



**EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11, 2023**

The Early Childhood Council convened in a regular meeting on Wednesday, January 11, 2023, 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 8:39 a.m.

Board Members in Attendance: Chair McHorse and Members Hedrick, Hosking Pulido, Huston, McCollum, and Paver

Board Members in Attendance Remotely: Members Alvarez, Bliss Lima, Gordon, and Schennum

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

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 November 9, 2022

The minutes from the meeting of 11/9/2022 were approved on Member Huston's motion, Member Hedrick's second, on a unanimous 9-0 vote. Member McCollum was not present at time of the vote.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

2. 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

Rania Salman, Annual Conference Chair for the Austin Chapter of the Texas Association for the Education of Young Children (TXAYEC), shared information about upcoming TXAYEC-Austin Chapter events. The Annual Conference will be on Saturday, February 25th, 8:00 am-1:00 pm. During the Week of the Young Child (WOYC) in April, the Austin Chapter will be hosting two family-friendly events at local libraries. The Chapter is also planning a WOYC Proclamation Day with City leaders to highlight the importance of early childhood education. The Chapter hosts National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation networking events to help programs through the accreditation process. Meetings are virtual and all child care providers are welcome. The next meeting is Tuesday, February 14th, 12:30-2:30 pm. Additional meeting dates and information have been posted as backup material.

John Green-Otero, Director of Early Learning at the Austin Independent School District, gave an update on pre-Kindergarten registration for fall 2024. Registration will be opening soon. The online registration form was scheduled to open on January 9, 2023, but due to some system issues registration has been temporarily postponed.

Chair McHorse gave updates on behalf of the Austin-Travis County Success By 6 Coalition. The next stakeholder quarterly meeting is January 26, 2023, from 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Lunch will be provided. The meeting will include a presentation and discussion about the Early Childhood Council (ECC) Quality-of-Life Study and an advocacy training ahead of the Early Childhood Education Rally Day at the Texas Capitol on March 21, 2023.

WORK GROUP UPDATES

3. **Update from the Quality-of-Life Study Workgroup related to the content of the study**
Member Huston provided an updated on the progress the workgroup has made to determine the quality-of-life framework for the study. The workgroup is defining quality-of-life by the aspects of a family's surroundings that influences their well-being and supports their needs. Three additional community members, who are parents of young children, have been recruited to help inform the content of the study. The workgroup will also be using input from community meetings to inform the study, including the City of Austin's Quality of Life Town Halls in December 2022 and January 2023 and the Success by 6 Coalition Stakeholder meeting on January 26, 2023. On February 5, 2023, the workgroup plans to attend the Joint Inclusion Committee's retreat for the commissions executing a quality-of-life study. The workgroup will prepare a draft Request for Proposal (RFP) for discussion at the regular Early Childhood Council (ECC) meeting in March. The next ECC Quality-of-Life Study Workgroup meeting is scheduled for Friday, January 20, 2023, 2-3 p.m. in person and online.
4. **Update from the FY 2023-24 Budget Workgroup about the workgroup meeting on January 18, 2023**

Board and Commission recommendations are due to the Budget Office by March 31, 2023. The ECC Budget Workgroup will meet Wednesday, January 18, 2022, at noon to discuss ECC budget recommendations in previous years and if there are any additional recommendations for the upcoming fiscal year. Some of the workgroup members will attend a joint meeting on January 18, at 5 p.m. for all the budget workgroups from commissions on the Joint Inclusion Committee.

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS

5. Discussion and possible action on Quality-of-Life (QoL) Study Workgroup membership, study content, and the joint QoL Study Workshop on February 5, 2023
Member Huston moved to approve Kim Houston, Arlene Cruz, and Tatiana Nam as community members on the Early Childhood Council (ECC) Quality-of-Life Study Workgroup. Member McCollum seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously on a 10-0 vote.
6. Discussion and possible action on FY 2023-24 budget priorities to put forward to the Joint Inclusion Committee
The ECC members did not take action related to budget recommendations.
7. Discussion and possible endorsement of the Texas Prenatal to Three (PN-3) Collaborative's policy priorities for the 88th Texas Legislative Session
Member Huston provided a summary of the PN-3 policy priorities for the 2023 legislative session, which have been adopted by Austin-Travis County's Success By 6 Coalition. Member Huston moved that the ECC endorse the PN-3 policy priorities for the 88th Texas Legislative Session. Member Paver provided a second. The motion passed unanimously on a 10-0 vote.
8. Discussion and possible action to recommend City Council amplify the 2023 Best Place for Working Parents campaign and to ask that City elected officials and departments encourage local businesses to participate in the initiative
Member Hedrick provided an overview of Early Matters Greater Austin's (EMGA) Best Place for Working Parents initiative. 2023 is the third year of this initiative in Austin. Businesses receive designation based on the number of family-friendly policies they have. 140 businesses have been designated. A memo from EMGA has been sent to Mayor Watson, requesting his endorsement. Member Hedrick moved that the ECC endorse the 2023 Best Place for Working Parents initiative. Member Hosking-Pulido provided a second. The motion passed on a unanimous vote of 10-0.
9. Discussion and possible action on proposed definition of "affordable, high-quality child care" for City of Austin business purposes
Austin Public Health staff, Caitlin Oliver and Rachel Farley, shared that City Council passed Resolution No. 20221201-044, which directs City staff to create a transparent process that allows for City Council to participate in plans for development and redevelopment of City-owned land. Goal #7 of the resolution

directs staff to work with Success by 6 to articulate criteria for “affordable child care,” present the proposed definition to the Early Childhood Council (ECC), and then bring it to City Council for approval in March 2023.

The ECC members discussed proposed definitions of high-quality, affordable child care for the purposes of City development projects. The proposed definition for high-quality child care matches the definition that has been used by both the Success By 6 and the City’s Strategic Direction 2023 plans: “‘High quality child care’ refers to child care programs that have a quality rating of Texas Rising Star (TRS) 4 Stars, and/or are nationally accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) or the National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs (NAC), and/or are an Early Head Start and Head Start (EHS/HS) program.” If a program is not contracted to accept child care scholarships, a program cannot be TRS. As of December, there are 46 TRS 4-star centers, 9 TRS 4-star homes, and 46 centers with national accreditation. There was discussion about whether to recognize TRS 3-star programs as high-quality, given programs can fluctuate between 3 and 4 stars, from year to year.

The proposed definition for affordable care was used in the current agreement the City has with the child care operator at the Austin Public Health facility at Bergstrom Tech Center, which is that the operator serve at least 10 children who receive Texas Workforce Commission child care scholarships through the local workforce development board, or they have at least 20% of children enrolled receiving these scholarships. The members discussed that this definition is focused on accessibility to child care for families with low income, and not affordability for all families. The Department of Health and Human Services has a 7% affordability benchmark for child care which recommends a family using child care scholarships through the workforce development board spend no more than 7% of their household income on the child care co-payment. An unintended consequence of using this percentage for all families, regardless of income, would be that most child care programs would be considered unaffordable and that 7% would likely not cover the true cost of care.

Chair McHorse and Member Hedrick volunteered to draft a memo to City Council that they will bring back to the ECC for approval. The memo will outline the discussion from this meeting, including:

- A definition of high-quality, affordable child care for the purpose of City development projects, as well as the limitations of the definition;**
- A recommendation that the City define accessible child care; and**
- A list of potential challenges related to crafting a universal definition of affordable child care.**

STAFF BRIEFINGS

10. COVID-19 and other respiratory illness updates from Caitlin Oliver, Austin Public Health

A steady rise in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations has elevated Travis County's COVID Community Level to medium. The Austin Public Health (APH) COVID risk-based guidelines recommend wearing a mask in many circumstances. For people who are at higher risk of severe illness or are not up to date with their COVID-19 vaccines, masking indoors is recommended when gathering, dining, and shopping. For people who are up to date with their COVID-19 vaccines and boosters, masking indoors is recommended when social distancing in public is not possible. The best protection against COVID-19 is staying up to date with COVID vaccination and getting the updated bivalent booster, which is available to everyone 6 months and older. People can go to Vaccines.gov to find vaccine locations. APH offers the new booster at Shots for Tots clinics and at mobile vaccine program clinics and events throughout Travis County.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

ECC members listed the following future agenda items:

- **Presentation about the Ready Families Collaborative and home visiting programs**

Chair McHorse adjourned the meeting at 10:08 a.m. without objection.

The minutes were approved at the February 8, 2023, meeting on Member Tom Hedrick's motion and Member Johanna Hosking Pulido's second, on a 7-0 vote.