

April 13, 2023

To: Mayor Kirk Watson and the Austin City Council

CC: City Manager Jesus Garza, Assistant City Managers Rodney Gonzalez and Bruce Mills,  
Director Juan Ortiz, Director Ken Snipes

Re: Status Updates of the Disaster Food & Water Appendix and Mass Care Branch Plans

Mayor Watson and Austin City Council Members,

The Austin-Travis County Food Policy Board (ATCFB) is committed to ensuring our community has uninterrupted access to food, water, and basic necessities during future disasters. In this spirit, we are requesting an update from City staff on the status of the items listed below, all of which are related to the provision and distribution of food and water in the event of a City of Austin emergency.

**Status on the adoption of the Disaster Food & Water Appendix to the City of Austin Emergency Operations Plan (Basic Plan)?** Hagerty Consulting was contracted to produce this appendix, and a significant amount of time was contributed by individuals throughout the community to provide feedback on experiences from the onset of the pandemic and Winter Storm Uri. Our understanding is that this appendix was completed by Hagerty Consulting and submitted to the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) on January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023 and the Director of HSEM has the authority to approve the Food & Water Appendix to the Basic Plan. The lack of an approved plan led to continued disorganization of emergency food and water distribution during the most recent ice storm in February 2023, as it did not seem to even be referenced or “tested.”

**Where does the Food & Water Appendix, once approved, fit into the Mass Care Branch of the Emergency Operations Plan?** It is our understanding that it would be the responsibility of this Food Access Group to implement the Disaster Food and Water Appendix in the event of an emergency.

**What is the timeline for hiring the positions for the Food and Water Access, specifically with regard to the Food Access Group in the Mass Care Branch?** Another disaster could be right around the corner, and without these positions filled, we will continue to be unprepared to help our citizens.

**How does Travis County fit into the food and water distribution in these shared plans?** We strongly recommend that Travis County be included in the coordination of food and water distribution. Coordination between City and County is essential to the comprehensive implementation of an emergency food and water plan in neighboring areas such as Manor, Elgin, Lakeway, Del Valle, and Pflugerville. A coordinated response will also avoid duplication of (or conflicting) efforts between the City and County.

We appreciate the City's investment in creating these plans and focus on the community in the times of highest need. We request that a member of City staff present at our next ATCFB meeting on May 8th, 6pm (virtually or in-person). Thank you for considering our urgency to approve and implement these plans before the next disaster strikes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Barden", with a stylized, cursive script.

Lisa Barden  
Vice-Chair, Austin-Travis County Food Policy Board  
Representing the full board as approved on April 9, 2023