



**EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES  
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2023**

**The Early Childhood Council convened in a regular meeting on Wednesday, February 8, 2023, at City Hall, Board and Commission Room #1101, 301 West Second Street in Austin, Texas.**

**Chair McHorse called the Early Childhood Council Meeting to order at 8:36 a.m.**

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

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

**Staff in Attendance: Caitlin Oliver and Cindy Gamez**

**PUBLIC COMMUNICATION: GENERAL**

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

**Jason Gindele, advisory board member at Mainspring Schools, shared that Mainspring Schools lost power due to the ice storm the first week of February 2023. Gindele asked that the ECC recommend to City Council that Austin Energy group child care programs with schools for the prioritization of power restoration.**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- 1. Approve the minutes of the Early Childhood Council Regular Meeting on January 11, 2023. The minutes from the meeting of 1/11/2023 were approved on Member Hedrick's motion, Member Hosking Pulido's second, on a unanimous 7-0 vote. Members Alvarez and McCollum were not present at time of the vote.**

**DISCUSSION ITEMS**

2. Updates from related groups (as needed), including Austin Chapter of the Texas Association for the Education of Young Children, Austin ISD, Child Care Regulation, Child Inc, E3 Alliance, Success By 6 Coalition, Workforce Solutions Capital Area, and other groups in attendance  
**Member McHorse provided an update on the Workforce Solutions Capital Area Start Early report presentation, which has been postponed. She also gave a reminder that the Austin Chapter of the Texas Association for the Education of Young Children conference will be on February 25, 2023.**
3. Recognition of Early Childhood Council (ECC) commissioners whose terms end on February 28, 2023  
**Member Huston expressed appreciation for Member Paver's years of service on the ECC. Rhonda Paver joined what was then the City of Austin Child Care Council (later the Early Childhood Council) in 1994, serving for almost thirty years since that time. She succeeded Jeanette Watson as Chair. Under her leadership the Council created a framework for an early childhood system in Austin that ultimately formed the basis for the first Success by Six Strategic Plan. Rhonda brought expertise in early childhood care and education to the Council through her Master's degree in Early Childhood and her experience as founder and owner of Stepping Stone child care centers. She has advocated for high quality early education, and at the same time, has helped to develop recommendations that take into account the economics and practicalities of providing education and care for young children. Rhonda is widely recognized for her expertise and contributions. In 2011, the Governor appointed her as the only person in private business to the Texas State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care. She was a 2018 Nominee for the Profiles in Power Award. The City of Austin and its children and families thank Rhonda for her service and her lifelong commitment to quality early care and education.**
4. Discussion regarding the time and meeting location for the April 2023 ECC Regular Meeting  
**Members asked Caitlin Oliver, staff liaison to the ECC, to explore options for convening the April regular meeting on April 11, 2023, potentially at a library location with a start time between 5:30 and 6:30 p.m.**

### **WORK GROUP UPDATES**

5. Update from the Quality-of-Life (QoL) Study Workgroup regarding the Request for Proposal and the joint QoL Study Workshop  
**Member Huston provided an update that the QoL Workgroup presented at the Success By 6 Coalition Stakeholder Meeting on January 26, 2023, where the Workgroup gathered feedback from attendees on QoL topics to prioritize in the study. One of the topics with the most votes was financial stability. The QoL study workshop between the some of the commissions on the Joint Inclusion Committee has been postponed. At the workshop, the boards & commissions plan to discuss having a joint QoL survey. The ECC QoL**

**Workgroup will meet in early March to draft the Request for Proposal (RFP) for the study. The draft RFP will be brought to the March regular meeting.**

6. Update from the Fiscal Year 2023-24 Budget Workgroup regarding budget recommendations and timeline

**Member Hedrick provided an update that the Success By 6 Coalition (SX6) will publish their priorities for the FY 23-24 City budget by February 22, 2023. Typically, the ECC aligns their budget recommendations with the SX6 priorities. The ECC Budget Workgroup will have their next meeting on March 2 where they will draft the budget recommendations to bring to the March 8 ECC meeting. Member Hedrick summarized the \$4.4 million in Austin Public Health early childhood investments in 2023, which includes, among others:**

- **Approximately \$3.1 million- Social Service Contracts with the Ready Families Collaborative for home visiting programs; Austin Community College for teacher and director education; Child Inc. for after school and summer care; and Workforce Solutions for quality improvement, continuity of care, and child care scholarships**
- **Approx. \$508K- Maternal and Infant Outreach Program (MIOP)**
- **Approx. \$303K- Lease for the Bergstrom Tech Center child care facility**
- **Approx. \$185K- Staffing (2 FTE) positions specifically for early childhood through Austin Public Health**

**Chair McHorse shared that additional investments may be part of the ECC budget recommendations, including funds for an economic development grant program to cover city fees for child care programs that was included in City Council [Resolution No. 20230126-055](#).**

## **DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS**

7. Discussion and possible action on Quality-of-Life (QoL) Study Workgroup membership, study content, Request for Proposal, and the joint QoL Study Workshop  
**No action was taken regarding the quality-of-life study.**

8. Discussion and possible action on FY 2023-24 budget recommendations and timeline  
**No action was taken regarding FY 2023-24 budget recommendations.**

9. Discussion and possible action on an "affordable, high-quality child care" definition for the purposes of City business and policy related to child care in new City facilities and City-sponsored projects

**Member Paver moved that the ECC endorse the "affordable, high quality child care" definitions drafted by Austin Public Health staff. Member Huston provided a second. The motion passed unanimously on an 8-0 vote. Member Schennum was not present at time of the vote.**

**STAFF BRIEFINGS**

10. COVID-19 and other respiratory illness updates from Caitlin Oliver, Austin Public Health  
**Austin-Travis County re-entered COVID-19 community level low in January due to a decreasing COVID-19 hospitalization rate. APH continues to provide COVID-19 guidance to child care providers and schools through the child care nurse line; to convene monthly COVID task force meetings with child care programs and other early childhood stakeholders; and to support programs with needed supplies, such as at-home test kits.**

**FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

**ECC members listed the following future agenda items:**

- **Discussion about City of Austin winter storm response and supports for the child care sector**
- **Presentation about the Ready Families Collaborative and home visiting programs**
- **Presentation by the Housing & Planning Department regarding the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Action Plan Community Needs Assessment**
- **Presentation by Austin Public Health regarding early childhood social service contract solicitation**

**Chair McHorse adjourned the meeting at 9:22 a.m. without objection.**

**The minutes were approved at the March 8, 2023, meeting on Member Tom Hedrick's motion and Member Huston's second, on a 5-0 vote. Members Green-Otero and Gordon abstained.**