



EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCIL MINUTES

**REGULAR MEETING
Tuesday, April 12, 2022**

The Early Childhood Council (ECC) convened on Tuesday, April 12, 2022.

Board Members in Attendance: Chair McHorse, Vice Chair Worthington, Council Members Alvarez, Bliss Lima, Conlin, Demby, Gordon, Hedrick, and Huston

Staff in attendance: Caitlin Oliver, Donna Sundstrom, Cindy Gamez, and Michelle Rodriguez

CALL TO ORDER – Chair McHorse called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION: GENERAL

Two people provided public comment. The first speaker, Zenobia C. Joseph, requested that the ECC include access to transportation in recommendations regarding affordable housing for families with young children and that the ECC ask City Council to reconnect people who live North of Highway 183 through public transportation. Joseph also commented on City competitive bidding for social service contracts and expressed concerns about access for new providers to receive funding.

The second speaker, Laura Olson– a mom, former early childhood educator, and Organizing Director of GoAustinVamasAustin!– requested that the ECC schedule evening meetings to accommodate the schedules of working families and that future meetings include multilingual interpretation and translation of agendas. Olson also asked that the ECC prioritize families with young children in anti-displacement and affordable housing strategies and that the ECC prioritize opportunities for equitable investments in Austin’s Eastern Crescent.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES from March 9, 2022, meeting – Member Gordon moved to approve the minutes from the March 9, 2022, regular meeting. The minutes were approved by a unanimous vote of 9-0.

2. NEW BUSINESS AND POSSIBLE ACTIONS

a. Annual ECC officer elections

Member Hedrick moved to recommend re-election of Cathy McHorse and Matt Worthington for the Chair and Vice Chair positions, respectively. Chair McHorse and Vice Chair Worthington were re-elected by a unanimous vote of 9-0.

b. Policy Work Group updates

i. Workforce Solutions Capital Area request to add appointee to the ECC

Prior to the City Council's 10-1 decision for appointing members to boards & commissions, Workforce Solutions (WFS) Capital Area appointed someone to the ECC. After that decision, WFS no longer had an appointed person. Adding a 14th member to the ECC requires an ECC bylaw amendment and a City Code amendment. The policy work group decided that now is not the right time to pursue this request because of the community engagement with WFS already in motion. Members discussed considering equitable makeup of the ECC and the criteria for expanding appointed positions, possibly to additional school districts. Chair McHorse requested that the Community Engagement Work Group further discuss and develop recommendations to the ECC regarding the makeup of the ECC. Members also discussed setting up a system for regular reports, which in the past included a standing agenda item inviting WFS, among other systems agencies, to provide updates routinely to the ECC. Chair McHorse will update WFS of the decision to not pursue adding a 14th member at this time.

ii. Recommendation to increase Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) spending on Early Head Start and child care for teen parents

Member Huston motioned to approve the recommendation with an amended title: "Early Head Start and Child Care for Teen Parents." Chair McHorse motioned to approve the recommendation with an amended title to say "Austin-Travis County Success By 6 Coalition" rather than "United Way Success By 6 Coalition." Motion to amend the recommendation passed with unanimous vote of 9-0. Members discussed that transportation considerations raised during public comment do not need to be addressed in this recommendation. The recommendation was approved as amended by unanimous vote of 9-0.

iii. Recommendation related to community engagement for APH social service contracts

Chair McHorse motioned to approve the recommendation. Members discussed equitable access to social service contracts and the competitive procurement process as a separate recommendation, to address the public comment. Member Hedrick motioned to amend the recommendation to include an additional request that the City "Allow [social service contract] agencies to request funding to cover the cost of increased community and client engagement and that the City increase funding to accommodate community and client engagement, when possible." Motion to amend the recommendation passed with unanimous vote of 9-0. The recommendation was approved as amended by unanimous vote of 9-0.

iv. Recommendation regarding affordable housing investments

Chair McHorse motioned to approve the recommendation. The recommendation was approved by unanimous vote of 9-0.

v. Recommendation to prioritize early childhood education workforce and families with young children in City anti-displacement planning

ECC members discussed addressing this recommendation to City Council rather than the anti-displacement task force and discussed wanting more information about how access to transportation might be included in the recommendation. Chair McHorse therefore withdrew this recommendation until more information is gathered.

c. Joint Inclusion Committee (JIC) updates

i. Update on budget actions taken up by the JIC and consider endorsement or adoption of those budget actions

Member Alvarez updated the ECC that the JIC voted to endorse the ECC budget recommendation for fiscal year 2022-23 to maintain early childhood funding. The budget recommendations that were endorsed were grouped into four priority areas. Under the resiliency

priority, the JIC endorsed recommendations related to the winter storm response. The maintain early childhood funding recommendation from the ECC was endorsed as an affordability priority, along with recommendations related to rent & utility assistance for seniors; safe & affordable housing for people who identify as LGBTQ; immigrant legal services; the establishment of an immigration affairs office; bilingual early care & education programs; and funds for parent support specialists in schools. Under the engagement priority, the JIC endorsed funding to hire a City community engagement specialist; a position in the cultural arts division; a request to update the Quality of Life reports every 5 years; more public safety support; victim advocacy; and funds for a community liaison. Under the access priority, the JIC endorsed support for homeless, youth, seniors, and women; and mental health services for LGBTQ individuals, youth, Asian, Hispanic, immigrants. ECC members discussed requesting that the JIC prioritize the recommendations they endorse in future budget cycles, which would go beyond grouping the recommendations into issue areas as is currently done.

ii. Topics for the ECC to take to the JIC

Members discussed a request to call for budget information earlier in the process and to seek public input sooner.

d. Community Engagement Work Group updates

i. Early childhood organizations/task forces in the community that the work group can support

Member Gordon requested that ECC members share with her any information about possible connections or organizations that the ECC can collaborate with and support.

e. Week of the Young Child proclamation at City Council meeting on April 21, 2022

Mayor Pro Tem Alter will be reading the Week of the Young Child proclamation at the City Council meeting on Thursday, April 21, 2022, at 5:30 p.m., at City Hall. The proclamation was drafted by the Austin Chapter of the Texas Association for the Education of Young Children (TXAEYC). ECC members and other community members are invited.

3. STAFF UPDATES

a. COVID-19 updates

Austin-Travis County has aligned the Austin-Travis County risk-based guidelines and mask recommendations with the CDC's COVID-19 community levels. Currently, Austin-Travis County is at a low community level, which means that masking indoors is optional, regardless of vaccination status. People with symptoms, who test positive, or have had close contact with someone with COVID-19 should wear a mask. Austin Public Health has updated COVID-19 recommendations for local child care providers to reflect these changes. The updated guidance recommends that masks be worn by all people 2 and up in the child care setting when the community level is high.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- a. Potential ECC recommendation to City Council regarding equitable access to social service contracts and the competitive procurement process
- b. Potential ECC recommendation to City Council to prioritize early childhood education workforce and families with young children in City anti-displacement planning

c. City planner presentation on Project Connect

ADJOURNMENT – Chair McHorse adjourned the meeting at 7:37 p.m.