and many centers and childcare staff remained open, and this is recognizing those childcare staff that have performed in-person throughout the pandemic at a heightened risk to themselves. And next slide, please. And we'll touch a little bit on stabilizing the childcare workforce. The workforce solutions and really trying to provide them that premium pay is an effort for retention of staff and we'll talk a little bit about that in ongoing challenges of childcare

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and the childcare sector a little bit later in the presentation. But, these are some of the efforts of just trying to retain staffing, because it's a critical challenge right now that they're facing. And we'll give you a little bit more statistics a little bit later. Another part of stabilizing the childcare workforce through these investments is through providing opportunities for childcare educators to further their education. And this is through the teach early childhood Texas scholarship program. This is leveraging some state dollars, but then this is providing the additional wrap around supports that the state does not cover and really supporting those staff to further their education, which in turn really can increase their pay, and then also help retain those staff in the field. Next slide, please.

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And then stabilizing programs that support families with young children -- these -- this effort is also as a retention to -- for staff who are providing direct face-to-face services and who continue to do that throughout the pandemic. And also really trying to enhance the outreach program and bringing those to pre-pandemic levels, and really trying to engage -- get those families back engaged with ready families collaborative. Next slide. And then another investment is with the full-day pre-k. So there's two different -- two different investments that are being made from the recommendations brought forward, and that is through del valle ISD of the full-day pre-k and that is underway. There's about 53 students who are currently enrolled in those

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programs and that's expanding access for children and families who don't qualify based on state guideline availability, and for Austin ISD to expand full-day pre-k3. So that is pending council approval coming up on may 19th. And they're looking at opening up those additional classrooms in the next school year. And the next slide. Another part of the investments is with the family connects. Family connects is a short-term nurse home visiting program that is a universal program of offering a nurse visit for families that deliver -- right now it's at St. David's south Austin center and offering a nurse visit about three weeks postpartum and recognizing that all families have challenges when they have a new baby coming home.

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And through these services we're able to connect them to other resources, provide assessment and education on site. So with this funding that's underway, we are able to expand services into ascension

main, and so we're excited about that partnership and being able to expand those -- those services to those families that deliver at that hospital. Another segment that it helps us with the family connects is providing data and local data that really focuses on outcomes. And the emphasis of return on investment that, you know, really looking forward in sustainability and potential bringing healthcare payers onboard of supporting this program. And so this evaluation will really help in getting that local data. It is evidence based, so there is already the evidence based studies nationally, but then bringing it to more of the local level. And I'm going to turn it over to

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Kathie to talk more specifically on the programs. >> Tovo: Thank you, assist an director. >> Good morning, and I wanted to echo the assistant director's sincere thanks for your investments in this critical sector. And note as we look at the expanse of slides that it's really important to capture that you have invested in the entire early childhood ecosystem, and then investing in certain areas without others can have destabilizing effects on the whole system. So it's greatly appreciated. I also think that it is important as a segue from the conversation about homelessness to identify that. Childcare is the single greatest cost to families in Austin, behind housing, and that access to childcare can enable families to work and to stay in their homes safely. I'm going to start with discussing on the next slide the investment to -- into our pre-k

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partnership program. This was an investment through a contract with the United Way for greater Austin. And, yeah -- next slide. It's coming. This is a support to continue and expand a program that is in partnership with Austin independent school district that enables us to leverage state pre-k funding into subsidized childcare centers, simultaneously expanding access to pre-k for children who need full-day-care and as well as pre-k funding into these high-quality centers that are already meeting those standards. Since 2019, we have co-enrolled -- and that means adding to the enrollment of Austin independent school district which is also a priority -- 804, additional pre-k students and leveraged almost \$3 million into community-based childcare centers in the community that they couldn't access otherwise. This is critical for blending and braiding the state pre-k and

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childcare subsidy funds. If you could go to the next slide we wanted to just give you a visual model how this is creating a mixed delivery system, which you might have heard about. At the federal level looking to expand universal pre-k through mixed delivery. If we expand pre-k without supporting our childcare sector, we remove 3 and 4-year-olds who essentially subsidize the cost of infant care in the childcare

business model. So expanding pre-k without supporting childcare has unintended consequences for our childcare sector and reduces access for infant and toddler care. Through this model, the united Way serves as basically a shared services hub. We have the centralized administration that enables these small businesses in Austin, the childcare programs, to participate in this state pre-k program. And we provide all of this administrative supports and a principal registrar and instructional coaching that enabled them to participate in partnerships.

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Our model has been an exemplar for Texas, and now invested \$26 million in staffing across the state to try and scale and grow pre-k partnerships. And we're proud that our program serves as a model for how that work is happening. Next slide. We're also expanding access to affordable quality childcare for all families, especially those who rely on family-based childcare programs. Through this support, we're able to sub-contract with avonse who has begun work creating cohorts of family-based license and registered childcare homes. And they provide support in a unique and innovative way, that means linguistic and cultural needs of providers and meeting them where they are and helping to assist informal providers to become licensed and registered and moving providers who are licensed and registered into

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being able to access subsidies, the childcare subsidy system, and to become part of the quality rating system. They will run two cohorts of 35 childcare providers and help to connect them to the resources that we have available in the community. We know many of our infants and toddlers from low-income homes are enrolled in family-based childcare programs in the community. And we really want to make sure that we're getting the supports needed to these programs. The first cohort, we had 12 non-registered, non-licensed and unregulated providers to begin the process to become licensed childcare programs. And we have five programs who entered the Texas quality rating system as a result of their participation. Next slide. And there's also an investment to help to strengthen and to build on identified gaps and strengthen the childcare system

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through a shared services model. You can see through the diagram that shared services really aimed at centralizing an automating business supports for these childcare businesses that need to simultaneously focus on serving as a small business and being a nurturing, loving, care giving home -- a place of care for these young children. We're looking at -- we have a co-design process where our community providers are building the system that meets their needs. Looking at human resource supports, accounting and financial management and business coaching, and navigating regulatory processes, with the goal of

serving 40 centers and being able to direct the cost savings they realize into improved compensation for their staff. Next slide. The next slide -- in the next

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investment, we are going to contract with Urbans Institute to conduct a study of the supply and demand for non-traditional hour childcare in the Austin community. In Austin, we have fewer than 10 regulated childcare providers that offer weekend and evening and nighttime care. And what we know about our workforce is that those who are in the lowest paid jobs, and typically individuals of color who earn low income are working those non-traditional hours. In Texas, there was a service industry subsidy launched that was underenrolled across state because the families who need non-traditional hour care couldn't find childcare that met their needs in order to use that subsidy. So we're hoping to really identify the need -- the demand, and create the supply by

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incentivizing and piloting different solutions that meets the needs of the families utilizing this care. We're also hoping to work with groups like Good Work Austin and some of the business industries as well as the childcare providers to match the supply and demand for quality care. The next several slides are about additional family supports through a contract with the United Way for Greater Austin. One is the one-stop-shop for individuals navigating social services and accessing benefits. And this is through the United Way 211 and Connect Atx program. This will support increased staffing capacity for enhanced closed loop referrals and increasing the social determinants of health screening, data analysis, and report generation. Detailed reports about community needs and gaps in social services will be created through this. Next slide. One more.

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This investment will increase the quality of school-aged care for working families living in or near poverty, and that involves partnering with the Andy Roddick Foundation to really assess out-of-school programs, and for childcare, and this looks at programs and makes sure that the structures and the processes are meeting the developing needs of children and really extending the impact of what they learn during the school day into after-hours. And then the second piece is a summer program with literacy first. To implement literacy tutoring, high quality, high dosage tutoring into summer programs through the YMCA. Next slide. This investment is going to essentially help with a guaranteed basic income project through ACC where they receive a

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cash assistance of \$500 a month and social supports while enrolled in a degree and certificate program. This is supported by the federal reserve as well as the foundation. That concludes the information about the existing investments. Donna is going to join me. >> So the other -- the other piece that we were asked to brief on is the ongoing challenge in Austin, Texas, and the early childhood system. And I will cover a few and Kathie can add to them. But one is on -- I mentioned a little bit on the childcare scholarships wait list. So, there's about 1,700 children that are on the wait -- currently on the wait list. The currently investment will hopefully move about 300

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additional children off of that wait list. But there continues to, of course, remain a demand and a need in that area. Childcare staffing -- we mentioned that it is a critical challenge right now for childcare providers. We had done -- we had a recent survey that was completed by programs that accept childcare subsidies. And 97% of those providers indicated that they have trouble with staffing. And 73% of them indicated that they have staff vacancies. And then more than half of them are underenrolled and limiting hours due to not enough staffing. And so that remains a critical area of need and a challenge that they're currently being faced with. And that also impacts, of course, childcare scholarships on a wait list by being able to

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actually have seats and them operating at full capacity. And then also rising costs for childcare facilities through property values and/or rent. Of course, that impacts the childcare providers in their -- in their budgeting and in their bottom line and as we look at, you know, assessing future city and -- city -- city locations, if you will, or anytime that a city development is being done then, of course, that also will have some additional costs and needs associated with that. I don't know, Kathie, if you want to add more to this? >> I think that just reiterating for context that with our childcare scholarships funded through federal -- federal funding through the workforce commission, that pot of money is only intended to really serve

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about 1/10th of the eligible population. So even our wait list is not necessarily reflective of those that need care. And it also limits that to those who are -- fall below 75% of the state median income. And we know that in Austin that the cost of care are outpacing even middle-income families as well as low-

income families. So we have a lot of families making decisions about participating in the workforce due to the rising cost of care. >> And Travis county funding allocations, they have invested for 15 months, an investment in early childhood for 15 months and so waiting to see the second tranche of our investments in the summer that will add to that investment to be able to continue the work for from the Travis county side.

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So questions? >> Tovo: Thank you very much, this is really informative and I like how you framed it and as I think back on this work I have mentioned in the context of the discussions in the past that about in about 2008, I think, there was a families and children task force and the group that worked on childcare, you know, really sounded the alarm and said that we fail in this city to really treat economic childcare as the economic development issue that it is. And so, you know, while there's been progress, I think that in the community-wide and at the city in childcare, we really -- it hasn't been until the last several years when everybody understood just how critical, critical this industry is to sustaining not just academic achievement and all of the other things that I know that those of you who are professionals in this field have been talking about for so long but just how critical that connection is between childcare and economic

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development. So, thank you, Kathie, you mentioned investing in the spectrum. I think that it is really -- those of you who are professionals in this field who have helped both the city and the county understand just how best to invest in that spectrum and how important that kind of approach is. So, thank you very much. The other point that I want to underscore is one that also I think that has been made in the past, but, you know, when we have conversations about affordability and costs in this community, so often -- so often people make the assertion that transportation is the second highest cost in a family's budget. So, thank you, I want to underscore what you said for families with children, almost all the time childcare is the second cost, not transportation. And so thank you. I think that it is -- I have -- I have mentioned that several times and others have mentioned, but, still, you know, as we get presentations, even from our staff, very often we'll hear

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that stat cited about transportation. So thank you for helping us to rewrite that narrative. And it ties to how firmly we value childcare. And so we have a lot of work ahead, but I think we're making good strides. So, thank you. I'm interested in thinking through how we might -- so I'll leave it there. I do have a question and just want to point out to my colleagues, I'm wondering how we might better highlight the

need for investments in childcare scholarships. You know, that is such a specific request and need that it seems like if we had an opportunity to really communicate that out to the broader community that that might -- that might be a place where we could get private investment. I know that you all work on that every day. But I'm going to be mulling over how either through the city or through other means that we might really highlight that need and potentially solicit some additional donations in that area. Colleagues, questions? >> Can I make an addition to that.

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>> Tovo: Of course. >> There is an opportunity through the Texas workforce commission called a childcare industry partnership, and it is an opportunity -- it requires business or corporate investment into the childcare system, but there are matching funds, dollar-for-dollar, through twc, through this childcare industry partnership. So if there was an opportunity to encourage or leverage business investment, there's a list of opportunities that they can use those dollars to invest in, I think that it is hard to pass up a dollar-for-dollar match for state funds. Texas mutual, we have a pending piece as an example. >> Tovo: Would you mind just spending a few more minutes on. That so through the Texas workforce commission they are matching private dollars and this would be an opportunity for a business -- and can you walk us through what that would look like. So a business in this community could step up and make a commitment and then if you would take it from there and walk us through the step-by-step of what

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that would look like in terms of the investment. >> It's intended for businesses to make an investment in a number of childcare industry partnership matching grants. It can go through home-based care, public/private partnerships and business support for childcare programs and childcare worker wage supplementation or stipends and program capacity or expansion as well as research studies that can support the quality improvements. A number of things that can be approved by twc. But essentially they would make a commitment of investment. It would go either to the local workforce board or it could go through a non-profit entity such as United Way, just as an example. So there was some hesitation about getting to a workforce board with conflict of interest. And then the application to receive the matching funds goes to the Texas workforce commission. It's essentially making a pledge

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and building out a budget and saying what the funds are intended for. And then the workforce commission can approve those funds. There's only been one investment approved so far and I believe that it is in the valley area. And then ours is pending. >> Tovo: That's great. So as I understand it, just to

kind of put it in layperson's language, an interested business could step up, could determine what in the spectrum of childcare ecosystem they wanted to invest in. And it could be, for example, in childcare for non-traditional hours. >> Correct. >> Tovo: Or something like that. >> Correct. . >> Tovo: And that would be for that particular need and they'd work to figure out where to give that investment, to a non-profit, and then apply through the workforce commission for that matching fund? Thank you. I think that sounds really exciting and thank you for mentioning that. Councilmember Fuentes. >> Fuentes: Thank you. And thank you for presenting today. And having this public platform

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is a tool for us, for us to talk about the opportunity that businesses can utilize to invest in the workforce and ensure that families have better choices and options available. I'm super excited about our investments that the city has made into the overall ecosystem when it comes to early childhood and childcare. From my understanding it was a \$11 million investment, if I remember correctly? Great. So that will inject much-needed relief and a system change within the city of Austin and, of course, I'm excited to see Travis county join us in that effort. Some of the questions that I have -- and one question that I have is around the data. Knowing that this is a unique opportunity for us to invest. You know, how are we going about capturing any metrics or outcomes from these investments that we can utilize and showing, you know, how important it is for not only government, but businesses and other non-profits

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to make these investments? >> And that's a really good point because without data, then it's hard to tell the story. And so each of the different investments in the contracts that we put forward includes performance metrics, includes data that will be gathered through those investments. You know, some of them align really well with the treasury department's performance metrics and a lot of these different areas. And so we'll be collecting that data in addition to additional data that we need locally. Also we mentioned a couple of them will have evaluations that will be able to give a really deep dive into data around, like, the family connects visits and the resources and the impact that that program is making with families. Along with the after-hours care. I think that through really doing that study and getting additional information for our community will help us in

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telling that story and continuing to identify where those needs are and where those challenges continue to be. So, I don't know if you want to add anything on data. >> Just to say as part of our coalition work we also collect pretty robust community level data. Data related to our strategic plan goals. So we're always happy to share back and report on those. >> Fuentes: Thank you. Yes, I think that having that

information to come back to us, perhaps in this committee or to council in the form of a memo and just having an update on any outcomes and metrics and especially the evaluation information too would be helpful and beneficial. And building on that, knowing that we have -- so you said 300 children will have access to these programs with the wait list is 1,700. So for those other 1,400 children who are currently on

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the wait list, what opportunities do we have for them? What else can be done? >> So, we're hoping that the navigator staff will help identify maybe some of the children who do qualify for pre-k3 and 4 and expanding those programs and the pre-k partnerships and making sure that they do not remain on a wait list without understanding that these additional opportunities that might have some seats available. That also includes our headstart program. So whenever they're going through enrollment, making sure that families know that early headstart and headstart may have more opportunities as well. Texas workforce commission and Kathie can probably speak a lot more into this piece, but I believe that yesterday approved some additional funding to allow the workforce board to serve more children. And so we're hoping that locally that's going to be about another 300 children.

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So -- so, you know, little -- all of these investments help, and, of course, it's not just -- it won't solve the problem. Like Kathie said, this is just who is on the wait list and there's probably a greater need out there. But it is -- it is definitely helping. And so, of course, that still has some additional children on the wait list that even with these programs. Also with the navigating staff, hopefully right now when workforce board has done some outreach recently, it's about 29% response rate when they're doing outreach from the wait list. So hopefully by proactively engaging with these families, we'll keep them engaged so we can really find them a high quality childcare and get them enrolled. Anything else? >> The opportunities are at the state and federal level to invest in -- in increased childcare access as well as

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increasing reimbursement rates to meet the cost of care, because we know that those subsidy does not cover the costs of high-quality care. Short of that, many communities are identifying unique revenue streams to expand access to childcare. Childcare for state funding. >> Fuentes: So, thank you, because -- so other cities are identifying dedicated revenue streams in absence of state and federal leadership on expanding access to childcare and early childhood education. So for me that -- that means that we as a council should consider what that looks like locally for us to have a dedicated funding source to help to

us expand the access to high-quality childcare. What would you say that could look like? Or, how would we go about identifying a dedicated revenue source? >> I would say that we can look

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to San Antonio as an example. They've laid out a process for us where, you know, they implemented the 18 sales tax dedicated and understanding the background of how they got to that going through a process to do some fiscal mapping and cost modeling, and then generating -- looking to see what those potential funding ideas could be. There are a number of entities across the country that are doing this for municipalities. I do know that the cost for that kind of background work would be between \$50,000 to \$75,000 to just make that plan and then, of course, if you were going to go through, you know, a ballot initiative or other dedicated funding stream there may be associated costs with that -- that element. But the first piece is to really to be able to knowledgeably to set the target of what amount of money do we have in the system,

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making sure that we're maximizing the use of that. And then how do we understand, given all of these opportunities, what is that target number that we need to truly fund the big picture in our community. I think that it would be that study. >> Fuentes: Thank you. So I need to -- I need to shift gears. Mayor pro tem alter who joined us on the call has an 11:00 need to leave, so I know that she's certainly been a leader in helping us increase our funding and I want to make sure that she has an opportunity to ask questions before she needs to depart. >> Alter: Thank you, chair, I really appreciate the opportunity to speak briefly here. I'm really excited to see the progress that we're making with these investments when I championed putting \$11 million, I knew this had the potential to be transformational in its ability to invest both in the capacity of the system, as well as improving the research that we need to make sure that future

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investment flows happen as well as meeting, you know, various needs in our community. And for the providers. As we evolve through this process of covid, the importance of these investments becomes even more important. So, thank you, for your work. You have touched on it a little bit in response to some of my colleagues, but what would you say are the key next steps to ensure that these investments are sustainable over the long haul? I know that some of them are designed to create the sustainability like the capacity building for the childcare centers themselves, but can you speak a little bit more to those next steps, please? >> As you said, some of them are -- were originally geared towards self-sustainability, such as shared services and engaging with other communities and we have a national

technical conference here next week on that. I am now learning that in light of the pandemic that many of those are trying to continue

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funding those philanthropically or with funding streams because of the dire straits of the sector. So as much as we aim for sustainability and/or collect data that demonstrates the impact of these investments, and where can we potentially shift where there are already quality dollars in our system, such as workforce solutions has a bucket of money for quality investments. Can we look at the data and make sure that all of the current investments are being invested most strategically, and are all of our philanthropic dollars invested most strategically? And do we need to shift to some of the newer initiatives to sustain that impact with those dollars or do we truly need to generate additional funding to sustain this work? Because the system is still quite broken. We're trying to recover, and the point to which we are recovering, you know, prior to the pandemic was very fragile

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and under-resourced. So we can't achieve -- there's no silver bullet to that. >> Alter: Thank you. >> Donna, did you want to add anything? >> No, I think that Kathie did a great job and I think that it will take identifying sustainable funding that can really be -- provide those additional and consistent supports long term because it is a broken system. >> I would echo councilmember tovo in the idea that this is economic infrastructure, and is there an opportunity to leverage business investment and development incentives in a new or a unique way. As we know that this is essential to our growing workforce and expanding economy. And I think that we tend to be thinking in a social service perspective, and we have made a lot of strides in our economic development department. It's been amazing -- amazing

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partners in that, but I think that there is more opportunity there when we think of it in terms of economic development. >> Alter: I would absolutely agree with you and I believe that you are connected but I just want to underscore, you know, last council meeting or the time before, we -- we adopted some contracts with some of the diversity chambers. And they're going to be watching this regional, economical, equity plan and I think that we have already connected you up with them with respect to childcare as part of the need that we see for supporting our diverse businesses. And so I think that, you know, that's -- that's one connection with economic development work that we're doing that I think that is really important. We also recently launched a navigator program for businesses. Which I hope that you will hook your childcare businesses up as an additional support beyond the shared

services. You know, it is free for them to access and it provides some of the similar reports. And in terms of the additional funding, I wanted to respond to

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something that councilmember Fuentes was asking about with the other revenue streams. Because I've had some initial conversations with United Way. I think that childcare is an area that we should think really carefully about trying to do. I think that we do need to have all of our ducks in a row and we have some investments at this point, so I don't know if this year is the right year or we have the research back. But one could imagine a tax rate election where we're dedicating whatever -- you know, 1% of a tax rate would be for that particular year. And then that stream of funding is there. It is a little bit like a sales tax but it's a tool that we have available for us since we don't currently have sales tax option. I think that would garner some support, but we would need to do it in a way where we have it -- you know, all of our ducks in a row and establish that our current funding streams were not

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-- not sufficient. My final question is about the county. They have provided 15 months' worth of funding at the tune -- can you tell me how much, and then you can tell me what we are doing to work with them to make further investments. >> So, currently it's \$4.6 million they're investing on the 15 months. They are doing a community survey currently. And so we are making sure that throughout the success by six coalition that everyone knows about that opportunity to weigh in to that survey. Because I think that based on the results of that survey, from what we understand, it will determine which direction that they go. We do -- from what we understand, we have been working really closely with them on the investments they have made so far and really looking at these contracts as a community-wide, like, in the performance indicators and the data. Looking at this holistically as a community instead of separate

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contracts and really working side-by-side on these investments. So that part has been really been good. We do understand that they have requested in their budget for the additional funding beyond the 15 months, and so we should know more about that from what I understand at the end of summer. Or in the summer. >> Alter: Well, great, please let us know how we can support those efforts and for folks who are watching, please reach out to your commissioner and encourage them to invest in early childhood education. Thank you. And thank you to the committee and to the chair for allowing me to bump ahead. This is an area that I am passionate about and an area that I championed during our budget discussions and I appreciate the opportunity to speak. So thank you. >> Tovo: Thank you, mayor

pro tem, and I enjoy worked with you on that framework and I appreciate the work that your staff and mine did with Kathie, and thank you for your service on our commission.

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>> Alter: Absolutely, I should have mentioned that. Thank you. >> Tovo: Other questions? Let's see -- I'll go to the mayor and then back to you councilmember Fuentes unless councilmember kitchen has a question. >> Mayor Adler: I really appreciate the presentation as well, you know, and as we went through the pandemic that we went through, I think that a lot of what you have been saying for years just stood out in really stark relief. And the first thing that really stood out starkly was the fragility of the childcare infrastructure that we had. When the pandemic hit and people were staying at home and people weren't going out, it became really clear really fast that we were in danger of losing the childcare infrastructure that exists in our city. And we were confronted with not only its loss, but the realization that once lost it becomes so much more difficult to -- to reestablish.

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So I think that really stood out in relief. The other thing that stood out in relief that you have been talking about for a long time and that we have talked about here is that childcare is not just a social service program, that fundamentally it is about getting people to work. It is about getting people able to train for better jobs so that they can provide for their family. That there is no workforce development solution in our city that does not include that. And I think that stands out in stark relief when I had originally proposed the framework for the spending of the arpa dollars and suggested to colleagues that we focus on just some few priorities, rather than handling this the way that we had in the past, which was still important, but touching a

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lot of people, but not really giving enough to anybody to be able to do transformative work, the concept of really focusing on a few things became something that everybody wanted to do, which was great. And when we sat down to actually to do that and listed I think three, maybe four things that we focused on, childcare was number two in that list, reflecting the importance and the priority. So it's good to see the investments happening. It's good and I appreciate Travis county joining in lockstep with the city and the county together on this. This is a priority. And so you guys do need to be coming back to us and treating it as the priority that the community has established for this. Thank you for the work. >> Thank you. >> Tovo: Thank you, mayor. Councilmember kitchen, did you have a question. Okay, councilmember Fuentes and

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then we'll probably then conclude. >> Fuentes: Yes, I just wanted to wrap up my remarks in saying that, you know, thank you for the presentation. Definitely am super supportive of us identifying a dedicated revenue source to continue our early childhood and childcare investments. And to get to what the mayor pro tem was saying earlier, I think while -- you know, this type of work will take years to initiate, we do need to get started with at the very least that study that takes a look at the ecosystem. So I'm grateful for councilmember kitchen for her support and joining me in bringing forward a policy direction and initiating that type of study so I just wanted to share that with you. Thank you. >> Tovo: Councilmember tovo -- >> May I express sincere thanks for the Austin health department. I don't know if council knows the extent of the support that they have provided to the childcare sector throughout the

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pandemic with a nurse line and our childcare task force. And I will note that the mental health of our childcare leaders is fragile right now. We still have young children who cannot access vaccines. And parents who are frustrated by low staffing and they simply want to go to work. And, unfortunately, what happens is that our childcare program directors are taking the full force of that. And I'm just so grateful for the work of our public health team that has taken a lead and still convenes weekly calls and is hearing and helping to process and helping problem solve. So I would be remiss in just not asking for a thank you for that. So, thank you so much for the opportunity to share. >> Tovo: Yeah, thank you for that. And I know -- and thank you, you know, there's so much going on during the pandemic that that is an element that we haven't really discussed much, the kind of support that you provided. And I know that my office got several of those problems that

[11:08:09 AM]

we sent on to you all to help to problem solve directly with childcare providers and others. So, thank you, for reminding us about that. And thank you assistant director on behalf of all of your colleagues, thanks for the work that you did and continue to do. Yes, councilmember kitchen. >> Kitchen: I didn't have any questions, but I do want to add my voice to the thank you. And to everyone involved in this effort I think that it is so critical and I wanted to say thank you to you all for the work that you have done as well to my colleagues who have championed this effort for quite some time. So I like hearing the conversation about how can we take steps towards some kind of dedicated funding. So I think that thinking of systemic kind of changes like that is -- is something that is important for us to do. So, thank you all. >> Thank you. >> Thank you. >> Tovo: All right, colleagues, that is our last item and

[11:09:11 AM]

without anything else we need to discuss here today? Okay, we stand adjourned at 11:09.