



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Adrienne Sturup, Director, Austin Public Health *Adrienne Sturup*

THROUGH: Stephanie Hayden-Howard, Assistant City Manager

DATE: July 19, 2022

SUBJECT: **Staff Update – Joint Austin/Travis County Public Health Commission**

This memorandum serves as an update to [Resolution 20210930-108](#) which directed the City Manager to collaborate with Travis County on creating a joint Austin/Travis County Public Health Commission and return to City Council with a formal recommendation on the creation and implementation.

The resolution further directs the work of the Public Health Commission to include the following:

1. Monitor the public health status of Austin and Travis County
2. Explore the best/evidence-based public health practices for areas that need improvement and provide recommendations
3. Inform policymakers, administrators, and public health agencies at large about the status of the public health system
4. Provide an annual formal recommendation on the improvement of the overall public health programs, projects, regulations, and services within the governing entities in the city and the county
5. Work to address health disparities that impact health outcomes for underserved patients and populations
6. Gather input from the community on budget and programming recommendations to share with policymakers and health agencies annually
7. Report periodically to the Public Health Committee of the Austin City Council and the Travis County Commissioners Court (or the appropriate committee thereof)

Phase One – Information Gathering

Austin Public Health leadership and Travis County Health and Human Services began meeting to address the task. Key first steps were aligning with Travis County and ensuring a similar resolution was presented to and acted upon by the Commissioners Court. [The County resolution passed on February 22, 2022.](#)

Staff from both agencies met with key community leaders, council members, commissioners, and stakeholders to gather information on the commission's intent and scope. All agreed that the commission should work in three areas:

1. Amplifying the need to address disparities through programs, policies, and resource recommendations anchored in equity
2. Amplifying and supporting the work of public health to engage communities in the implementation of evidence-based strategies to address health disparities
3. Advocate and support the strengthening public health infrastructure to better position the community to respond to public health threats

Staff also reviewed information on existing Boards and Commissions within the City of Austin with similar intent and purpose; of interest is the Austin HIV Planning Council. The HIV Planning Council is a group of volunteers appointed by the Mayor. They oversee the allocation of funds from the Ryan White HIV/AIDS program to coordinate an effective and comprehensive community-wide response to HIV. The HIV Planning council is a requirement of the federal funding the City receives. By-laws and membership are per guidelines from Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA). Planning efforts of this body cover five counties: Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Travis, and Williamson. <https://www.austintexas.gov/content/hiv-planning-council>.

Other relevant models considered were the Central Health and Sobering Center Boards. These bodies contain City and County appointees and ex-officio members representing local government.

Phase Two – Peer City Analysis

Staff researched cities within and outside of Texas with established bodies with similar intent and purpose. Of particular focus were the following five cities/counties:

- Dallas County, TX,
- Minneapolis, MN,
- Montgomery County, MD,
- Lane County, OR,
- and Alameda County, CA (attachment A).

Staff reviewed the following information:

- Purpose and Vision
- Membership Description
- Number of Appointees
- Term Limits
- Leadership Structure
- Meeting Frequency

This information, language in the resolution, and feedback from stakeholders were foundational in developing specific recommendations around the scope of work and membership (including the number of appointees, recruitment, and application process).

Staff Recommendations

The following are recommendations from the staff team : Local Health Authority and Medical Director for Austin Public Health, Austin Public Health Director, Travis County Health and Human Services County Executive, Travis County Planning Project Manager, and Travis County Intergovernmental Relations Officer(Staff). This team also consulted with the City Clerk to ensure alignment across the City and County.

Scope of Work

Staff based the proposed revisions to the Austin/Traviv County Public Health Commission's (ATC-PHC) scope on information gathered and the potential overlap with responsibilities mandated by state statute as core functions of a local health department, it is recommended that the following activities would fall within the scope of the commission:

1. Explore the best/evidence-based public health practices for areas that need improvement and provide recommendations
2. Provide an annual formal recommendation on the improvement of the overall public health programs, projects, regulations, and services within the governing entities in the City and the County
3. Gather input from the community on budget and programming recommendations to share with policymakers and health agencies annually
4. Report periodically to the Public Health Committee of the Austin City Council and the Travis County Commissioners Court (or the appropriate committee thereof)

Membership

Staff recommends a membership consisting of nine (9) appointees and four (4) ex-officio members. The nine appointees will represent individuals and organizations best positioned to provide expertise by profession, organizational affiliation, or lived experience. The ex-officio members will consist of the Local Health Authority and leadership (or designee) from Austin Public Health, Travis County Health and Human Services, and Central Health. A draft recruitment matrix is attached (attachment B).

Ex-officio members will vet membership applications and make recommendations to the ATC-PHC for approval. The ATC-PHC will then forward the recommendations to the City of Austin Public Health Committee and the Travis County Commissioners Court for review and approval.

Next Steps

1. Attorney review of by-laws - July
2. Draft ordinance for City and County Approval - September
3. Establish a timeline for the recruitment and vetting process – September/October
4. Present roster to Public Health Committee and Commissioners Court-November
5. Schedule initial meeting – January 2023

Austin Public Health and Travis County Health and Human Services staff will continue to meet bi-weekly to work on relevant documents and the orientation process and share updates with Council.

Austin Public Health will provide a status update memo summarizing progress on the next steps by September 30, 2022.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at 512-972-5010 or Adrienne.Sturup@austintexas.gov

cc: Anne Morgan, Acting City Manager

Pilar Sanchez, County Executive, Travis County Health and Human Services