



**EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2022**

The Early Childhood Council convened in a regular meeting on Wednesday, October 12, 2022, at City Hall, Board and Commission Room #1101, 301 West Second Street in Austin, Texas.

Chair McHorse called the Early Childhood Council Meeting to order at 8:43 a.m.

Board Members in Attendance: Chair McHorse and Members Bliss Lima, Gordon, Hedrick, Hosking Pulido, Huston, McCollum, and Worthington

Board Members in Attendance Remotely: Members Alvarez and Schennum

Staff in Attendance: Caitlin Oliver, Rachel Farley, Michelle Rodriguez, and Cindy Gamez

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION: GENERAL

The first five speakers to register prior to the meeting being called to order will each be allowed a three-minute allotment to address their concerns regarding items not posted on the agenda.

There was no public comment.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approve the minutes of the Early Childhood Council Regular Meeting on September 14, 2022

The minutes from the meeting of 9/14/2022 were approved on Member Huston's motion, Member Hedrick's second, on a unanimous 8-0 vote. Members Alvarez and Worthington were not present at time of the vote.

STAFF BRIEFINGS

2. Staff COVID-19 updates from Caitlin Oliver, Austin Public Health
The COVID-19 community level in Austin-Travis County remains low. People are encouraged to get the new bivalent COVID-19 booster designed to protect against COVID-19 omicron subvariants. The flu season began early in Austin this year. There is more flu transmission in the community than this time last year. APH is encouraging people to get the flu shot as soon as possible.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

3. Updates from related groups (as needed), including Austin Chapter of the Texas Association for the Education of Young Children, Austin ISD, Child Care Regulation, Child Inc, E3 Alliance, Success By 6 Coalition, Workforce Solutions Capital Area, and other groups in attendance

Updates from Austin ISD provided by John Green-Otero, Early Learning Director. Roughly 4400 students enrolled so far this year. District still dealing with staffing shortages.

The Child Care Regulation (CCR) update was given by Roy Jones. CCR continually permitting and monitoring child care operations, to ensure safety and well-being of children in care. CCR is also doing community engagement with parents and providers and outreach in regions considered child care deserts. They are searching for unregulated providers to help them get a required permit in the state.

An update about the Success By 6 Coalition was given by Chair McHorse. The next Success By 6 Coalition Stakeholder meeting is October 27, 2022, at the ACC Highland Business Center, 3-5 p.m. There will be a presentation on the upcoming Texas 88th Legislative Session.

Nicole Robinson provided updates from Workforce Solutions Capital Area (WFS). WFS has started a new contract year. Highlights from last contract year include a virtual training platform for parents with training topics like “Managing Tantrums and Meltdowns”; informational videos for parents that shows how to apply for child care scholarships and find child care; and 100% of non-Texas Rising Star (non-TRS) providers contracted with WFS are at entry level designation and have 2 years to become at least TRS level 2. WFS was awarded a grant for a support specialist to help transition child care providers to star-level designation. The Start Early final report has been submitted to executive leadership. A presentation on the findings will likely be in November 2022.

4. Presentation by Sharmila Mukherjee from CapMetro regarding Project Connect
Presentation by CapMetro has been postponed.

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS

5. Approve 2023 Early Childhood Council meeting calendar
The 2023 regular meeting calendar was approved on Member Huston’s motion, Member McCollum’s second, on a unanimous 10-0 vote.
6. Discussion and possible action on creating a budget workgroup, designating members, outlining responsibilities, timeline, and authorizing members to speak on behalf of the ECC on matters pertaining to their assignment
Chair McHorse shared updates from the October ECC policy work group meeting. The Joint Inclusion Committee is planning to invite the budget work groups from the member commissions to a fiscal year 2023-24 budget workshop in November.

The policy work group plans to dissolve and would like to see a time-limited budget work group formed to represent the ECC at the JIC budget workshop and to hold monthly meetings to inform ECC budget recommendations.

Jeremy Garza, staff liaison to the Joint Inclusion Committee, informed the ECC members that the JIC representatives have discussed public townhalls in November, January, and December that will gather input on both the FY 2023-24 budget and the quality of life studies. Themes for the townhalls have not been determined yet.

Chair McHorse moved to designate a Budget Work Group to investigate the challenges our community face and that need to be included in the upcoming FY23-24 budget. The work group shall consist of no more than 6 members, and members will be replaced as needed by the commission. Will make periodic reports to the ECC as deemed appropriate, with a summary report on what is included in the adopted budget, no later than October 31st, 2023. The work group members are authorized to represent the ECC as necessary and speak on behalf of the committee on matters pertaining to their assignment. The motion to create a work group for the fiscal year 2023-24 budget was seconded by Vice Chair Worthington and passed on a unanimous 10-0 vote.

Chair McHorse and members Bliss Lima, Gordon, Hedrick, and Schennum volunteered to be on the budget work group. Members Bliss Lima and Hedrick volunteered to attend the Joint Inclusion Committee's budget workshop on November 5, 2022.

7. Discussion about ECC Quality of Life Study and possible action to appoint members to the Quality of Life Study Work Group and schedule meetings
Member Hedrick facilitated a discussion on nine topics related to planning the quality of life study: quality of life (QOL) definition; goals; scope; design; deliverables; audience of final report; resources to conduct the study; potential challenges; and commitments. The guiding questions for this item were based on an outline used by the group that prepared Austin's LGBTQ+ QOL study. The following points were discussed by the members.

Definition of QOL:

- **Early Childhood Council's charge includes making recommendations to the city council for the creation, development, and implementation of programs that promote optimal development for young children and promote well-being of families of young children and that support a system of high-quality early care and education and afterschool programs for Austin's children**
- **Elements of QOL may include wealth and/or affordability; employment and wages; environment; physical health; mental health; education; recreation; leisure time; social belonging, connection, supports; religion; safety and security; housing transportation; toxic stress**

- **Frameworks**
 - **Community Advancement Network (CAN) dashboard includes indicators that are grouped into these categories:**
 - **We are safe, just, and engaged**
 - **Our basic needs are met**
 - **We are healthy**
 - **We achieve our full potential**
 - **Success By 6 Coalition Strategic Plan groups metrics into these pillars:**
 - **Healthy Beginnings**
 - **Supported Families**
 - **Quality Care & Education**
 - **Safe & Stimulating Communities**
- **Key questions**
 - **Are we a community in which people feel they can raise kids here?**
 - **How do caregivers perceive quality, affordability of child care?**
 - **What choices are families making about their jobs, schooling, housing, as it relates to access to affordable, high-quality early care and education?**

Goals:

- **Influence policy**
- **Inform early childhood strategic planning**

Scope:

- **Study population**
 - **Families with children under the age of 6 years (5 and under)**
 - **People in a caregiving role for young children**
 - **Within City of Austin and/or Travis County**
 - **People with potential to have children/planning to have children**
- **Delegate to work group a discussion on whether to include surveying pediatricians and law enforcement**
- **Focus on family and caregiver experiences, not on sustaining the child care system.**

Design:

- **Townhalls and focus groups to inform plans for survey construction**
- **Use of RFP for expert survey construction/implementation**
- **Get as much data from existing sources and partners**
- **Coordination with other Joint Inclusion Committee member commissions on a survey because of the intersection of their quality of life studies with early childhood**
- **Multiple modes of information-gathering and mixed methods design**
 - **Quantitative (e.g., survey) and qualitative (e.g., focus groups)**
 - **Options for survey to be completed online, via text, and in person**
 - **Language and accessibility considerations**

Deliverables:

- **Report and executive summary that tells the story of the community**
 - **Visuals**
 - **Quotes and testimonials**
- **Recommendations**
 - **The ECC and the work group will write the recommendations**
 - **Show the people involved in the focus groups and stakeholders the recommendations before finalizing, to get their input**

Audience:

- **Families**
- **Policy makers, including, but not limited to, City Council**
- **Schools**
- **Faith-based organizations**
- **Nonprofits and service providers**
- **Media**

Equity Office Resources:

- **Support includes**
 - **Navigating City bureaucracy**
 - **Advice**
 - **Possible stipends for focus group participants involved in planning the study**

Challenges:

- **Brevity vs. comprehensiveness of survey**
- **Reaching difficult-to-reach communities/people**
- **Creating an inclusive working group**
- **Open data and anonymity**

Commitments:

- **Inclusivity and accessibility**
- **Consistent terminology**
- **Build a sense of purpose and trust, especially with families who are undocumented**
- **Build a sense of community**
- **Avoiding deficit model**
- **Open-ended questions to let participants define needs**
- **Credibility**
- **Evaluator/consultant with experience with equity and intersectionality**

Next steps were also discussed. Chair McHorse will schedule a time for the QOL Study Work Group to meet to discuss the notes from this discussion. The work group will then report back any next steps and ideas at the next ECC regular meeting on November 9, 2022. At the regular meeting in January 2023, the ECC plans to reauthorize the QOL Study Work Group, to continue work into 2023.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

ECC members listed the following future agenda items:

- **Updates from the Quality of Life Study Work Group**
- **Updates from the Budget Work Group**

Vice Chair Worthington announced that he is stepping down from his position on the ECC. The October regular meeting was his last meeting as a member of the ECC.

Chair McHorse adjourned the meeting at 11:28 a.m. without objection.

The minutes were approved at the November 9, 2022, meeting on Member Tom Hedrick's motion, Member Aletha Huston's second, on a 7-0 vote.