

Public Safety Committee (PSC) Special Called meeting Transcript – 2/28/2023

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[9:00:38 AM]

yeah already? Well, in that case, I'll call to order the public safety committee of the Austin city council at its February 28th 2023. It's nine o'clock am and we are meeting in the city council chambers at city hall. Member of the order that will go in today is well, we won't have public communications at the beginning because we don't have any speakers. That have signed up for public communications. We will go to item one, which is approval of the minutes in a moment, then we will have discussion impossible action on public safety issues in the rainy street district members. We have 17 speakers that have signed up to speak on this item. And, they'll have each have two minutes apiece to speak to us. Item number three will be a staffing update, and we have a

[9:01:39 AM]

number of people here for that, and I remember four will be a public safety facilities. Update. With that. I'm gonna go to item number one, and is there a motion to approve the minutes of the public safety committee meeting on January 10th is a motion is made to approve those minutes by councilor reveillon second by council member qadri. Is there any objection? No objection of minutes or adopted item number two is the discussion of possible action on the public safety issues in the rainy street district district. What I'm gonna do is we're going to have the speakers. Come first. As I said a minute ago. We'll have two minutes each for the speakers, and I will ask, our staff to help us out and going forward with the speakers. And I welcome all of them. First is J. Reyes here in person. Now. Is there a J. Reyes online?

[9:02:54 AM]

We have a John Alleman mama. And we can run through this list again. Do we have a tare? Hoda H O D. A let's let Tara Hoda speak. You'll have two minutes. Okay hello, everyone. My name is Tara. Am Jason's partner. I am here to tell you a little bit about Jason and asked that you consider some changes to the trail. So unfortunately, I will have to live with the mystery for the rest of my life, not knowing how or why my partner fell into the water and drowned his death. And we'll have to

[9:03:54 AM]

live the rest of my life without the peace of mind of knowing obviously what happened in the final minutes of his short life. Nobody else should have to live with this lack of closure, and it could all have been prevented with cameras and lights on the trail. Jason was a social butterfly loved by everyone he met. He loved his life, and he loved the city of Austin. He was the one who actually convinced me to move with him in 2020 after I tried to convince them to move to Salt Lake City. I have no words to describe what it feels like to lose the person you love and a plan to build a life with at 30 years old, but at the very least, we can ensure that nobody else has to experience this pain. I understand the argument against life on the trail due to habitat disturbance. I'm a wildlife conservationists by profession and I'm currently in a graduate degree program at the Yale school of the environment focused on conservation. Yes there's value in keeping parts of the hiking, biking, natural

[9:04:54 AM]

dark to preserve the natural environment, but it doesn't make sense to do that, in a heavily trafficked area right next to a major entertainment district in downtown Austin. We don't let Jason just be another name added to the list of people who have died on the M and road butler hiking bike trail. Many people had to be stuck for this change to come. But please make Jason no asked by installing cameras on this portion of the animals, my butler. Thank you. Thank you very much, and we're sorry for your loss. Appreciate your taking the time to talk to us today. Before we go to the next speaker of I want to point out that we have all of the members of the public safety committee, but we're also joined by mayor pro Tim Paige. Ellis council member Alison alter on remotely and we're also joined by council member Ryan all alter in person. Please go to the next speaker. And Neil Chaco.

[9:06:04 AM]

John Ronaldo. John Lucia Ronaldo. Council members for your time today. My name is Luca Ronaldo and I was and will forever be a friend of Jason John. This past month has been one of the most difficult periods of my life. To go from sharing lasting memories. One minute to them, searching countless hours

and other and then finding out the worst outcome, all within an eight day span was painful to single least. To hear the crying scream of a loving mother. The soft crying of a heartbroken father. And to feel the uncontrollable shaking of a devastated partner. Are things I wish no one in this world has to experience this is why I'm here today. I'm here today to ask for the city's investment in public safety

[9:07:04 AM]

measures around ladybird lake near Rainey street. We need lighting cameras an emergency blue light stations to be installed in this area as soon as possible to avoid this terrible situation from happening again. It pains me to say. Similar experience as us and yet still nothing has been done. It is time for a change. I know you all didn't know Jason personally, but if you did you know why so many of us came to the aid of his family in their time of need? Was to leave the world a better place than how he found it. By doing it the adjacent way, which was by making others feel safe. Truly honor Jason and the legacy has left behind is to continue his purpose and help make this world a better and safer place. This is why I am here today. Thank you for your time. Next speaker reshma Joseph. They, I. And also

[9:08:17 AM]

, I've known Jason my entire life. We grew up together. And I am here on behalf of, everyone that loves and cares about Jason. To urge this committee chairman. Put in public safety measures on ladies are like, as a few other people have mentioned. There's no reason why any other family should lose their loved ones because there isn't adequate lighting, adequate cameras or any other safety measures place in the area that is so highly trafficked. We are urging you to take a moment to consider is that all we're asking is to put up some lights and a little bit of safety. So we'd love to be able to honor Jason's memory and making sure that this doesn't happen to anyone else, and she really make often a favorite place for everyone. Thank you. Next speaker Jennifer Cloward.

[9:09:23 AM]

My name is Jen and I'm a friend of Jason and his partner, Tara. I've recently learned that Austin has one of the highest crime rates in America compared to communities of its size. One chance of becoming a victim of crime is one in 24. It is both a human right and a human need for the topic of safety is broad. I'd like to focus on physical safety on the lake path. In 2020 Austin began an initiative to redirect reimagine public safety . This initiative included gathering feedback from residents on how they rate their safety of those who responded. Less than half reported feeling their safety was good, with the majority reporting their safety felt fair or poor. While impressive improvements in Austin have been made with the transition to focus on reimagining public safety, none of the measures focused on the public safety of the well known path. The Annan rebuilt. Their trail is not only pitch black at night, but it

is covered in trees and shrubbery, blocking much of the trail from the public roads without proper lighting and emergency lights. It is inevitable that more people will continue to go missing. While the conversation

[9:10:24 AM]

of environmental protection is a separate topic, I confirm Lee testify that nobody should have to lose their partner, brother, son and friends of questionable circumstances had there been more traction on the previous public requests of safety measures on this trail that undoubtedly could have saved Jason's life or at the very least, provided justice justice to Jason for the unfortunate way he left. The safety of those enjoying the path is a non negotiable two things that will strengthen public safety for those that have bought them that made that normal or more may lose their lives is one rapid response planning, which includes emergency blue lights on the trail and to integrating lights on the boardwalk trail. You'll experience the path completely lit 24 7. There is no reason for this not to also be the case on the trail path. White for those using the path at night is a simple and effective approach with the efforts of the trail conservative project in full swing, the time to implement lighting and other public safety measures as long past due and should urgently be implemented. Thank you for your time. Next speaker varun barkey. Next

[9:11:28 AM]

speaker Raul Joseph. We'll run through this list again at the end, and the next speaker Miranda zim early. Next speaker inju John. Handy. Masood. Angel Chacon.

[9:12:38 AM]

Love life. Ah he loved you can start over. Sorry I didn't have you and meted. Okay. Sorry. Thank you. Thank you all for giving me the opportunity to speak with you today. I'm a cousin of Jason John and I wanted to speak because this proposal is dear to my heart as Jason was, Jason was someone that that loved life he loves to Stanley. He loved his friends. He loved his partner, Tara and lock his dog level. Buy it was a free spirit, and anyone that met him just instantly liked them to me. He was like a little brother . He was also like an uncle to my kids. One of my daughters attends, Texas state and San Marcos and the offer to be the emergency contact. If anything if you needed anything, my son was planning on attending UT Austin next year, and he offered to be, keep an eye on him for me and also helping with anything he offered him, which is placed

[9:13:38 AM]

day when they wanted to attend city limits last year. Very generous. Very kind. I mean, I'm sure the rest of his friends and family have expressed this and how much of a loss of the hurt and lost that we feel with him being gone, but we feel that this loss could have been prevented as everyone mentioned an android. But the trail by ladybird lighting, no cameras, not even emergency blue light towers. Even though this area by Rainey street is a popular walkway for many patrons at night, senses Jason's disappearances deaths have also come to learn that he was not the first person to lose his life in that lake. There have been others before him, and there's nothing is done. There will be countless others, some pleading with you today for the sake of human life to install lights and cameras on the trail to deter foul play pedestrians safer experience walking in that area after dark. Please do this, not just for Jason and the others have lost their lives and liked it for him. But for all future sons and daughters, siblings, friends and family members that may walk in that

[9:14:41 AM]

area in the future again for the climate and given me today, and I hope you'll pass this proposal. Next speaker is Michelle. I think you mean in the shot. Is it a 3 to 0 number? Yes, ma'am. My name is Michelle parker travel and the family friend of the John family and the best friend of parenthood. A his partner. I'm here to speak on the public safety issues and actions needed on the rainy street district. Referencing figure 5-8 current binding conditions, which can be found on page 41 of 1, 17 and 2021 safety and mobility study on the lady birthday. It shows the entrance of Rainey at the high priority area of concern deemed by the public as you continue along the path towards I 35 they're more only and public areas of concern. Clear exactly what the disappearance and the death of martin Gutierrez and my friend Jason John, and more than 10, others occurred or the place of concern for the public.

[9:15:44 AM]

Safety measures measures such as emergency blue light boxes, working cameras and lights in these areas. I'm aware that there are standards and protocols that go into place in these certain infrastructures into the ground. However it's now been two years since he was published and after my conversation with part and trail conservancy, it seems that we have to wait even longer for more proposals before any work can actually be done. How is it that the death of martin Gutierrez occurred in 2018, and one year later in 2019 Christian who survived a horrific balls or just this past July, Josh crow was found by the I 35 bridge, but no proposals have been made . How is it that the people of Boston have aspirin change? But years later, nothing has been done. I'm here not only to say that this is unacceptable. But as that our voices will not once again death ears. Mitchell Gutierrez begged for lights and cameras four years ago, but here we are once again advocating for the same thing. If you listen to his concerns, then maybe Jason would be alive right now, or, at

[9:16:44 AM]

the least we would know what had happened to him. These deaths that have occurred in ladybird lake are in the hands of the city officials that have ignored public pleas for change in the last five days we've collected over 1700 signatures to rally for this change, and we're just getting started. So I'm here now to hold all of you accountable, change again. I am aware that there is a protocol for establishing infrastructure but asked for a formal timeline. Adding lights and cameras, including the emergency. Blue fox is particularly dangerous section between your time has expired. Should be a priority. Thank you. Mayor we have several other phone numbers, and we're going to ask them to identify themselves as we end mute them. We have people online, but we're not sure of their names, so we'll have them identify themselves as people who would have signed up already. Okay, thank you. I'll ask you to end mute 51 to 9 to three. And speaker if you identify yourself, and then we'll start your time. 512 93 you're on. Go

[9:17:55 AM]

ahead, speaker. Welcome to we'll come back to that speaker will end mute 91432. Oh, speaker if you identify yourself, and then we will start your time. Right? That's fine. And we'll go to the next 19175 to 6. 9715 to 6 years in your name, please. Oh yes. My name is renji. Jonah I am the eldest brother of Jason John. Once we found that Jason was

[9:18:56 AM]

missing, it was instant panic. So I stand me being do something was wrong. And then the many days after that we were searching for him. All I could think was this could have been avoided. This is something that should not have happened. We should not be searching from my brother day after day without any sort of knowledge of his whereabouts or what occurred. And they dug deep with the help of friends and family. We found out that this is a common issue . This is something that's happened again and again, and speaking with the families that have lost loved ones they had pleaded cried. They have fought to get some change and nothing has happened. And now we are coming with the strength in numbers. Asking for change. There has to be lights in place, even on us a sense of basis. There has to be some sort of, cameras set up where we're.

[9:19:56 AM]

Please and mute 503367. Hi my name is Miranda them early. Jason was my good friend and neighbor and I'm here to advocate for change in his memory and his legacy. The fact that he isn't here right now still feels surreal. We're here today asking for safety measures, both on the trail and at the bars. Starting

with the trails. I've long expressed how unbelievable it is that has heavily traffic and popular trail in Austin doesn't have better lighting, not just remote parts of the trail is stepping out of my apartment at six P.M. In the winter and hitting the patch so dark just two minutes into my walk, but I have to turn around because I feel so unsafe. And we all know how pitch black . It is at night where Jason went missing, which is also right by apartments and hotels. There's no excuse for it to be unlit. When I first moved here, I was warned of two things. Don't go running on the trail in the early morning because you might get raped and be careful at the bar. There's a lot of roofing going on, especially on

[9:20:57 AM]

rainy and west six. I wanted to laugh at office urban legend, but I googled both and numerous articles and Reddit threads exist that clearly articulate this issue. Encourage you all to Google those and read those stories that people have firsthand accounts. Because it's happening all over. We don't know how or why Jason or any of these other men ended up in the water, and this is a huge problem. We all recognize that this is a complex situation and budgets and staffing issues are challenges, but the city is making money off of tourism and the growth that's happening in Austin, and some of that money needs to go back into common sense safety protocols like lighting cameras, emergency lights on the trail. It sounds like the trail cotton conservancy has solutions available that provide adequate lighting while also protecting wildlife. Even if that solution costs more, I believe it is worth it. Jason loved nature as the majority of the trail users and its solution that protects both will help keep nature lovers and safety lovers happy alike. Thank you for your time

[9:21:58 AM]

today. I know you all have loved ones that you want to protect. And I hope that you push these changes, in honor of Jason and others whose lives were cut short and similar ways and also to prevent this from happening to anyone else in the future. Thank you. Please add mute 646552. I my name is barren Berkey, can you please confirm if you can hear me? Yes, we can. Great thank you. As I mentioned, my name is of our own work, E I am a cousin brother of Jason. John wanted to thank you all for giving giving me and that's the opportunity to do. Speak to all of you, last few weeks have been extremely difficult and painful for all of us for all of Jason's friends and family. As we were going through this painful period last few weeks. We also had a chance to meet other family members. Other families who had lost their family

[9:22:59 AM]

members in similar circumstances in ladybird lake. Austin is a fast growing city known for its welcoming community, especially with the growth of the technology sector in the last few years. But 50 and

security are a major priority. As others mentioned before me on this call lady bootleg and the trail around it. It's extremely dark, even though it is so close to the to the core of the city life and the nightlife of Rainey street. There are a lot of people have been jogging. A lot of young people are jogging throughout the day, but at night, it's completely pitch dark. We have spent. Banana evening in the last few weeks. A lot of night all day all night looking for Jason and we start first time how extremely dark it gets there. We would like for you all to please consider do expedite the process to get new

[9:24:01 AM]

streetlights installed. Do you get emergency blue boxes installed and it's possible to install security cameras so that we can avoid another incident like this happening so that we can avoid another casualty so that we can avoid another family suffering from such deep pain often of a family member being lost early. So again. Thank you for your time. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to speak. But please be all request that you expedite the process to make some changes. Thank you. Please end mute 914772. Can you hear me? Yes, we can. Our cameras don't work. Our cameras don't work. Our cameras don't work. The amount of time these words were repeated throughout. The search for Jason is

[9:25:02 AM]

ridiculous, and the reason we had to search for your camera footage from surrounding areas is because there is no presence of light. North cameras dedicated to the trailer itself . If there had been I truly believe Jason could have been sounded much much sooner. I want to keep this short. Because it's heartbreaking that we're here, saying this after losing Jason, who was a brother of friends? Watson. And a giver and I did give her I know that, Jason, we're here. And it was someone else that had gone missing. He'd be here pleading for the same thing. So let's all work together to make sure this never happens again to anyone by installing lights and cameras and blue light block boxes. Alongside the trail of lady bird lake. Thank you very much for your time. Like to go back to one online speaker that may have

[9:26:02 AM]

had difficulty with the technology. It's 51 to 9 to three. If ulan mute that speaker and on deck in person will be Christopher pew. Color can you hear us by 1 to 9 to three? I think that for me. We can hear you. Hi my name is George E. Johnson and I have lived in Austin for the past 27 years. And we do use of the ladybird Johnson lake for private boarding and kayaking during daytime. I have two children who are 27 23 years old. I blatantly quest to them not to go to the

[9:27:02 AM]

train at night because, on and off here that's and break and assault on the on the train. So now it has hit home. Jason is a family friend of ours, and it was so excruciatingly painful to participate in the grief of the family, and I believe it is the same for families who have lost loved ones on the train on in safe conditions. It is imperative that we that the city cameras and lights and have the area they safe so that the public can go to them and enjoy the trade during nighttime and even in times and also, I would request to add some kind of security person until the lights and cameras. Child so that we

[9:28:04 AM]

can enjoy the lake. What is the point of having a trail which is so dangerous for the citizens to use and it is the responsibility and it is, the responsibility of the citizens as well as the government or the city council, or whoever is governing that area to have the place and on other trains safe for human beings to use and enjoy. And I want to thank you for giving us this opportunity to come up and talk on this issue. Thank you very much. Next speaker is in person, Christopher pew. Hi my name is Christopher pew. My son. Christian pew. Went missing off the Rainey St. State street back in November. 16th 2019. We spent a little over six weeks in the hospital in between a neuro rehabilitation facility and the intensive care unit down in del Seaton just trying to get him back on his feet. Another eight months just trying to get him to

[9:29:06 AM]

walk, talk, breathe and act like a normal person again. It's been a little over a million dollars doing such. And you know the biggest thing I hear the biggest thing that I have in. The biggest problem I have is that I really appreciate the Austin police department for their health and finding my son. The biggest problem I have is the gap the gap that I think all these families have, that everybody on the phone has is what is going on. And why can we not find any answers about what happened to our children? I mean, how would you like it if your children went out on a Friday night? Saturday night and didn't come home for three or four or five days, maybe eight days and then you find him dead or you find them with huge injuries that they're going to live with for the rest of their lives that you cannot repair and you cannot fix and the damage. I'm sorry, and the police department cannot tell you anything about what happened with your child. Nothing. Nothing. Nothing they have no answers other than they walked off, and it might be their fault that they went off this bridge or they went off into the lake, or they went off into wherever I don't believe that for a second. And the only answer that we're going to have is if something gets installed down there some

[9:30:06 AM]

lights and some cameras that maybe that you haven't answered next time this happens because, believe me, it's going to happen again. It will happen again. And it's up to you whether you want to have an answer for that next family or not. So please try to have an answer for him because this totally sucks. And every time it happens, we get to relive it. The good years, families had to relive it two times, at least maybe three or four. Every time this happens, they relive it. Every one of the Jason family, John's family is going to have to relive it, and I had to relive every single time. Try putting yourself in our shoes for just a minute and understanding. Like what we're going through every single time. This happens and you all city and we see it on the news, and we have to really deal with it. And then come down here and talk to you about it. Please do something to at least maybe have an answer for that next time. Thank you. The next speaker is calling from 91432. Oh, hi. My name is Elie and Madonna and Jason's month. Our family is going through such unimaginable sorrow and despite all of the past few weeks Jason was a gift of god from heaven. His name

[9:31:06 AM]

means Taylor. And in fact, he was a healer. Too many was one of the most loving, caring and empathetic person anyone could meet or have known by nature. Jason was very general and compassion made. He had a sense of intuition and emptiness beyond his age people's ability to speak goodness in everyone and hard drive and determination. Jason made so many friends in the last two years and was born and raised in New York. However he loved often so much and the people there and he engraved asked all of us to move to Austin. And now we are frightened to move their love for Austin and the community of forcing them to bury him in Austin instead of New York, while all the New York people were waiting for him to be the rule in New York, he excellent schools even to childhood school . He was the president of the club, even to many, many, many conference hmm. Problem people

[9:32:10 AM]

helping other people in my you I'm John family church right behind him with good values reflected in his life. He also had a team love for our future, doing fighting and biting, all inspired by his girlfriend, Tara, he was promoted. His company, and he was well respected by always workers. The fabric loving families. Now this is the beeper photo card that has been excited and never can be replaced. We mourn at this time overcoming toto, did you learn imaginable and unfathomable notes for the date? We will cherish those migrated, soundless, sweet and loving memory. We are welcome family will hold on to workers to take comfort at this time, but he's like embrace stably, I would lord resting in his loving yard. However we do not want another

[9:33:11 AM]

family to face the heartbreaking pain which we have experienced searching for our funds the whole now in our hearts for the rest of our life, Jason, timely John family is requesting to make all the necessary actions to protect the lives of the people of Boston ability. Bird leg. I also asked you to change the scary name under history of rain history to Jason street to bring healing to the family and the community. There are many things that our family has, including. I'm very sorry. I'm very sorry to interrupt you and I feel deeply your loss, and I'm sorry for your loss, but apologize, but your time has expired. A year. Next speaker Michelle Gutierrez. Mitchell Mitchell Gutierrez. Have a

[9:34:12 AM]

little speech here. Once again. My name is Mitchell guitars. November 19th 2018 date that forever changed my life. My little brother martin. Guitarist 25 years old just moved to Austin, Texas, live with me and my wife. Him and I went downtown all the time. Enjoyed life to the fullest. He was the happiest person in the world you would ever meet. He decided to go out with some friends on Sunday night on rainy street and they never came back. The next day, we knew something was wrong. We called the police searches were done. We're all over. Social media kids. CNN Fox News, CBS. I did interviews everyday, spoke with the police every day. And we did searches every day 20 to 30 people. For six days, and we found him March on November 26th and lady bird lake. Every interview. You find online, you're going to find me begging and begging for surveillance and lighting. That was never done. A year later, Christian went missing. And he nearly the exact same date my brother did. And

[9:35:14 AM]

once again I was all over the news. Begging for lighting surveillance and nothing was ever done. Multiple people have gone missing with no change. No progression into the cases rolling. Everything is accidental, and it's not something is going on. Something is and I got to meet Jason's family, and it was like staring in a mirror with my family for years ago. There's so much pain coming back every day. I saw everything that they're going through. And I had to sit down with his mom looking at my mom as well. With no answers. Something should have been done years ago. Even before martin so please do something. Thank you. Emily Crowe. Hmm. Hello

[9:36:20 AM]

my name is Emily Crowe and I'm a lifelong austinite and homeowner and district three. Mayor Watson . You know, maybe you may know my father, Alvin crow. He has been a resident in Austin since the seventies in a fixture on the Austin music scene. Today I speak on behalf of the crow and Geller families. And for Joshua Alvin crow, who can no longer tell his story on the 22nd of July, 2022. I received a phone call from my father what that would forever alter my life. I had a strange feeling as I answered the

phone as it was not a time he'd normally call me his voice. The boys filled with pain and agony, whispered your brother Josh died prior to that . I had never heard my father cry or express much emotion in my 44 years of life. Over these past seven months I have seen and heard my father cry more times than any person should. And my purpose and speaking today is to raise awareness regarding the safety issues in the rainy street district. Josh was writing his bicycle from Rainey street to his apartment at 10 and Ford and Riverside drive after work. Somewhere

[9:37:21 AM]

along the way he realized he's left. He left his keys at the bar he worked at on rainy street, he turned around to head back to rainy street and was biking north on the pedestrian bridge when the crash occurred just prior to the first switchback turn, Josh died from blunt blunt force trauma to the head and chest from a collision with a fixed object, according to the medical examiner's report. He was found by another person who was walking home from Wayne Rainey street and 911 was called at 2:56 A.M. Attempts to resuscitate Joshua made, but one CMS and the fire department arrived. Joshua's declared to ceased at 3 13 am his organs were not viable for donation due to his witness death and Austin homicide was assigned to the case. Josh's death was eventually declared an accident and we were told the case would be closed. With Josh being a very seasoned bicyclist. It has been extremely difficult to accept his death occurred during a trip he could probably make in his sleep since he rode the route twice daily for work. My sister and I retraced the route Josh took and as wobbly scooter

[9:38:22 AM]

zip zipped past us and bicycles. Thank you struggle to make the tight switchback turns due to the congestion from joggers, dogs and baby strollers. We noticed there was no lighting in the area. No reflective tape to mark the middle barriers. No police call boxes, no cameras, and no signs to warn of upcoming switchbacks. I did petition the city of Austin parks. And there are signs present now on the switchback turns, but we will never know what happened to Josh. We won't know if an object from I 35 hit him or if a possum run out in front of him or anything, so I just employ you to please, increase the safety measures just so that some families may have closure and know exactly what happened to their loved ones. Thank you so much for your time. Thank you. Joshua Gail. Hmm. Thank you all for being here. My name is Josh Gail. I'm

[9:39:23 AM]

a friend and former roommate of Jason John. Today I stand here in front of you all to ask you, my elected officials and those in charge of our parks and trails to make common sense safety reforms to rent any more tragedies and to make sure no other austenite has to be pulled out of our legs because to

be quite frank, this happens way too often, at least 25 times since 2014 so why do we continue to not make changes? We all know the saying about the definition of insanity. So what else needs to happen before you act? So what actions do we want? To be honest, there's a lot we do want to talk about our struggles to receive a police response and the resources we need. We do want to talk about the drugging Zahn, Rainey street and how to stop those but are top priorities for today's meeting is the installation of lights, cameras and blue light emergency call boxes. And if we already had those would they have made a difference? I think so. On the night Jason went missing. There was a witness who was smoking a cigarette on east av. He said it

[9:40:24 AM]

was too dark to see anything. Lights on the trail would allow him to see the incident. Maybe save Jason lights would allow anyone on the trail to simply see where they are going. Chris the unharmed individual who hobbled from the water to the holiday inn. Why suffering from hypothermia to call 911 could have got help a lot quicker, with the conveniently located emergency call box. Jason maybe could have even have hit the button on the box on his own if he needed the help before he somehow got into the water. And the unanswered question that is tormenting so many of us today. And what happened to Jason. What happened to martin, Christian Joshua and all the other victims could easily be answered? If we had footage capturing these dangerous heavy traffic and high risk incidents areas how can we make sure that those enjoying a nylon Rainey street and sixth street get home safely and not in the water a place they had no business being in to begin with . This isn't a paddleboard island tragedy. This is a not getting home safe tragedy. Look all these incidents could have been tragic accidents or there

[9:41:24 AM]

could have been foul play. Thank you, sir. I'm sorry if I could just finish my thought. I'm sorry. Your time has expired. Please make change. Thank you. I'd like to call again for J res. Are there any other speakers in person who have not been called? That concludes our speakers in person and online. Thank you very much for the record. I also want to recognize the council member of Velazquez has has joined us recognize council member qadri. Yeah. Thank you, mayor. And I want to thank the mayor and councilor of Alaska's for all their help when it came to finding Jason, you know, just the work that their offices put in. But most importantly, I want to thank Jason's family. You know, no family. Should have to go through with what they've gone through and to show the tremendous courage and love of their son of their friend of their partner. It's inspiring

[9:42:25 AM]

and just their, passion to make sure that real change happens, I think is heard from all of us here on the dais from for those tuning in and those who have read about this case and know about this case, and I'm so sorry that I was never able to meet Jason. And I think what the family has spoken of when they have spoken of Jason and the friends of what they've spoken of when they've spoken of. Jason says a lot about him and then the person he was, and I'm also so sorry to all the other families that are here. Martin's family, Christian's family, Joshua's family, and so many other families. That have lost loved ones, right? I wish we weren't here today talking about this issue. You know, I wish after the first incident, something like this happened. We took care of it. So I'm so sorry . I'm so deeply sorry for all the families that have lost loved ones. And the reason I requested this item to be on the agenda today. Is to give a

[9:43:27 AM]

dedicated time and space for these families to talk about their experiences. And daylight issues that this council can take up. To increase the safety along Rainey street. I've been in talks with director Mcneely from pard trail conservancy. Assistant city manager, Carolina's office, the interim city manager, his Garza city legal chief Chacon on what next steps would entail. And I'm focused on getting interim lighting until the trail conservancy completes the construction from their project , which is expected to be completed by the end of 2023. The emergency of blue light boxes that many folks have have mentioned and halo cameras in the vicinity. Because one thing that I do want to highlight that that has been mentioned there were no working cameras anywhere that had any visual of the trail. And that could you know, if not have stopped? The incident at least answered a lot of questions and with a lot of these families are dealing with

[9:44:28 AM]

right now, or the lack of answers. What happened to their loved ones, but with that I would like to transition to questions for staff. And it it love to start with chief Chacon to get some more background on what's happened on rainy street. Good afternoon. Mayor council members, Joseph chuckle and chief of police. What questions specifically can answer you. Council member? Yes, sir. Well, thank you for being here this morning, and I really do appreciate your help in the search for Jason, but I think it would be helpful for the council to understand the background as far as the number of deaths that have occurred and ladybird lake just in the past five years. These are folks who you know. They're unfortunately were found in ladybird lake. We're working on that request. We talked about that at the time when this investigation was going on, we don't break it out necessarily

[9:45:29 AM]

into those who in this tragic circumstances. Have come from Rainey street or from our downtown entertainment district , as opposed to those who were on the lake and might be in a boat and fall off the boat and drowned. So my team is still working on that, and I'll be glad to provide those numbers once we have them. I'm sorry. And then what is the process for acquiring footage from businesses that may be helpful in finding out the circumstances of the missing person or drowning of an individual? Generally we can go to a business and simply request it. The businesses are generally very cooperative, and we'll turn over the video that they have. Ah for those who, say that they need more, such as a court order , we can obtain a grand jury subpoena or potentially even a search warrant, if necessary to be able to get that information. Don't have to go that route very

[9:46:29 AM]

often, but, but those are generally you know, most of the time businesses are turning those over voluntarily. Thank you. And then what's the process for classifying your person as a missing person and the protocol to follow after that? You know generally, if someone if they're checking in on a regular basis. They have regular communication with their family. And then all of a sudden that communication cuts off. Someone can always call the police department and generate a request to locate. And they aren't necessarily deemed a missing person at that point. And. The amount of investigative resources that we can apply is usually proportionate to whether we think that there are found if there's foul play or some, you know, suspicious circumstances to their disappearance. You know, in this case, the call came in on February, the fifth and by the morning of or the

[9:47:31 AM]

afternoon of February, 6th it was assigned to the missing persons unit and, and recovery efforts where we were begun immediately. And then my last question inventory for replacing a halo camera. I'm not sure if you if you're the person asked this question, but placing a halo camera in this area if one is not available, what is the cost? Look like what is the process of a corner one. You know, we have, over 60 halo cameras that are deployed citywide. Most of those are in the downtown entertainment district. Around the sixth street area. There have been requests in other areas to set those up. The cost can sometimes be prohibitive as well as the technology that's needed to go ahead and set that up. Whether it's going to be a wired camera or a wireless camera and then providing a power source to it. So we've had from time to time to be able to, keep cameras

[9:48:32 AM]

operational. Move them because we don't have a power source for them, and that has proved a little bit challenging, and we're in the next phase right now of, making our halo system bigger and more cameras,

but we to my knowledge or not looking at one have not looked at one on the trail in this area that we're talking about. Thank you, chief. I have one question for Christians, father if he has, capacity to answer any questions. What Christians about it. Because, remember the public . Just one question. Okay, cool. Yeah no, I just had a question because, you know, unlike the other families who have spoken who had lost loved ones to an end. I believe that a lot of those were actually voted to accidental drownings. What was

[9:49:32 AM]

the cause for your you know what was the police reported? What was the cause of your son's son's accident? If you don't mind, state your name for the record, so we're my name is Christopher pew. I'm Christian. Useful. Thank you. My son's accident, it was deemed an accident. They said they couldn't figure out whether he fell off the bridge jumped off the bridge or was thrown off the bridge. But just so you know, there was another incident to we exactly. Almost two weeks before that were young lady was on the bridge with a group of her friends during the daylight was attacked by a homeless individual who was attempting to throw her over was intervened by a jogger. And this was actually put onto the city mayor race it was actually on the running a commercial for city public safety. And this gentleman. I think his name is Mike Dolan. I like to have that incorrect, but I think that was his name. Anyway he intervened and he was afraid that she was going to get thrown over the bridge. And that's exactly what I mean. Essentially what we think happened. My sons. He was attacked thrown over the bridge. There's really no easy way to just follow off or stumble off

[9:50:33 AM]

the congress street bridge, but I can't believe and that such a high traffic area right there where those bats come out from under that bridge, there's not a camera one working installed nothing. I mean nothing. You've got to be kidding me. I'm not trying to be mean. But I just like I cannot believe that and there's businesses all up and down that place. In fact, if you look up, there's a camera on the pole right at the light, where he went off, not working. Not working. Well, thank you. But it was an accident. You know, it clearly wasn't an accident, though I mean, he had contusions on the front of his head on the side of his head. When you fall you're only going to hit your head in one area. You're not going to hit it in multiple areas when you fall, so he was attacked. That we feel like that's all there is to it, but we have no absolutely no answers and nothing to go off other than he's just at the bottom of the bridge, and that's where we got. Thank you. Thank you. No, sir, that I appreciate it. Council member Kelly. Thank you, and thank you, council member for bringing this forward. I think

[9:51:34 AM]

it's something that we have needed as a council to address for quite some time. I actually have a couple questions for staff. First one's probably for the police chief. If I could ask you, how does traffic safety in the area of Rainey street play into the safety of the patrons who are down there? Are there any improvements that have been recommended to counsel? On Rainey street that the city has not had a chance to follow through yet with or that sort of thing. No council member not to my knowledge, we have looked at traffic safety on rainy street and actually ran a pilot program . I can't remember if it was last year or the year before, with regard to opening Rainey street to vehicular traffic, and determined that it was not safe to do so due to the heavy pedestrian traffic that we have there so, we have not experienced, you know any traffic major traffic incidents that have happened there, but, have continue. To have continued

[9:52:39 AM]

to place people on rainy street . For the purpose of safety in the area overall. I'm sorry to interrupt. Okay people are checking out their slide deck. I didn't want interrupted police. She's thank you for your answer on that. I appreciate it. Do you think that there have been more patrons on rainy street based on what you've observed, since covid has kind of come to a little bit of a law pardon? Have two more. What? I'm sorry. What has the patron population increase been like on the weekends on rainy streets since covid. You know, during covid, obviously, all of our entertainment district population was down. It has rebounded very strongly, and you add to the fact that on rainy street we have we have residents that actually live on rainy street, and it's a it's a very, very dense area. So if you go down to Rainey street on a weekend night, midnight one in the morning, the street is

[9:53:40 AM]

absolutely packed. So that's that's generally what you're going to see. Okay and could you tell me what's being done to monitor for weapons when crowds reach their weekend peaks on rainy street? If anything, say that again. I'm sorry. Anything being done to monitor for weapons of any kind on rainy street? Especially there. If you're talking about, you know, metal detectors and such. No, we don't have that. Our officers are certainly, you know, have the experience and have been trained on, you know, weapon detection, but again, simply carrying a weapon is not illegal. And it has to be carried in the committee and then they're in the commission of a crime for that to become illegal, so you know, obviously our folks are are watching out for that. Okay thank you. That's all I have for you. I might have a question for Austin energy just if they had the opportunity to evaluate the area for additional lighting, and if they're not available now, if they could provide that at a different time. I don't think anybody from Austin energy was expected to be here this

[9:54:41 AM]

morning. Okay well, we'll get you. We'll get you an answer your question, though. That sounds great. So thank you so much for your leadership on this. The stories that we heard today were nothing short of tragic. And it's unfortunate and a lot of situations that change happens after there's an incident that occurs and I want nothing more than for our community to feel safe and to prevent incidents like the ones that we heard about today from happening again. So council member padre if there's anything I can do to support you in this initiative, please let me know. Thank you. Does anybody else have any any questions or comments at this point? I guess we're qadri. I'll turn it to you too close. Yeah, you know, just just going off of what council member? Kelly just said. I just want to echo the you know the stories that we all heard today? You know, we're a lot of us are seven weeks on the dais, but I don't want to go into your two into your three into your four and continue to have families that have lost loved ones reach out to our office. I want to do

[9:55:42 AM]

something about this now. And I very much wanted to think Jason's family. For their tremendous energy. I want to thank Josh for, you know, just always being in contact with myself and our office. You know, one death is one death too many, you know what is the cost of a human life? You know when you know, at least in my own digging and going down the you know the rabbit hole on the internet. You know, it's been over 10 folks who have who have died, you know, and found in ladybird lake at the very least. You know, we need to do something about it. So I'm thankful for the mayor's leadership on this and like I said so many folks on this dais and I am so sorry for your loss. You know, I just want to continue to say that, but I promised this council will be will be proactive and make sure we do right by your loved ones. Thank you, Mr council member qadri. Yes well, the this committee will make recommendations and we'll bring them back. This appreciate everybody that's been here. Everybody's testified on this.

[9:56:44 AM]

It's an important issue and we'll be we'll be revisiting it with dispatch. With that we'll go to item number three, which is a staffing update, what I would like to. We've got a lot of folks here to help us with this staffing update the way it had been presented to me that y'all would be prepared. But you tell me if this is not the case is that we would first hear from a F, D E. M S and then a P D. Is that changed on me? The order is the same as you received it in the power point, which should be a P D. And then a F D and then E. M S. That's different than what the way I received it. So we'll start with a P D then.

[9:57:48 AM]

Good morning count. Can you hear me? Okay. Good morning. Council members again. Joseph Chacon, chief of police. This is Michelle Schmidt. She is the assistant director for the Austin police department. And what we'll do is do a brief overview of our staffing to give you an idea. Not just of the sworn staffing right now, but of our civilian staffing as well, which is even kind of more in dire straits. Ah if I can get the first slide, please. And I'm gonna go ahead and turn it over to director Schmidt right now to start with civilian staffing. Good morning. Again I'm Michelle Schmidt, assistant director for the Austin police department. This slide on our civilian staffing shows that we are authorized for 506 civilian positions currently as of the pay period ending February, 11th . We have, filled positions of

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381 and vacant positions of 125. This is inclusive of our emergency communications center , which makes up approximately half of those vacant positions. The remaining half are from the civilian professional staff, which includes, vacancies in our financial services division. Our victim services division are crime analyst information technology office of community leads on neighborhood liaisons. In our administrative division, turn it back to chief taken to talk about the emergency communication. It's not thank you, director Schmidt and I know that we wanted to break this down a little bit more, because I know that this has been a, point of high interest for this council and for the community to give you exactly and I say exactly. This is a point in time. It's kind of fluid, and some of these numbers have actually gone up in. Some have gone down. But as a February 11th ah! Hmm we have 100 and 40.

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Yes, 143 authorized positions. And emergency communications. 10 of those are supervisor positions. Eight of them are currently filled. Two are vacant , and then we have 11 lead positions of which eight or filled and three are vacant. Next slide. This is the most important with regard emergency communication. We have 75 dispatcher positions that are authorized. Currently 58 of those are filled. And 17 are vacant. And then 104 call taker positions. 58 are filled and 46 are vacant. If I get the next slide, please. This is what we have the number of people we currently have in training for those two positions, dispatchers and call takers 11 dispatchers currently in training, and then six call takers. We've taken a number of measures over the last

[10:00:56 AM]

really two years to work on this issue, including shortening the amount of time that it takes to train a call taker or a dispatcher to one of the shortest training periods that you can you're going to find right now in the state still about 2.5 months from the time that they start to the time that they're really operational but that is to ensure that we're putting out good quality folks to answer 911 calls and to be

able to dispatch those cars. We're backfilling right now, on overtime from current staff to fill the vacancies that we have generally on evenings and night shifts, but also on days and then as well as bringing in sworn staff. To be able to do the same thing. I have 21 sergeants with another five sergeants that are in training right now, and they come in, and they fill in overtime answering 911 calls. Finally we just received authorization to begin

[10:01:58 AM]

doing double overtime as opposed to the 1.5 normal over time for our night shifts to be able to get, those shifts fully filled. We do a very similar thing with the sworn staff. It has helped tremendously with filling our night shifts to where there are few vacancies, and we feel that there will be a similar effect. 911 call center. Once we get it up and running, we are working through the hr and payroll pieces right now. Alright next slide, please transitioning to our sworn staff. This is a number of authorized sworn officer positions that we have 1812. Of that 1548 are currently filled. With vacancies right now of 264. The way that our promotional system and overall structure works. It doesn't really matter at what rank someone retires or decides to

[10:02:59 AM]

leave the organization. That vacancy will always come back down to the officer rank. We still have. We are still doing promotions for all the various ranks, detective corporal sergeant lieutenant and commanders and so, once someone at any of those ranks retires, we promote people up into those ranks and then that that vacancy will reside at the officer rank. What we've had to do is to bring take some units off line. I know y'all are well aware of that, and then send those officers back on a permanent basis to patrol. And currently we are backfilling patrol using, the specialty officers and investigators. The detectives, to fill in to bring us up to minimum staffing levels, usually anywhere from 40 to approximately 55 people per month are having to come back. On a temporary basis, put

[10:03:59 AM]

caseloads to the side so that they can answer 911 calls. Next slide, please. Just to give you an idea of some questions that had come to a P D with regard to separation notices for this year in particularly since the middle of February. These are the numbers 49 retirements and resignations since the beginning of calendar year, 2023. And since February 13th 17 retirements and one resignation for a total of 57 people that have either retired or resigned since the beginning of the year. These are inclusive of numbers that are projected. So we're really seeing higher numbers in the month of March as we near the expiration of the contract. Yeah and my understanding is that there are a number of retirements maybe as many as 20 to 25, which we have not received paperwork on yet that

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are still there still in process right now. Next slide, please. I'm talking about how we're trying to refill our ranks have been talking about our increased pace at the academy were starting new academies about every 3.5 months. The 1 47 class, which started late last year is in week 20. And we started with 55 cadets of the 55 38 remain and they will graduate on may the 19th. And then we began a class at the end of last month, four weeks ago with the 1 48 during week four. We started with 34 cadets, and there are currently 30 and they are projected to graduate on September the eighth, so currently 68 people that are in training and, will be added to take away from those vacancies that that you see on the previous slides. Alright I think that was it. And, we can take any questions you might have.

[10:06:00 AM]

Thank you, chief. One of the questions and I'll go to ask questions real quickly. First of all when we look at the initial slides where you show the vacancies, the number of vacancies those vacancies. How long have they that has that problem been going on? The department always carries vacancies. If you go back to I believe it was 2018 we had about 70 vacancies, and that was pretty normal. We were losing 5 to 7 officers per month generally to, just normal attrition. And we're running pretty healthy size academies at that time. So we got very close to filling our vacancies in 4016 17 18 timeframe, and then began to lose people, obviously, at a greater rate heading into 19 4020 after may of 2020. That's

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when the pace really increased, and this is the most vacancies that we've had during that time. Okay and. I want to talk about 911 for a second. Why is it. That we have such a big vacancy. What is the problem? What it strikes most folks that I visit with. And me too, that if you've got that many vacancies in 911, you do whatever it is to hire to fill those vacancies. How is it that we might want to point out? This didn't start in January, either. This has been going on for some time, right? That's correct. Why is it we can't seem to over a long period of time fill those positions. It you know, one of the issues certainly was pay and at one point the starting pay for a call taker. Was it \$18 an hour and we just were not competitive

[10:08:00 AM]

in the city of Austin that starting pay now is over. \$24 an hour, for the 91 dispatcher 25 \$26 an hour, so it has gotten much more competitive with what we were seeing with other local police departments who are trying to hire dispatchers as well. And so that was one issue and we seem to be in the in the right ballpark for starting pay. Certainly. The other issue is with regard to licensing. So in the state of Texas state law that in order to answer a 911 call, you have to be a tele communicator, which means that you have to have a T coal license. The Texas commission on law enforcement the same license police officer has to be able to do his or her duties. To get that license is pretty tough. It requires a number. You know, a great deal of, you know, certainly a great deal of training. You have to be able to go through a background, the

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psychological test all the same things that the police officers do so for a civilian position that does not pay say what a police officer pays. It's an onerous kind of thing to go through to get to get to that level. That level of pay. The other thing is with, you know, kind of in line with the T coal license is making sure that you qualify for to be able to access criminal justice information systems. That means that you have to absolutely have a clean record. And not have any of the disqualifiers that whole house for that, or that the FBI has for that. So all of those things make it tough to find folks that kind of are willing to do this work and yet jumped through all of those hoops to get there. So is this a problem in other cities as well? It is. Speaking of problem beyond Austin's jurisdiction. It's my understanding that yesterday, colonel Mccraw, the leader of

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dps, testified at a house I think it was an appropriations committee on their legislative appropriation request that they were over 500. I think I'm right about this sworn officers short and were they were having difficulty recruiting to get to their full staffing levels and when I read when I read national reports, it appears that and while there's going to be something unique to every city, and I don't want to, and there will be things unique to Austin, and I don't want to minimize that. But hiring police officers and meeting staffing levels. That is not a uniquely Austin problem. Is that right? Oh, not at all that's correct big cities, particularly or struggling with it. But even for small departments, and I would tell you in the state of Texas, the average size police department is about 7 to 12 police officers even having one or two missing. I mean, you do the percentage. It's similar thing for them so all police

[10:11:05 AM]

departments right now are struggling with staffing, sworn and civilian. Thank you, chief counselor. What I'm gonna do for those who are paying attention is and I know I've got two people that are on virtual

appointed on like them. They know I'm pointing at them. Yeah. So I apologize for that. We've gotten goofy, and at least I've gotten goofy in the in the zoom era, but I see him. I'm gonna go to committee members first, and then I'll go to those that are on remotely so cast member Ryan alter I wanted to ask you about you mentioned using sergeants or other sworn officers is called takers. What is the cost? Disparity of the pay disparity? How much do we pay a sergeant per hour? We're paying them not only on our but on overtime, right? So I don't know. Do you want to talk about that? Michelle I don't have that number in front of me, but it's a pretty big differential, obviously, and I want to thank that average overtime rate for the sergeant is somewhere around 70 to \$75 an hour. It would seem

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to me if starting pay is \$24 an hour and we're willing to pay sergeants upwards of \$75 an hour that there might be somewhere in the middle that we could attract more people. And save money. You know a little best of both worlds. So ah! I don't know that that's a budget question. I think we'd have to figure that out. But it it seems there's an opportunity there. If we're spending that kind of money anyways, that we could allow our sergeants to do what we envision them to be doing in the community and attract more call takers. So those put a pin in that for another time, but the another question I had. Similarly similarly related is do we have any data on how much extra. We're spending on overtime. For our sworn officers or non sworn for that matter, but how much extra we are

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spending an overtime versus if we were just fully staffed. Well, what I'll say on the sworn side, particularly is we have to have minimum staffing levels to be able to safely send a shift out. On the street and for every ship, based on the number of hours is generally a percentage . So we try to do is hit that percentage as much as we can and knowing that we're not at full staffing, but we're at least that and minimum staffing and I can tell you that many times we don't even hit minimum staffing. We are hiring those officers on over time and are paying them based on our salary savings to a large extent right now, outside of our overtime budget, just knowing so I'll let director Schmidt talk a little bit more about kind of the nuances of that, but she'll help provide a little more detail. Yes if I'm understanding that question correctly, we're still coming

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within our budget for fy 22. I think we spent something like 99.5% of our budget. So our overtime is being offset by the vacancy savings from the fully funded salary positions, but we're not. We're not exceeding that amount. I guess what I'm trying to ask, and it's a little bit of an unknowable thing. But if we're spending 50% more on over time. Officers when, when, when they're doing overtime. If there was

a way to and it's a chicken and egg problem a little bit, but redirect that into higher salaries to get more people, so we're not paying so much overtime. I don't. I don't know if there's I'm curious of any analysis has been done in terms of maybe we can save on overtime. If we pay officers more. And once again, it's potentially, I think an unknowable, but I just want to know if that's something you've

[10:15:12 AM]

thought about. I have not performed an analysis on that, since that would be an adjustment to their base wage, so okay. And then the last question I have for the individuals at the academies who have dropped off. Have we. Contacted them or try to steer them maybe towards the call taker side or, you know, they obviously have some interest in public safety. Yes, we have, actually, so couple of things when we have our hiring Federer's, we have both folks from that are trying to hire police officers. But then we'll have folks from the 911 call center that are there as well, trying to trying to say hey, if you don't want to be a sworn police officer, that's okay. We've got a job for you over here. A lot of times, the folks that we're losing in the academy are due to say an academic. They have numerous academic failures and simply, are you know they're not making that mark and then sometimes they get hurt, and they can't perform physically

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performance necessary to be able to graduate and what we do is offer them. We let them know that they are going to be what we call a recycle, so we'll put them move them forward into the next class and recycle them into that class. And in the meantime we're glad to hire you enter 911 call center and get you get you going there and we can get them. T Cole licensed, they can answer 911 calls and sometimes they avail themselves with that, but we are we are offering it. Thank you. Thank you. Council member alter council member Kelly. Faced here, Kelly, vice chair killer. I'm just kidding. Thank you. Council member Ryan altar for bringing up the pay disparity between the call taker versus sergeants getting over time. It was something that was brought up by me last year, and I'm glad we're revisiting it because I know that if I were in that position I wouldn't appreciate knowing that I wasn't getting paid more for doing the same job. And I'm sure that some of our call takers probably feel that way as well. So I'd like to

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see that address. And chief. Do you know how much additional money we're paying? When we need to rely on outside agencies to fill spots during special events. You can get back to me. That's okay. I'm just wondering what that looks like, as far as budgeting goes, so that I can. I don't have the exact numbers vice chair, but I can tell you that we pay we pay that outside under the outside vendor contract, we pay more than we would for an officer and overtime. Okay thank you. And then regarding the

communication center. I'm curious if you've considered cross training, so let me just explain for a minute so that you can understand it. A short time ago, I received a text message from a member of a fire dispatch area, and it said, I wish I could figure out a way to get some fire people over to a police department to help answer their calls. And I understand personally from what you've explained that it is difficult to make that happen because they have to be licensed telecommunications, and there's a cost and time investment involved. But I'm wondering if that's something that you've considered if a police department or is

[10:18:15 AM]

willing to work with a fire, police and emergency medical services to maybe help fill some spots that way. You know, we it was considered and essentially was dismissed because of the amount of training they have to be to get a license right there. Looking at 10 weeks of minimum of training to be able to, to be able to perform the function. Yeah and, you know, in many respects fire and any emergency medical services kind of in the same same boat, we are. As a matter of fact, the emergency medical services is a little bit worse. And and don't really have the staff to just, you know, dedicate over there to help what is essentially right now. Police function. Okay thank you for explaining that. And then I would just ask that staff add these presentations to back up because they're currently not there. And I've been getting questions from the community regarding where they could find the information. So thank you. Thank you. I sure Kelly bass chair vela. But chief heard anecdotally that we're losing call center folks, too. Software

[10:19:16 AM]

companies that do where you know there. There do the same kind of job, obviously not in an emergency context, but you know, they provide kind of you know, phone support. Ah and that the software companies, apple has been one of the ones that's been mentioned are paying like, you know, like 25 \$27 per hour, something like that. And also, they can work from home. You know, basically, you know that that if you're a trained emergency center call center person, you know, you could potentially jump over the private sector and you get a pretty substantial bump in your pay. Are you aware of that? Is that true again? It's just, you know, I don't have any data on it. But it's a theme that that people have have mentioned to me. Yeah I would say that that is accurate. I don't have any data on it, either. But talking to the managers I know not only are we losing our call taking center, but many of our crime

[10:20:16 AM]

analysts are being hired by private companies at a much higher rate. With all the benefits that you just talked about. There was even a big box retail here in town that was paying more to simply go work there instead of working for the city, and that's why we had to. We really had to raise that pay up. Like I said, I think I feel like it is competitive. I've got 100 applicants right now in the pipeline for call

taker. And I believe I have 75 call taker. I'm sorry. 75 applicants for dispatcher right now they are in the pipeline. The problem is, is that when you when you finally work your way through those 100 for the for those who return the call, who you know, actually show up and then you know, maybe you can't get through. Can't get through all the background stuff and all those kind of things that it their small numbers. Like I said, right now it's 11 and seven that we have in training, but we are making better progress that we've made in a really long time. Well very much appreciate. Do you think

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that that \$24 an hour do you think that's that is in the competitive range? I don't know how much you know a private company like a software company would pay for tech support kind of call taker. But do you feel comfortable that that's a that's a good competitive salary? You know what I'm gonna say on that and really kind of, differ a little bit to hr on that, but I think that the numbers are kind of bearing that out to some degree, the greater number of applications a greater number of people we have right now in training that are on their way to becoming a dispatcher or call taker. You know, I think those numbers kind of speak for themselves, and if I remember correctly, I think this is because this was going on right when I started on council about a year ago. It wasn't what \$18.19 dollars an hour like that's correct. Yes sir, that that gives a lot of context the last question. Are how is Travis county sheriff's doing in terms of staffing? I used to be intimately familiar with them when I was in and out of the jail all the time, and I've

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heard again. Just kind of comment. Want to ask that question differently when you were in and out of the jail all the time? You might create some contacts that when I was visiting clients at the jail ah , but I understand that there have been that they're experiencing is pretty substantial staff shortages on the sheriff and on the jailer side as well are. Do you have any insight into that? My you know, I don't I certainly don't know their numbers. But in my conversations with the sheriff, I know she is sending staff from the streets back to go staff to jail because they're struggling as well. And like I was saying earlier. I mean, this is not just an Austin phenomenon or an APD phenomenon, and that's I know that there was a plan to try to try to, get some of the Travis county sheriff's to do a patrol and stuff, but I mean, if they don't have the staffing, you know they're not going to be able to kind of sub in for us, huh? That yeah, that's correct. Thank you, chief. Cancer were, I'll recognize virtually council member Alison alter. Thank you.

[10:23:20 AM]

Good morning. Can you hear me? Okay. So first I wanna, you know, thank our call takers and our dispatchers who have been working under really difficult circumstances for almost two years now, this problem and this phenomenon is not new. In summer of 21. I had a budget rider with respect to compensation study. We had many, many conversations with the then city manager cronk about, 911 and the need to improve those wages. It took well over a year for there to be any significant changes, and I think I'm pleased to see how interim city manager Garza and the mayor are, you know, really leaning into this at this point in time, this issue requires an urgency. And it's long past due , just by way of background for

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my colleagues who are new to the dais. Not only did we have a budget rider, and lots of discussions in 21 about what we were going to do about pay. We had several resolutions along the way. We had discussions this budget about whether or not the move to \$20 an hour and then whatever that would mean for the call center would actually fix the problem. And as I stated during the budget, I didn't think that that alone would fix . The issue, so we are where we are now. And we need to really be thinking outside of the box. I understand that this is happening everywhere. But 911 is also the core of our business as a government and so we really need to lean in. If you take a look at the numbers, it was something like 44. Vacancy rate , and that's now after having done a lot of stuff. Compared to the 15% for sworn when we spent a lot of time talking, so this really really does require a lot

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of urgency. I want to ask. I have submitted a lengthy set of questions. To the city manager to get answers about how the call center is functioning and options. We have to scale it as many of you know. I was on hold for 28 minutes. The other weekend trying to call 911 that is a particular situation. That's not necessarily the daily experience of somebody that happens when you have something called boca rival in a call center when a lot of people are calling it once. And so some of my questions for you, chief have to do with what what system do we have in place? To deal with bulk arrival in the instance of, the calls on February 18th. We had you know, 200 some calls coming in over that period of time. And then we also, though, had the short staffing. But there are ways that call centers have to deal with. The situation

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of bulk arrival. But I would like to know more about how we handle those situations. What are the levers that we have to scale our operations and adjust capacity when we get a sudden increase in demand, which does sometimes happen? Yeah. Thank you. For the question council member and I'm not sure I'm gonna be able to answer technique, you know, from a technical standpoint to your satisfaction right

now, I probably need to bring additional staff on to do that. What I do know is that we have been looking at the issue of increased call load coming in and how we can have some automation that would assist with that and be able potentially to divert people away. You know if they're calling about the exact same thing that you know, 50. Other people are calling about some type of an automated message that they would receive as well as a call tree. So after a certain number of rings, it

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would actually divert them from it asked the question. If you need police dial one, if you need, you know, a fire dial two and so forth. Those things right now with our current vendor. I believe we're having problems in implementing and I know that the capital area council of governments cap cog, which is really kind of overseas. The combined communications center is looking potentially at, you know whether they need to, have another have another vendor and what that would look like is through an RFP thank you. I really wanna emphasize the need for us to get this technology right. It's going to take quite a long time to get the dispatchers in there, according to what we can tell right now symptom major increase in salary, which, as my colleague, council member Brian alter mentioned is perhaps cost effective. And so these

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technology and these data things I think are really important. One thing you didn't mention was a text to 911. Is that something? I think we have provided direction on that at some point, what is the status of that? And is that an option? You know about. I'm gonna I'm gonna have chief Henderson come up and talk about that a little bit more detail. I'll tell you what. Council member Ken. Well, I'm going to have to defer that question to just make sure that we're being accurate. I wasn't prepared to answer about texting 911 this morning. I apologize, but we'll get that counsel. I mean that answer back to you and the other committee members. Thank you. You know, as I mentioned, I did put together this whole list of questions and I looked forward to the answers. To that, but I think there are there's the technology questions which you raised with the call tree and putting the announcement on and perhaps the text to 911. And then there's

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sort of how are we looking at the data that we have to do the scheduling with the resources that we do have. We don't have electronic time sheets. I mean, like what is the system that you're using? As I understand it for a typical call center 911 or not there. There's a lot of science to this. And how to get it right. And there are a lot of levers that that can be pulled. What are we doing? To manage that flow of the staffing you know, in a systematic way. I'm going to have to, find out whether this is true. For then I

won't call center as well. But what we do for deployment of our officers based on call load based on where sector lines are drawn and how our officers are deployed on their various shifts were using Dr Jonathan crane ganar chief data officer, to synthesize all of that data and to figure out if we're deploying

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in an efficient manner, and he is using his folks. To determine do we need to like I said, redraw sector lines to make one sector bigger or smaller, to redeploy our folks to either a different shift or to increase certain shifts and decrease other ones. So that we can be as efficient as we can. I just need to find out whether they're doing the same thing in the 911 call center, which I believe they should be able to do. Thank you. I think that's a really critical part. And I want to make sure that we're leaning in, in the that I wanted to point out is that you know, we talk a lot about this one vacancy, so I'm glad that you started with a civilian vacancies. But I do want to note that we're talking here about a 25% vacancy on the civilian side and about a 15% vacancy. Read on this Warren side. And you know. There were there was nothing that council did that had an impact on the

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civilian side in terms of funding levels or allowances and the way that happened with the academy. And I think it's really important that we that we understand. Dais. On the civilian side, whether it's 911 whether it's victim services, whether it's our crime analysts or or hr specialists, etcetera are also very critical to public safety and the functions. Of the police department. And so we should be. We should be mindful that those are also very important issues. I've allowed to more to say about this warm, but I will pass it back to the there. Thank you. Thank you, Catherine. Yes? City manager. Members of council members of council and committee members. I just want this is a an issue that is beyond the police. It is the police department for the things we're talking about today. But the issues of vacancies and pay etcetera is really going to be a team effort. And I'm telling you, there's a full court press right

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now that is being pressed to get these answers. Resolve our answers to the questions that you're posing to resolve. And we're gonna keep just going at it. And just but I want to make cheap Chacon has done a great job and at least doing some, I guess stopgap measures, but then we as an organization need to help him in terms of the whole question. The whole answer to this question, which is a lot of upstream work that needs to get done by hr and other elements of our organization, and we're on it. I just want to let you know that thank you, manager. Mayor pro tem, do you have questions or comments? We can't actually hear you online. Our feed cut out on this end. Hey, hang on a second. Is there a problem that they. Back now, but it had cut in and out. I was speaking. Well he complimented both of y'all greatly.

Mayor pro tem, do you have questions or comments? No I appreciate the discussion and everyone who's come to speak to us today. Thank you. Is there

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anything else? For a P D. We appreciate both of you. Excuse me for being here and answering questions. And I know, council member Alison alter has that list of questions and we all look forward to seeing that the answers to that as well. Thank you, mayor. Thank you. We'll go to Austin fire department. Mr mayor, vice chair council member on this publication committee. I just want to start off by bringing ingredients on behalf of all the men and women are often fire department and just say thank you for the opportunity to present our staffing. Challenges and opportunities we have here today. You should look at the slide here. We have approximately 154. Fts, while civilian staff and right now we're at 27 vacancies, and that's really due to the I T

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department and department. I would plan examiners. We have approximately 29 plan examine it, but only 11 vacancies at this point. So what our opportunities in this areas are to really work on. How can we train some of our admin staff? And the fire marshal off to bring them up to speed. To cover those vacancies. But like all departments you're gonna hear here today here today. Our competition is it's sick. It's the private side of the workforce. Competing with our plan examining but right now they do a wonderful job and trying to keep up with the fast growing pace. Of this great city of Austin city. The wildfire division. We have seven vacancies, and that's really do too. We are reclassified and reclassifying that division to do some some changes in there. To really bring up our enhance our processes. And how can we really, do a better job and providing services in a while and division? And then we have other vacancies, like in fact admin position at the end of

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that nature and sylvania style that slide, please. Authorized transfers. Approximate 1266. We have 74 vacancies right now. We have six people on deployment and about four retirement every month. We have, about 90 cadets actually have 43 that would be graduating dismay. And 40 that we will graduate and July or 2023 this year. We think we have an application process starting . I believe March the 15th Twitter 29th. And usually we get about 353,800 to 5000 candidates interested in joining the Austin fire department. So this recruiting period where we're looking at hopefully her approximate 200 debts over the next two year period. So again, we get close to 3800 to 5000 people who showed interest in the Austin fire department. I

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got this new hiring process starting in March of this year, we would not have a new recruit class graduates to may 2024 but again when emphasize, we do have to recruit guides recruit class that will be graduating this year. Next slide, please. Some of our challenges, but yeah, opportunities that you look at this slide here, Luke. Three sisters station will be open to March. We need 16 4 time employees for that position. Our unfortunate unfounded me. We need to area truck one pollute 3 61 for the devastation. I want to just remind counsel. That around in 1995 or 93, or 94 area. The state of also has not add it. Any additional aerial trucks. This apartment. Have not added the city is growing. And the fire department. We need those trucks so we can so we can

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continue to grow with this city to provide those services. Our citizens expect us to provide for them. Ah, the other on finding need is that one task force staffing the task force staff is really those members on those I'm fun at unit. To help us manage any type of human calls or natural disasters that we have in the city. To help us respond to soft by southwest was sample to help us respond to a CL, for example, as well to help us respond to this history district on Friday and Saturday and early Sunday morning. So we staff those unit but we're not funding to stuff those unit, but that's emerged emerging, immediate need to provide those services. So we had that quick response time to keep those other units and service to respond to other mercies throughout the city. With that we have a graduated class I mentioned earlier by 83 cadets this summer. And so our goal I believe is, by the end of this physical year, we'll be close to

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almost zero and for his biggest sees with the Austin fire department. But on unmanaged fun as we have here is the mandatory for person staffing. Before I talk about that. I do want to thank councilor can I think councilor enough? For allowing us to have full person staffing . It makes a bit different on those emergencies. Same for the safety of our members to have that extra body on the fire apparatus, and because of that, we're able to do the job and a safe amount that we then we came with three person staff. However we do not currently really have the bodies to support for persons. Stefan in the past. We had three and three steps and we had to bias to do that. We still have some overtime. And now we have full person staffing, but we need extra buyers about I would say about 100 to 125 airstrip biased, really support the foreign four staffing that we have for the department. The other reason for our shortest

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staffing in those areas as you see here, we had the battlefield . The vacancies position the center for position. But when those recruits get out of training that's gonna help reduce that. So we say we imagine that pretty well right now. We also have to have training activities and we downtown safety initiative talked about earlier. We have members about 15 or 15 there on anjali or they are doing parenting bonding, which is a great thing for our members of parenting. Barney, we have cadets training the members from operation. We take up the unit overtime for them, so they go to the training center to help staff the training to get those recruit out as rapidly as possible. And make them as qualified as well. And then we have different committees that we participate with, along with that we do bat field for the testes task force deployment could be deployed anywhere. In this state and sometimes out the state, but it's a great return on investment. We get refunded while we get. Reimbursed for

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those deployments, but also gives the opportunity to get that on hand training that we need. And in any event, the something, disaster happening instead of Austin. We know I remember not just by emails, but we can pick up the phone and call and get that help back to us when we did it because of our relationship with the testes task force. Next slide, please. Tomorrow Stephan. Challenges and opportunities we have here. For fiscal year 20 for the good night ranch station opening project to open January 2024. So we will need counsel and all too provided for 16 4 time reports for that. Again I'm gonna ask him for test force position about 18 to help cover those on men in need so making make sure we continue to provide the service that the citizen as well as council men have come to expect from us. Command test to really help the city's growing lot of traffic going on in the roadway. It's a lot of going on

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for those battalion chief officer to try to command is saying to work on those critical factor prior to getting on the scene. It's almost impossible, so don't command test can really help us. Remember minds the risk for that. You heard teacher to come and talk about the dispatch challenges he's out. I'm quite sure my colleague chief lucky was also mentioned his dispatch challenger. Right now in Austin fire. We are at full capacity staffing. But discretion, however. As soon as my belief that when the city continued to grow and when the staffing level of met in M S as well, police it's gonna cause if possible bottleneck in the fire service because when they increased, their staffing is going to flow more cost to us, so that's why we need those four additional buys to help us manage those increasing called by and along with the growth in the city. Away business jet project also in year 20 for fiscal year 24 approximately 50 to plus or

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minus people will retire. Our apartments gang younger than the older members, just simply retiring. We also project to have about 70 cadets to graduate and physical 2024 2200 from the list we plan on higher from from this promotional. I mean from this, recruitment process we're gonna have this month. So at the end of fiscal 24, we give a rough estimate of approximately 32 vacancies. So that's still not too bad for her us and Austin far but moving forward two year fiscal year 2025 when canyon creek fire station open approximate year. 25 25 in July . We need 16 fts for those positions. An additional 18 task force members again so we can continue to manage the, mercies that take place in the city. Additional 12 command text as you noticed, we graduate asking a bit by bit. Not all at one time. And we had with project a

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estimate of 52 people that were retired, but the project also to help at least 90 cadets to graduate. Physically, you're 2025 at the end of the fiscal year, 2025 we estimate to have approximately 39 vacancies. Concludes my presentation. I was attempting to answer any questions you may have. Thank you very much chief vice chair. Thank you for your presentations today. I'm glad to hear about the cadets. I know I saw you this past Saturday at the firefighter ball and my daughter saw the program. She so kindly reminded me that I'm too old to join a F D. So that's just to mention that if anybody's under 36 years old, they should child yeah, they should. They should consider joining a hefty, I also want to flag for my colleagues that I have an item in the works that will address some of those unmet needs that you're talking about. So if any member wants to talk after the meeting about it and join my sub quorum, I'd be

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happy to have that happen in chief. My office will be reaching out to your office. My people call your people will schedule meetings so that we can make sure it's buttoned up properly. But also I'm looking forward to seeing you at the fire chiefs conference later next month, so thank you for always support. You've been very supportive in the five service across the state really? At the support of our conferences, those cheap other chief in her department. They're very surprised that we have a sitting council members to learn more about the fire service. So I really appreciate that. Remembers any additional questions or comments. Yes, county council member Alison alter. Thank you, mayor. I wanna just, remember back to 2017. When I came on, there were a lot of vacancies. We were having a very serious set of issues with vacancies in the fire. Service and we were paying extra for overtime. We were asked to do midyear budget. Requests of something like I don't know. \$13

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million of extra overtime. I may have that slightly off. So over time, you things can be addressed. I'm really pleased to see where we're at with respect to stopping. It takes time. There is a link, though, to overtime, which we haven't looked at much with respect to police and what I really wanted to point out for my colleagues is that we will be getting in overtime. On it back in our next audit and finance committee meeting with respect to fire. That's looking at that. I don't know what the findings are at this point in time, but we did previously have some issues that we were able to address in part through through the contract and have been able to get many of those expenses under control so that we could invest in other fire personnel. Chief, I wanted to just ask if you could speak a little bit more to the need for the latter. And what that the letter, truck staffing and what that involves from an

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operational standpoint, since it does require so many staff absolutely. And thank you so much. Councilman Malta for that. But that question according to the, national fire protection association. We called NFPA 1710 were really outlined. The operation is safety for firefighters. Huh. And what they state that a response from my area unit should be with low emergencies. The medium has it about eight minutes, so we should have a five truck. I mean area chart respond to any mercy, low risk tumors within eight minutes. However for high risk, high rise high risk hazard. It should be about 10 minutes we should have here in Austin. Every high rise or high hazard. We should be able to get there from about 10 minutes and 10 seconds. That's not happening today. We respond. On an average of about 11 minutes and 47 seconds. 90% of the time. It's

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about 12 minutes. With those two additional aerial truck we do will help us reduce that 12 minute response time. So that's why it's so important to have that keep in mind. The city is really growing rapidly. Since 1995. That's my estimated time when we receive our last every truck. But yet we have not added internet additional area truck. To the rapid ground pace of the city of Boston. And so we now our response time with the areas just it's almost 12 minutes. Which is really unacceptable for fire department this size to have a 12 minute response. Time was much support we get from council. That's what I'm really asking for those two additional area chart to help us reduce that response time, to these areas here. And she can you explain the connection between the aerial ladder staffing and wildfire? Well the area love

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Stefan. And in a while for we have our own wildfire units, and we have our we now we have a wildfire battalion and end up with Italian. I think we have one area. What we only have one area in that area, so

they staffing are supporting a wildlife area. It gives additional staffing power. The men and women who are assigned to those units can also help respond to those wildlands area to help mitigate when that disaster happened. Keep in mind. It's not a matter of if we're going to have a wildlife, a wildfire disaster in Austin. That's when we're gonna have it. And so by having the staffing level in place and train trained at a higher level than we were required to train them. It just really helped me minimize that risk. Oh, yeah, I want to add something to that. Rob buyers

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chief of staff, Boston fire department, so to add a little bit more as we went through a process of restructuring to add the wildfire battalion. The wildfire risk is your very adept to is not the same on the east side of Austin is on the west side of Boston. And so part of the plan with the wildfire division or the wild fire battalion was to create two battalions geographically, one on the east side to deal with the wildfire risk there one on the west side. To do that properly. You have to have a span of control. You have to have enough supervision to oversee this to help that work in a functional capacity based on the assets we have. Today we were able to get part of that in place. So we do have a wildfire battalion with one aerial with it, which gives you a captain and supervisory leadership capacity. To be able to expand that so we can get to the ultimate goal of our plan of the battalion on the west side obtained on the east side. That's what the second area was for, so just tell that relevant more on what the chief was sharing their just for fy. Thank you. And I'll also want to add

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the urgency of it's not doom and gloom, but I need to add urgency . Who I had this opportunity of candles, areas trust. Yeah it's the building in those trucks it takes about 24 months to 36 months, so as soon we can get approved. We can get into bed and processed. And get in line. To get our area trust bit. It's a wait and see game when we can get its supply and demand the fire service for these apparatuses just sometime never seen seen before my thirst issues in the fire service. Thank you for that, chief. I'm going to go to the mayor pro tem unless cast member Alison alter you have anything more? Do you have something you want to ask or make a comment? Thanks my questions have been answered. Thank you any other questions or comments? Thank you very much. Thank you all for your time. Thank you so much. Well, now go to E. M S. It's all yours,

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chief. Not quite as tall as chief baker. I don't think anybody is quite tall. So good morning. Council members. Mayor thank you. Committee members for welcoming us today in the opportunity to speak to a little bit about some of the staffing challenges as well as some of the work that we've been doing. If

the E. M S department to address these issues I'm joined today by chief of staff to raise a gardener. As you know, I've been here just under a year coming up in my one year and chief gardener has a lot of historical context that she may be able to provide as we go through this presentation. Next slide, please. The to start off here and just have a little bit of a snapshot in terms of what our current vacancies are again from for historical context. I've shared this in the past when I've spoken on this issue, but the recruiting and retention and staffing challenges that we see in our department is very indicative of what we're seeing nationwide. Across this country, there is a paramedic shortage organizations across the nation are struggling

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to fill those vacancies struggling to get individuals through the training and there is a significant period of time that's required to staff people up to the paramedic level. And, so it's something that that we're addressing as well as we're seeing nationwide in terms of how it is that we improve those we do have the benefit and share this a little bit more. So we go through. I say this again and again. We truly have the best tms system in the country. Here it is world renowned. And as we go through this part of our challenges and part of our efforts that we're trying to address here is how it is that we get that message out how we recruit people. And that, really, it comes down to what the core of what our recruiting strategy is. A couple of things to highlight here. If you take a look at these, we've had some significant progress on our medical field position. That is our entry level position. It is an E M T position for individuals that are joining the department. There's 47 vacancies at this time, which, although high can be filled over the course of a couple academies. What's more concerning and what I do want to highlight is the two areas that we're seeing significant vacancies, the first being the clinical specialist

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field now that's our paramedics and again as I mentioned earlier , there is a long lead time for training and certification to get folks to that to that level . As well as internally as we try to train those individuals up and I'll share with you in a minute. Some of the things that we've worked through to try to address that. The other area I'd like to highlight is the medical communications as you can see, we have 11 out of 14 vacancies, and that's an 80% vacancy rate at that level. We face the same challenges that the Austin police department does in terms of how it is that, we can staff our communication center. We are working diligently on a number of different issues, but that clearly although not from Iran, numbers perspective, but from a percentage standpoint, we are having some significant challenges. Staffing our communication center. And I can share with you a couple of reasons. That might be, not the least of which is that we are not a civilian department. Those are sworn positions and everyone in those positions are required to be medically trained in medically certified, which is significantly different than what we see in some of our our

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other public safety counterparts. And so we're trying to work through ways that we can address that and I'll share specifics as we move forward. Can I ask you a quick question to interrupt, but is that the group that's at the E O. C. Yes that is the individuals on the first floor of ceatec. Okay so, yeah, I visited there. Recently and of course, it was in the middle of the real crisis, but every one of those people is was sworn every single person. They're sworn. Yes thank you. As I mentioned. Our communications team. They're all medically trained, and that's why we have. It's structured slightly different, so they're all E. M T S at this point. But in addition to meeting empty, so the medical field you need to be an E M T to get started to be a medical communications. You not only need to be an empty but you need to be a certified emergency medical dispatcher, which is an additional, multi week training process that those folks have to go through and so getting folks with those to training skills and also individuals that don't want to go to the field because again they have to be mts when

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they start, so we have to target individuals that have a draw towards that communication side of the house, and you said there's an 80% vacancy rate 80% rate vacancy rate at the medical communication that is the entry level that is our call taker positions. You'll also see on here clinical specialist communications. That is the promotion up from medic, will be equivalent to paramedic in the field, but on our communication center that represents our dispatchers. And so if you're asking how we function within 80% vacancy rate, which would be the obvious questions, so thank you. It's having those dispatchers that in order to become a dispatcher to become a clinical specialist. You have to have all the requirements of a medic, and so they are filling those positions again at that higher class. And then we are also working, and we have some individuals that are cross training from the field. That we are bringing over to assess. How do you recruit for that? For the medical communication, medical communications. Position. It's a challenge for us again because you have to be an emt to start. We have done some national recruiting what we're looking at

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now, as we go into this fiscal year is trying to do internships , and trying to find individuals in the community that might have a draw to this particular field and do all of our training in house. Again. Our department is slightly different. Where the only public safety department that requires you to be certified before you can enter the academy and that poses challenges for us, so we're working through the ability to do internships to get people trained, prior to entering the academy, so that then they can come on board as this is a smart as a cadet and then a sworn individual. No, no problem. Next slide, please. I just wanted to tee up a little bit of how it is that we got here. And it'll take three slides, so I'll go through. These three sides are relatively quickly but you can see here the year over year the

identification of the vacancies versus the cadets. And obviously , when you look at this slide to start, you will see that the vacancies are far outpacing the

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cadets that we're bringing through. We're trying to address that as I was sharing a slider to by increasing the number of academies that we have increasing our recruiting efforts. But if we talk about what the root causes, if you could go to the next slide, please. When you look at separations versus sworn additions or new cadets were actually doing okay, you'll see that we had a number of separations a few years ago. But as you look at the number of individuals we've been adding over the last couple of years we are seeing, improvements to our ability to, to staff that can you go to the next slide, please? Do we miss the slide? Oh, I'm sorry. We missed a slide here. Yes. If you could go back one side so this if you see here, this is our attrition versus our new cadets. This is slightly different than the graph that we saw previously. And so this slide here represents the fact that we are

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actually keeping pace with the number of folks that are leaving the department. So the blue, representing the number of folks that are leaving department and the yellow, representing the number of folks that are joining with the anomaly being 2022. And that's for a number of different reasons. And 2022. We did hit just about 23 years. Since we saw a massive increase in our department in the early two thousands when we when we merged to form Austin, Travis county E. M S and added a number of new stations in a number of new staff. We also we're still feeling the aftermath of the covid 19 pandemic. Across the industry between 2020 and 2022. We saw about a 25. Departure from the industry as a whole, and we did feel that as a department, we're doing better as we look into 2023. We do feel that that was an anomaly that year with a large number of people leaving if you go to the next slide. Here we go. This is little clear here, but this represents is the separations are the numbers in blue? They're both in blue, dark blue. The numbers in the light blue

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represent additional positions that were approved by council. And so if you look at 2021 2022 , that was the massive increase in our community health paramedic program where we saw 67 new positions added in 2021. Then in 2022. We saw additional positions for our communications , for C four line or diversion program and telehealth program, as well as the addition of the new stations that have happened over the past few years. And so I put this here to highlight over those past three slides that, the biggest challenge we have is not folks leaving the apartment. The biggest challenge we have is keeping up with the exponential growth here in Austin and the new programs and the new role that E.

M S is taking. E M S is not the same M S that it was a decade ago or two decades ago. It's not necessarily about ambulances that maybe our core business, but much like the fire service has shifted away from putting out fires to dealing with the prevention and other issues. The same is true for M S. And so we're seeing growth in our community health paramedic program or opiate program addressing homelessness, mental health care. Substance abuse all

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of those issues that have a true impact on the health and well being and reduce the taxation on , the emergency medical system do require additional resources . And so we're seeing that transition and that's what's reflected in 2021 2022. Next slide, please. I mentioned some of these as we were talking earlier, so I'll go relatively quickly. Some of the things that we've addressed so far we increased from 3 to 4 academies per year, and we do have 33 individuals that are expected to graduate from the academy on April 7th. So we have that's the January academy. We have a community academies in April. Where we do expect, are we've been averaging somewhere between 20 and 30 individuals per academy. In July will also be another academy as well as in October. That July academy is expected to be larger as we look to increase our direct hire program, which I'll share with you in a second. I mentioned let me just I mentioned the telecom interim program. Yes, I mean, go ahead. Thank you. Our clinical

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specialist vacancies again. This is that paramedic level. So we're going through that promotional process. We are trying to increase the number of promotional process that we have , but because of the extensive training that is required to become a clinical specialist, we're trying to navigate those waters and figure out ways to be creative. We're adding additional training officers so that we can get them out in the field and go through that process. We also are putting increased emphasis on our department paramedic program. Traditionally, in the industry and in Austin, we've folks are expected to go find a paramedic program become certified and then promote. That is not the case in our industry any longer . We are now taking individuals and sending the paramedic school that is staffed by our own employees, our own instructors. It is a multi year process to become a paramedic, but we're going through that process now to get individuals through that so that they can be eligible to be clinical specialist. And then lastly, the clinic the lateral process until 2023 everyone was required to be hired in as a medic, which is an E M T level

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that made it very challenging for us to recruit existing paramedics because they did not want to come in at a lower rank than what they were certified at. So beginning this year, this academy that we have

going on right now, this is the first time we have direct hired paramedics into that clinical specialist rank that was work that we did with the association and putting the last collective bargaining agreement. This was a little bit of a very quick process to trial it so we only had seven individuals in this academy, but we have already opened up for the July academy. So we'll do this twice a year, and we are expecting a much larger class in that year in that period next time. We are very optimistic again, going from three academies to four, as well as increasing the lateral class. We are, anticipating we're going to get ourselves through a good place. Of note. We had no turnover in January. Not a single person left the department and so we're very excited about that. On average. We average about 1% per month, or about 10% per per year 10 12% per year. With the four academies and the goal to hire 80. We do anticipate that hiring

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80 35 departing. We should end up with about a 10% vacancy. Barring any significant changes now again, that's based on the current staffing level. Much like the fire department. We're adding additional stations. We have good. We have Davenport's ranch 3 60, goodnight ranch as well as our community health program that we look to grow and had to make an impact on and so that number will likely be larger. Just because we've added additional positions. Next slide. Just a couple of items. I mentioned the internship program also doing some outreach to the military, for us again. We are a hands down known across the globe as a world renowned tms system. I've said this before. What Austin does the world watches and it's very much true in our industry. People pay attention to what we do here. We get a lot of interest. What I think one of our largest problems from recruiting standpoint is we kind of took that for granted and stop telling our story. And so it's important for us to get to the industry conferences and to remind people and get them

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seeing I've been in this business for about 26 years. I remember when Austin was all over and that's where everybody wanted to go. And that's why I'm here. But I think the newer generation of mps and paramedics need to be reminded of the great work that we do here and so we're really stepping up our, participation in industry conferences, getting our staff out to speak about the good programs we have, and even working internationally. There is an E B three Visa, for Australian to be able to come over to the United States. We've seen a lot of success in the industry. South Carolina is doing a lot with international applicants. We actually have gotten three inquiries from Australia in the past two months interested in coming to the city of Austin. So we do want to continue to capitalize on that. Excite. And for challenging challenges that we're facing recruiting staff they mentioned because we were so, wow such a place that people desire to work . We didn't really have a recruiting department. We had a hiring department and so the individuals in our recruiting, we're focused more on processing

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applications than seeking out individuals to come join the department. We only have two positions in our recruiting office, and one of them is vacant. And so that because of the challenge for us as we look to dedicate resources to going out and drawing individuals in and then on the training standpoint again, as we bring in massive numbers of individuals, we need additional equipment training officers facilities to be able to process all of those new employees. And I think that sand is there one more side after this. And with that I can open the questions. Great. Thank you, chief. Let me ask members. Do either one of the council members and the council member alter and mayor pro Tim Ellis. That our remote do you have questions or comments? In that case, I want, chief. I want to go back for everybody. I want to say thank you and one of the things that's interesting watching. A slide show related to hiring and classes and all that really emphasizes something you said about your it's not

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just ambulances anymore. I mean, you are healthcare providers, and we're hiring healthcare provider mobile health care providers, and it's sometimes. We lose sight of that, and that's one of the reason I was asking those questions earlier is, that becomes a very important part of what we're looking for when we're looking at, S so the health, the health care aspect more than just getting somebody to a hospital. So thank you for what you all do. Thank you very much very much. With that, we will go to item number four, and that's the public safety facilities update related to emergency power generation capabilities and reliability. And we'll have a brief presentation on that. Gentlemen. Thank you all. Thank you. Morning.

[11:08:13 AM]

I'm not sure how to turn all that on. We got it. There you go. Alright. Thank you again. Thank you all for allowing us the opportunity to be here on the assistant chief Brandon Wade with the Austin fire department over our emergency operations and our facilities, fleet and logistics and I'm assistant chief Wesley Hopkins with Austin Travis county emergency medical services. I to oversee our operations support facilities. All right. So first would be remiss is we're talking about generators and backup, supply and power without thinking. I think what brought us here is as many of the storms that we had and we've got to recognize our firefighters and E. M S employees that state at many facilities that didn't have what we were getting ready to talk about here, and they stayed on the front line serving their district. To ensure that those response times stayed right there. So we do want to commend them and recognize the great work that they have done. Speaking with that, as we move forward and talk about where we're at there was a research

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paper by the national fire protection agency around 2019 that identified generators and backup power across the fire E. M S service in this country and what they found was that approximately 35% of fiery M S stations were without backup power. I generator or another means, less than 2% of those came from major metropolitan cities. So majority of those without it, we're in smaller communities. Right now, as we look at the screen ahead of us, the city of Austin Austin fire department ems were sitting roughly it 60, plus percent of our facilities that do not have generators or backup power. As we break that down by facilities , there's times where fire department have standalone stations. Sometimes we co locate and then sometimes the M S has standalone stations. So of our cohabitating facilities of the number being 27 13 joint

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stations have working generators . 14 stations either have no generator or at the end of its life and needs to be replaced and or repaired. With the F D stations that we do not have. Austin Travis county ems with us. We have roughly seven stations that have backup power that have a generator on site. Ah and that is working. However, 17 of our stations do not have a generator, or that generator is in need of some sort of repair to get it back up to functioning to support the critical elements of that facility. On the 80 CMS standalone stations. There are five of them to stations, will have generators after the 2018 bond renovations, which are currently in progress, and three stations do not have generators they won't need them added. Slide, please. So as we look at this, what are the future needs? After the winter storm Yuri in

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2021 on the fireside. We had our facilities folks get with building services and went out and did some assessments at fire station to see what would it take to install a new generator ? So buying the generator and installing it at that time in 2021. Rough estimate was about \$80,000 was what we were told. As we are moving forward, make sure you don't mind me interrupt you make sure I understand when you say \$80,000 is what you were told. \$80,000 gets gets you what gets you a generator? One generator generator for a facility plus the installation of putting it on the pad site, the wiring, ensuring transfer switches inside. All of the details with it. Great thank you. So that was the rough estimate when we went out on site with building services and electricians to look at it back in 2021. Based on inflation, cost increases. What we

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estimated was about 100,000. Ah currently we're being told as late as last night, we received even a newer update that that could be approximately 100,000 to 130,000, depending on the size of the generator that we'd be looking to put in a facility if I'm doing simple math. And that's all I'm doing. And tell me if I get this wrong, if I look at your previous lied and I put up and I just used \$100,000 number because that's easier for me. You're talking about in order to provide at all the stations that don't either don't have a generator or need to have a generator replaced. We're talking 1.7 million. You're talking greater than that, sir. There's roughly you're gonna grade my paper heart, but I'm here to break that. That's where I think we have the second bullet, which is a low estimate based, jumped ahead. I apologize

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. You get it right there for me. I didn't have to show how stupid I was apologize talking through that we kind of had that rough estimate of that 3.4 million and I'll bump to the second slide. I think what we're going to need to do with construction prices skyrocketing and inflation. We need to go back and do another assessment of the facilities and really put that to cost. There's variation in the different sites where natural gas runs will it need to be, sure, diesel, so there's some work. We need to do just to firm up that number, but we kind of talked through a starting point, because we know that there are stations that have generators that are into life. That are pretty simple replacements, where it already has the pad transfer switch electrical service. We're just replacing the end of life generator, so we're looking at a multi year approach and this is a good jumping off point. But help me understand. Help us all understand? This is especially important right now. As we go into a budgeting process, right? So, and I'm going to be really

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embarrassed if it's on that slide, and I'm just not getting it. But when you tell me the estimated cost is \$100,000 per installation and I believe you told me it was 17. That was 17 a F D standalone stations that do not have backup power if you go to the joint stations. In which Austin E. M S and Austin fire cohabitate. That's 14 stations, so almost double and that's how you get yes, that's how you get to the three points the additional three stations at Austin E. M S have that. Are there standalone stations? Okay. Thank you that I'm glad. I mean , we really want to clarify some of those things because timing. And I'll and I'll say this to you. I think you're exactly right. There needs to be a clear assessment. With all that's happened with supply chain and inflation, everything we want to make sure we have the right number. My guess is there's just about enough time for you to do that kind of assessment before

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we start the policy budget process that I know we're all going to be very interested in so thank you for that. Yes, sir. We agree wholeheartedly. Yes so , as you see the 3.4 million that we have up there is probably the low number as again as I said, we got an update late last night of additional costs, which could range it generator and installation up to potentially 130,000, depending on the site. But that's where we go to that. Yes sir. That's where we go. Also go to that third bullet. Where we do need to assemble that cross department team like we did back in 2021, but probably even include some other budget showing up with us building services. The electrician's because we really need to go out to each facility. Even those were the generator because what we found during this latest storm when everything went out was what we thought we knew was being supplied at some of the facility. The generators did not

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supply possibly the critical element such as the communications equipment, and I think that's just through years and years of time of updates of facilities. Breakers being changed and having it, so we truly need that assessment with across department team to go out and do an assessment of each station. Our last point talks through the need for ongoing funding. What we know about these generators is you need to do preventative maintenance on them, and when they do break, they're quite costly to repair and so a lot of times are just operating budgets don't support the maintenance of them so that ongoing funding would be critically helpful. And I believe that covers the presentation and in any other questions that y'all may have for your killer. Thank you. So what was the last winter storm happened? I'm a little unique in my position. I have access to W. C and so what I saw come across as a resource request was the stations without power war station 5 12 16 21 33 34 47 49 51. Are those the stations that

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were specifically looking at to get generators for? We're assuming you're talking about on the fire any M S site. The numbers don't quite match up, right? Yes we are absolutely is there any council action that needs to happen so that you all can pursue the purchase of these generators and then also the ongoing maintenance or are you working on that already? As part of what you're doing to correct the situation. I believe right now. We're looking at some funds . As we showed in the slide. There's been some funds have been allocated to building services that we're looking at to support the generators in which are some critical sites that are called, and I would have to look the definition of about super node sites for communications in which multiple agencies depend upon that station and that equipment plus, fueling sites for stations were looking and working with building services to prioritize some of those because that has impact across numerous

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departments as far as future action that needs to take place . I think that's something we are working with our chief of staffs and fire chiefs to put plans together, and I believe probably working with your staff and budget for future actions and thank you for that. And thank you again for this presentation. I just want to make sure that it's known for my colleagues that this is definitely a priority for me to ensure that these critical infrastructures have the power that they need. So when something like this does happen , we're able to keep them powered up and continue doing the critical work that you all provide for the community. Thank you. Are these? Diesel powered generators. What's the fuel for the generators so that can largely depend on the site. Some sites have natural gas, and that's the preferred method to supply the generators. But if you don't have that, at these certain stations, you may well do that diesel generator and we would just schedule a delivery of diesel periodic time

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intervals at that station in inclement weather, or in a catastrophic power failure. Okay, I know fuel supplies, and the generators became an issue. Obviously, when there's a wind storm going on, and all of a sudden, you know you've got a generator, but you realize that you know you don't have diesel and don't get your default. You know, it's a tough is there any and I know a lot of people have been looking at, you know, a solar array plus battery backup as they're kind of on site, you know, no fail. No you dependent on the outside world kind of is that at all feasible for, stations. It's speaking that I. I don't know all the details of how much solar could power the different needs of the fire facility. We would have to work with the team of specialist to look at that. I do know as you bring up the fuel aspect of it and talking with building services. That's part of that assessment. And I know we've had some discussion of, changing

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diesel generators to the natural gas. So that goes a part of that installation assessment. If we need to go ahead and change the generators that we're going to put at the facilities here from an operational point of view, it seems like it would be simpler to just have one fuel source for all your generators. I appreciate the item honestly, after in 2021. It's very disappointing, to be frank bat. We have this many emergency facilities that don't have emergency power generation. Just, you know, unacceptable and definitely will be one of my priorities. And I would imagine, you know one of our council priorities. Thank you. That's why we that's a big reason. We put it on this agenda because we wanted to hear this and make sure we were moving in the direction we need to be moving. So thank you. I don't think there's anybody virtual right now, and I apologize if there is

[11:21:29 AM]

and I just don't know it. You're having played more. Thank you all very much. Appreciate the good report and appreciate you being here. In fact, let me just say thank you to everybody that's been here to help report on this. It's taken some time, but I think it's really important for us all for us to hear it, but also for the public to hear all the different reports we've had. So I want to be a half of the committee and the other council members that participated. I want to say thank you for all of you all being here before we adjourn. I just want to ask to last year's if they have anything they want to talk about to make sure it's on the next agenda, or we'll work on that through a message board down the road, okay. In that case without objection, we're adjourned. Thank you. All. Thank you.