



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

The Early Childhood Council convened in a regular meeting on Wednesday, March 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 8:34 a.m.

Board Members in Attendance: Chair McHorse and Members Green-Otero, Hedrick, Hosking Pulido, Huston, and McCollum

Board Members in Attendance Remotely: Members Alvarez and Gordon

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

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.

No public comment

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approve the minutes of the Early Childhood Council Regular Meeting on February 8, 2023
The minutes from the meeting of 2/8/2023 were approved on Member Hedrick's motion, Member Huston's second, on a 5-0 vote. Members Green-Otero and Gordon abstained. Member McCollum was not present at time of the vote.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

2. Updates from related groups (as needed), including Austin Chapter of the Texas Association for the Education of Young Children, Austin ISD, Child Care Regulation, Child Inc, E3 Alliance, Success By 6 Coalition, Workforce Solutions Capital Area, and other groups in attendance
Member Green-Otero gave an update that registration for pre-K in AISD is scheduled to begin in April. Chair McHorse shared that the TXAEYC-Austin Chapter had 300 hundred

attendees at their annual conference in February. McHorse also gave an update on behalf of the Success by 6 Coalition that the Early Care & Education Rally will be at 10 a.m. at the south steps of the Texas Capitol building on March 21, 2023.

3. Updates about Week of the Young Child, April 2-8, 2023, City proclamations and events
Caitlin Oliver, ECC staff liaison, gave updates on upcoming Week of the Young Child (WOYC) events:

- **WOYC proclamation & Rhonda Paver proclamation- Thursday, March 23 at 9 a.m., in the City Hall Board & Commission Room #1101**
- **Central Texas Early Childhood Educators Day of Celebration and Recognition- April 3**
- **Llama in the Red Pajamas story time- April 3, at 4 p.m., at the Ruiz Branch library**

Chair McHorse expressed appreciation for Member Huston's years of service on the ECC. Aletha Huston has been, for decades, a major asset to the City of Austin Early Childhood Council and to the world of early childhood education. We have been incredibly fortunate to have her on our team: a nationally recognized researcher and thought leader who bridges the gap between the ivory tower and the child care classroom. She has been a true teacher and model for all of us as we have negotiated how best to shape policy and how to translate policy into action.

Aletha views everything through the lens of what is in the best interest of young children and their families. In a bustling and growing Austin, she emphasizes that all families—regardless of income, family constellation, and neighborhood—are entitled to high quality early childhood education, building a foundation that will serve children as they grow into adulthood and our community as it grapples with issues of social equity and justice.

Aletha walks the walk and talks the talk. Locally, she has chaired this body, chaired and served on numerous committees, advocated to City Council members and anyone else who will listen, written policy statements, and drafted letters. No task is too big or too small. We cannot even begin to assess her influence in the national arena.

Aletha is retiring from the Early Childhood Council as early childhood education and care is beginning to receive the attention support it needs and deserves. We are at this juncture largely because of Aletha's efforts and storied career. For that we are profoundly grateful. We are honored to have worked with her, been mentored by her, and to call her our friend.

4. Update from Tom Hedrick regarding the February ECC meeting public comment about Austin Energy power restoration to child care programs
Member Hedrick has reached out to Austin Energy for clarity on prioritized groups during widespread power outage events. So far, the ECC does not have a clear answer on that, but

Member Hedrick is now talking to Council Member Alison Alter's office about this issue and will report back to the ECC at the April meeting.

5. Discussion regarding the time and meeting location for the April 2023 ECC Regular Meeting
The ECC members discussed locations for the April meeting and asked the staff liaison to reserve a meeting room on April 11, 2023, at either the Windsor Park Branch library or the University Hills Branch library.
6. Presentation by Austin Public Health regarding the Social Services Early Childhood Issue Area RFP solicitation

Presenters:

- Akeshia Johnson Smothers, Program Manager III, Social Services Agreement Administration Area, Health Equity and Community Engagement (HECE) Division
- Laura LaFuente, Assistant Director, HECE Division
- Michelle Friedman, Interim Manager, Community and Family Support (CFS) Unit, HECE Division
- Ashlee Kraus, Social Services Funding Specialist, CFS Unit, HECE Division

Akeshia Johnson-Smothers and Laura LaFuente presented information about the upcoming City of Austin early childhood social service contract solicitation process, for \$2 million in funding. Funding for Workforce Solutions Capital Area is secured and is not included in the \$2 million up for solicitation. Social service contract solicitations are divided into seven issue areas: 1) Youth; 2) Behavioral Health; 3) Homeless; 4) Basic Needs; 5) Early Childhood; 6) Workforce Readiness; and 7) Health Equity. The goal of early childhood services is to support children and families with employment sustaining child care and early childhood education. The anticipated release date for the early childhood area solicitation is April 2023, with the agreement start date being in October 2023. The Health Equity and Community Engagement (HECE) team has been working with the APH Community Services Division's Early Childhood team on this solicitation process. Current early childhood service categories funded, include:

- **Staffing for early childhood education programs**
- **Quality improvement programs to upskills early childhood workers**
- **Parenting education; including home visits, child development education, and support for parents of medically-fragile children**
- **Counseling and support groups**
- **Early childhood intervention for children with developmental delays, medical diagnosis, or auditory or visual impairment**
- **Family support services, including case management and basic needs financial support**

Other service categories, include:

- **Early childhood curriculum**
- **Program accreditation**
- **Extended care for children of essential workers**
- **Transportation for prenatal, pediatric, or other necessary medical appointments**

Agencies, board of directors, or leadership staff, etc., that receive this funding must report performance measures on a quarterly basis. The standard City performance measures, include:

- **Unduplicated clients served by the agency/program per 12 months**
- **Percent of individuals making progress toward their treatment plan goals**
- **Percent of individuals who complete an education program and demonstrate improved knowledge**
- **Percent of individuals who demonstrate improved life skills**

The contracted agencies will be required to report on unduplicated clients services every three months; but, during negotiations, it may be determined that the other three measures do not need to be reported with the same frequency. At the quarterly check-in meetings, there is an opportunity for agencies to propose measures that better fit their program(s).

APH is requesting feedback from Austin-Travis County residents on an early childhood funding survey by March 17, 2023. The survey responses will help APH determine where to focus Early Childhood Services for the community. The survey is available in English, Spanish, Traditional Chinese, Simplified Chinese, Arabic, Korean, and Vietnamese.

Applying for funding involves preparing for competitions and following the steps in the RFP process. APH recommends applicants do the following to prepare:

- **Get on the solicitation announcement listserv by emailing APHCompetitions@austintexas.gov**
- **Ensure Sam.gov registration is up to date**
- **Check the open and upcoming solicitations published on the APH Social Services Competitions website: <https://www.austintexas.gov/article/aph-social-services-competitions>**
- **Submit one Threshold Application per 12 month-period in order to be eligible to submit proposals for APH Social Services competitions. Threshold Applications are completed in the PartnerGrants database**

Steps in the RFP process for applicants, include:

- 1. Register as a City of Austin vendor, and register in PartnerGrants**
- 2. Submit a Threshold Application in PartnerGrants, which is valid for one year**

3. When a solicitation is released, Offerors submit an Intent to Apply for each proposal they are submitting; an agency would need to submit separate Intents to Apply for each category, if applying for multiple categories
4. Once the Intent to Apply is approved, Offerors submit a Proposal

The APH Social Services Contracts team has started offering office hours for applicants. A rubric for the applicant will be part of the RFP packet. Respondents will be asked to address the City's Strategic Direction 2023 goals, the community health improvement process, and equity within their proposal(s).

7. Presentation from the Housing and Planning Department regarding the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Action Plan Community Needs Assessment

Presenters:

- Jamey May, Housing & Community Development Officer
- Chris Duran, Research Analyst Senior

Jamey May and Chris Duran led a discussion and public hearing on community needs and spending priorities for the Fiscal Year 2023-24 Housing & Planning Department (HPD) Action Plan. Duran provided a summary of the FY 2021-22 funding performance. In FY 21-22, the HPD Action Plan served 2,666 people through federally funded projects. \$16.3 million in entitlement grants was spent, and \$12.2 million in pandemic CARES Act funding was spent. An outsized population of Black, Native American, and Hispanic people were served through the FY 21-22 action plan. The Child Care Services included in the action plan were managed by Austin Public Health, along with Mental Health Services and Senior Services. Child Care Services exceeded the goal of serving 179 people by serving 350 people and expending \$2.1 million. The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Special Needs Assistance funding served 144 people across 3 programs: 1) Child Inc. Early Head Start; 2) AISD Teen Parent Child care Program; and 3) YWCA Bridge Child Care Voucher Program. In addition, the Community Development Block Grant- Coronavirus funds (CDBG-CV CARES Act) were used to provide child care for essential workers through Workforce Solutions Capital Area. The program served 206 clients.

HPD is in the final year of the federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) consolidated action plan. Next year, HPD will come to the ECC to gather feedback on both the annual plan and the new 5-year consolidated plan. The plan includes the following programs & activities: Homelessness Assistance; Special Needs Assistance, which includes Child Care Services; Renters Assistance; Homeowner Assistance; Homebuyer Assistance; Housing Developer Assistance; and Other Community Development.

The Community Needs Assessment period for the development of the FY 23-24 action plan runs through March and ends on April 15, 2023. Two public hearings are planned during this period: 1) At the City Council meeting on March 23 and 2) at the Community Development Commission meeting on April 11. The public comment period is May 2 through June 9, 2023. City of Austin residents can provide public comment at upcoming City Council meetings and public hearings and through the online portal, SpeakUp Austin! website.

ECC members requested data from the presenters on families that were part of the homeless assistance program. HPD collects data on families that use these programs, but they need to aggregate the FY 20-21 data before sharing.

WORK GROUP UPDATES

8. Update from the Fiscal Year 2023-24 Budget Workgroup regarding budget recommendations and timeline
Member Hedrick updated the ECC members on the plans the ECC Budget Workgroup has to share the approved budget recommendation with the Joint Inclusion Committee (JIC). The JIC is organizing a joint budget workshop in March, between all the JIC commission budget workgroups. Chair McHorse encouraged ECC members to meet with their City Council offices in April or May to discuss the early childhood funding recommendations.
9. Update from the Quality-of-Life (QoL) Study Workgroup regarding the Request for Proposal (RFP) and the Joint Inclusion Committee QoL Study Workshop
Jeremy Garza, Equity Office Commissions & Neighborhood Liaison, announced that there will not be a Join Inclusion Committee quality-of-life study workshop between all the commissions conducting studies. Garza recommends that the ECC reach out to the other commissions individually, to discuss possible collaborations.

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS

10. Discussion and possible action to approve a recommendation regarding early childhood investments for the FY 2023-24 City budget
The members discussed the proposed ECC fiscal year 2023-24 budget recommendations to City Council, drafted by the ECC Budget Workgroup. Michelle Friedman, APH HECE Division, provided information on cost of living increases included in early childhood social service contracts. The last time contracts accounted for a cost of living increase was in 2017, at an increase of 2.5%. Between 2014 and 2017, there were 3 increases. To account for the increased cost of doing business since 2017, the increase would need to be 20%.
Member Hedrick moved to approve the recommendation with an amendment to change the last bullet point in the recommendation from “Incorporate cost of living increases for early childhood social service contracts” to “Incorporate inflation-adjusted increases of 20% for early childhood social service contracts.” Member Hosking-Pulido provided a second. The budget recommendation was unanimously approved as amended by an 8-0 vote.
11. Discussion and possible action to approve the Early Childhood Council QoL Study RFP
Member Huston provided updates on a draft Request for Proposals (RFP) for the ECC Quality-of-Life Study. The ECC Quality-of-Life Workgroup hopes to send the draft RFP to

the City of Austin Equity of Office by the end of March. The draft lists the purpose of the study; definitions; and what the ECC would like the research contractors to do. Jeremy Garza confirmed that the ECC can distinguish desired versus required responsibilities of the contractor in the RFP. Garza estimates that the City can begin to process an ECC-endorsed draft RFP by early April. Members made suggestions to improve the RFP document. Member Green-Otero suggested that the RFP make a sample size recommendation. Member McCollum suggested that the RFP specify considerations for finding families of children not enrolled in child care. Chair McHorse requested that the RFP refer to the Success by 6 strategic plan as a community plan rather than a United Way for Greater Austin plan.

Member Huston moved to endorse the Early Childhood Quality-of-Life draft Request for Proposals (RFP). Member McCollum provided a second. The draft RFP was unanimously endorsed by an 8-0 vote.

STAFF BRIEFINGS

12. Updates from Caitlin Oliver, Austin Public Health, about a public health training series for child care providers

In April, Austin Public Health plans, in partnership with Workforce Solutions Capital Area, to launch a series of public health trainings for child care directors and teachers. The first health & safety training will be on communicable disease prevention and resources. Later training topics include injury prevention and breastfeeding.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

ECC members listed the following future agenda items:

- **Presentation about the Ready Families Collaborative and home visiting programs**
- **Presentation about local findings from the RAPID survey, a national survey about home-based child care providers**
- **Early Childhood Council officer elections**
- **Presentation about the Intergenerational Day Center proposal for the city-owned Nash Hernandez, Sr. Building**
- **Discussion about City of Austin winter storm response and power restoration for the child care sector**

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

The minutes were approved at the April 11, 2023, meeting on Member Eliza Gordon's motion and Member Aletha Huston's second, on a 10-0 vote.