

Audit and Finance Committee (AFC) meeting Transcript – 5/24/2023

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let me start. Okay good morning . Good morning, everyone. Ann. I'm Alison alter. I'm chair of the audit and finance committee. I'm joined here this morning by council members pool and council members. Kelly believe council member Fuentes is right here and then council member Ryan alter should be joining us shortly at 931. And I'd like to call this meeting to order. It's my understanding that at this time we don't have any public communication speakers. Great. Thank you. So then the first item of business will be to approve the minutes of the April 26th meeting, have a motion from council member Kelly and a second from council member Fuentes with no objections. We will approve those minutes. Thank you. I am actually going to move up the meeting dates. To item number 11 so we can make sure that we take care of that early in the meeting. So the

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proposal for the meeting is to move the August meeting. To August 23rd at 9:30 A.M. Do I have a motion to do that? Move by council member pool seconded by council member Kelly. So with no objections, we will change the calendar so that we will have our meeting on August 23rd at 9:30 A.M. Okay thank you. We will now take up item number two, which is approving the proposed bylaw amendments for the parks and recreation board. Good morning. Good morning. This is Stephanie hall from the city clerk's office. I'm here to present some proposed bylaw amendments from the park and recreation board. They recently met or excuse me, to approve removing one of their committees. This is to edit article 8ab the committee is the financial committee and the

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reason for this is the intent to dissolve the financial committee is because they rarely meet. They do not have a set focus area and the items that it does handle, they believe, could be better handled by working groups. Staff has no issue with this. So we would recommend the removal of that committee. Thank you. Councilmember pool moves approval seconded by council member Kelly with no objections. The committee will move that on as approved to the full council to approve. Thank you. Thank you . Let's see. Going so fast here. I gotta make sure I'm okay. The next item will be item number three, which is the language access follow up audit. Do you have your staff here? So let me just start before miss stokes speaks. Just to say this is the first of two audit updates that we're going to hear for this morning. We do these as one mechanism to ensure implementation of our audits. Ann and as chair, together with

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the auditor and our interim city manager, as well as Mr. Benigno, we are working on some additional mechanisms that we're going to be using to make sure that some of the outstanding recommendations from our audits are being fulfilled faster under the new administration. But this is one mechanism for doing that by miss stokes, our auditor, to speak, please. Thank you. Yes. So we did some follow up work on language access. This involves two audits, two prior audits, one from 2016. Looking at our English language access language access program in general, and then also the language access work that we did related to our disaster preparedness work in 2021. So neha Sharma was the auditor or the manager of this, and Elena Purcell will be presenting to you today. Elena. Thank you. Council members. My name is Elena Purcell and I was the lead auditor on this special

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follow up project. I'm pleased to be able to present my team's work to you today. The purpose of this special follow up report was to determine the implementation status of three recommendations. As Corey mentioned from two of our prior audits, these recommendations were all related to the city's language access program. In both of these audits, we noted the city may not be meeting the language access needs of residents. We issued these three recommendations in order for the city to provide equitable access to city programs, services and information to the entire Austin community. Zo and heesom were responsible for the implementation of these recommendations. Burns and I'll discuss their implementation Ann status on the following slides. So recommendation one from the 2016 language access audit was to design a language access program. We found that the city wide language access program is in compliance with the necessary federal regulations and generally aligns with the best practice framework. We compared it to. However, we did identify

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problems with certain elements of the program. While cpio collects data on the population that needs to be served and shares it across the city, there is a little data collection on the there's a little data collection on the success of or satisfaction with departmental services without knowing success or satisfaction, it is difficult to assess whether needs are being met or whether resources are being used as efficiently as possible. For that reason, we determine the recommendation Ann to still be underway. Key recommendation two from the audit directs the city to designate a person or persons with authority to coordinate the implement action of and oversee the program. We found that the city did appoint their language access coordinator in 2018. However, we observed that the coordinator faces many obstacles Ralls in the implementation and maintenance of the citywide program. These include departmental language services existing outside of her oversight authority, limited resources and lack of reliable

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data and performance measures as such, we determined the recommendation status to still be underway. So what needs to be done to consider these recommendations? Complete the city should ensure that departments are collecting data on outcomes of their services and sharing that information with cpio recent policy changes may address this issue, but the new policy still needs some time to be implemented. To confirm cpio should also develop metrics to evaluate the success of programs with this data and also the city should ensure the language access coordinator has the proper authority to oversee the program citywide, as well as assess the resources needed to do so. Additionally as observed in the original audit, hr is in charge of administer the citywide bilingual pay stipend program. However, they do not have electronic records for all employees receiving the stipend. Individual departments are responsible for determining and

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monitoring their need for bilingual employees. The language access coordinator does not have authority to confirm self-reported needs. Match community needs as next from the 2021 disaster preparedness audit, we looked at recommendation recommendation number eight, which directs the city to create and implement a language access plan for emergencies as he summons Pio. We have made great progress with communication efforts in advance of emergencies. However, there is some more progress that could be done. We found that the city has not yet finalized and implemented an updated emergency language access plan, though heesom has hired an individual to accelerate this process. Additionally, as demonstrated during ice storm this year, the city still struggles to communicate in non-english languages during emergencies, though it is a goal of the city to accomplish these translations available resources are a constraint and to be considered complete. Janet we determined

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this recommendation to be underway, still to be considered complete, the city needs to finalize and implement a plan as well as assess the resources needed to effectively communicate with all non-english speaking Indian Ralls during emergencies. And with that I am open to any questions. Thank you . Miss Purcell. Does staff want to respond in from Pio or heesom before we ask questions? Yeah. Okay. Councilmember pool. I just had a quick question and maybe the auditor's office can answer or maybe staff can. I remember when we started talking about language access and having translators, certified translators on on call and available to help with that in our meetings and elsewhere that one of the concerns beyond finding the funding for it and what was finding actual certified people who had been certified Eid there was an

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abundance of folks who spoke a variety of languages, but it's a different thing requiring a certificate station. And I think because the need hadn't been really expressed in a large way throughout the city, maybe that hadn't. Those efforts hadn't yet gotten underway. Has that changed or did you see anything like that? And I'm talking probably back in 2018 or so when we were really engaging in this conversation on this dais in a large way, which is like five years ago, I think management can speak to this better. But I know that shared voices is a certification program separate from the stipend program, the bilingual pay stipend program, and they go through training a little more extensive of a process than the bilingual pay program. And they should have lists of people who speak different languages and their certifications. But I think they'll be able to speak to that better. That's great. Yeah, because finding the funding for it is one thing, but then making

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sure that we actually have the resources who can then implement a very and address a very real need is, is a whole different situation. Ann I see. Jessica standing there. Miss king is available to, to offer some insight. Thank you. Good morning . Good morning. Council members Jessica king, director so zo in the development of the language access program and I do have a support for any additional questions here. Marion Sanchez, who oversees our community engagement team, who is also lead in many ways on overseeing language access, along with mar gaba, who is our language access coordinator within our department. So to set up the program started, yes, back in 2018, where we really pushed forward on assigning staff one of the key elements to secure resource is had everything to do with securing contract services. The team worked with our purchasing office to develop a contract that allowed us that a multitude of different service

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providers. So it's not a rotating Ann that most people would see as a rotation contract, but it allows us to pick and choose based on the service need that we require. We have multiple service providers on that contract. It is a citywide contract that all departments have access to as well as council. And so there's funding designated to that contract through our budgetary process and each council office I think can tap into that whenever they need language access services for their for their programs. So would you say that there that we have plenty of opportunities when we have the need to bring in a translator for an array of languages that that that contract fulfills that need? Yes I believe the contract fills the need. Here's the challenge, Paige the challenge is, is a couple of folds. First and foremost, making sure that we understand truly what the need. And that speaks to the auditor's recommendations, really making sure that we understand what are the needs of the community and do we promote the service that is available and encourage people to contact us when they need that service right now for events, the community engagement team did a wonderful job

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partnering with 300 and Elton, so that if people need translation rasooli interpretation. So let me correct the language interpretation is the spoken word. Translation is the written word. So if they need interpre rotation services for a meeting or some type of community engagement activity, they can call 311, make that request and then a request goes to the department or the requesting organization that is I'm sorry, not the requesting organization , the department that is putting on the event and in coordination with our team to secure the interpretation services for that event. But in order for us to really understand, we need to make sure that we're reaching out to those entities, reaching out in their preferred language to say that this service is available to them and that they are able to actually tap into them when they need them. So it is not just the access to those resources forces and providing contracted staff. It's making sure that the residents understand that the service is available and how can they access those services. Gotcha. Gotcha the education process exactly. Yes. Thank you, chair.

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Thank you. Councilmember councilmember Fuentes. Thank you. I'm very pleased to hear about the bilingual pay program and looking at the backup, it seemed that the city allocated 2.2 million in the 2022 budget. And I'm curious if our council aides participate. I should back up and say to my knowledge, council aides are not participating Singh in this bilingual pay program. And so is that a matter of just coordinating with hr? Because I know for my office many of my team members speak Spanish and are translating our social media content. Our newsletter content in Spanish, and that does take time to do that type of translation services. So I wanted to first confirm and clarify if council offices also qualify within this program that's administered through human resources. I think RDI is going to be able to

answer that best. I'm not sure if there is anyone here today, but I definitely encourage reaching out to them. But that's my understanding as well that it's

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and what is the do you have more details on the program itself? Yeah so it's outside of the language access program itself, but did departments self report need for certain positions? Does that need to be bilingual? Will they request the stipend? Eid employees get tested and I believe just written, written and oral test. If they pass the test they get the stipend and there's not any kind of review process. The only way that they would really Luz the stipend is if they leave the position. Okay okay. So it's just a matter of connecting folks. Yes. Miss king . Sorry just to add to that, again, Jessica king, cpo, as the department that secures funding for my staff for bilingual pay, you do also have to make sure that there is funding. So that is one of the key challenges across departments, is identifying staff and that would I think be the case to for council as to whether or not you

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have the funding available so that bilingual pay stipend can be afforded to that to that employee if they meet all the criteria. Rey okay. That'll be a good conversation for me to have with with our city manager on that end. The other question I had is around the language access work with our homeland security emergency management division. You mentioned that they have contracted out an individual to take a look at our communication during times of emergencies. Do you have an update as to the progress of that contract and the services that they provide? Yeah. Last we had heard that they had just hired them. I'm not sure. Yes. Yes, they have just hired them. I don't think they've gone much farther beyond that. But they're working on that process now. I'm not sure if Jesus here and they'll be able again to report better. Back to you. But that was in early may, I believe this . Good morning, Juan Ortiz,

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homeland security and emergency management. Just just to confirm that that information is correct, the person just just coming on board and we're beginning to kind of outline what the scope of the confirm the scope of work that they need to do and the timeline for that work to be completed in. Okay. And so that scope of work, you're still determining what it'll all include, because I know this, the findings report here highlights quite a few areas that need to be looked at during times of emergencies. That's correct. Our goal is to make sure that we complete that language access plan and the deliverables to carry that out. And also to include I know that we're talking about spoken languages or written languages, but also want to make sure that that we include and let everybody know that we also are looking at asl, visual language for those segments of our population that are deaf or hard of hearing and

make sure that we have ways to communicate with the entire community. And we actually do have a system in place that's available now through the austin-travis county

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accessible alert system that that we're using to communicate in emergencies, in asl language directly to the residents. Okay, great. And we are heesen's been a great partner. We've been working. Marian and her team are working directly with the Pio team over at heysham to ensure that there is a clear scope of work. I think they've already had meetings. They're bringing the person on board. I think they literally started within the last couple of weeks and so they've finalized the scope of work and they will have timelines set to implement. Okay, great. And then, Ms. King, last questions for you with this report and the recommendations that were provided of the recommendations, can you speak to which ones of the recommendations? Luz you and your team will prioritize or any insight as to what the report has has shared? So the top priority for me at this point and for my team, I think at this point is really on the emergency side. It ties back to council

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member Poole's question with regards to resources. In an emergency all hands should be on deck and I think the city manager has made that clear across the organization. So our next step is to really work with hard to look at who has bilingual pay access, who's receiving that stipend and how we can fold them in to the emergency response. What that process looks like and how we can ensure that we have easy access to quicker translation services or interpretation services if the need arises. So that's really right. Now given given the climate issues that we have and how hot things are getting over the summer, that's where I would say our priority is right now. Thank you. Thanks councilmember. The only thing I would add to that is just make sure that it's available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, because those needs will be will, will be necessary whenever . Thank you, chair. I just wanted. Excuse me. I just wanted to say thank you for providing

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us with this information. I think it's really important, especially when we're looking at a whole community response and approach to preparing for and responding to situations in our community. With so many non-english speakers or English speakers and a second language, I think it's very important that everyone has access to the information that they need in a timely manner. So thank you very much for the work that you did. Thank you. Thank you so in reviewing and reviewing the audit and the response, there's a little bit of a of a of a disconnect between the two. And I think part of that is that we have made a lot of progress from where we were, I think back with covid and with Yuri. We really,

really struggled and there were a lot of these pieces that were not in place. And so as we take a look at this audit and we try to understand what we need to take away from it, I want to acknowledge that there's been a lot of work that has been done. We only have one language access coordinator. We're asking a lot

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of them. There are a lot of languages. It is not an easy task to produce the language materials and also to make sure that the communities know that that it's available. That being said, I think there is a lot of work that is still pointed to that needs to happen within the audit. That raises questions about whether we're meeting the needs of our community, whether we're evaluating our programs, whether we're taking advantage of the language skills that are already within our system to the maximum of our ability. And this won't be closed out until we close Eid those loops on things . I did have a couple of questions there that I wanted to clarify. Mr. Ortiz, if you could come down, I have some questions on the emergency plan for the language access. So that does seem as Ms. King said, that the emergency response for the language access to be of high priority from this material. I'm

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not sure what what is the status of complete meeting the emergency language access plan Ann and what resources have we devoted to that? And that's again, one artist with home security and emergency management. That is exactly the work that the staff that is coming on board is going to be focusing on. And we're dedicating resources to make sure that that gets done as soon as we possibly can. And what do you anticipate is the timeline? Ann, I think what we're looking towards the is that we're looking at towards the end of the year. So I think that's a challenging question because there's if I can break it out and speak in the Micah, if I could break it out into two pieces, there's a department plan which he has a general department plan for communications because there's proactive communication that occurs in in making sure that the community is prepared. So that side of the plan is underway is being deepened. The emergency communication plan is

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still underway. But I do want to stress to that that I would I would hope that that we would have that in the next money on six months with the with an understanding to though with each emergency we learn new things and we learn how to address and tweak and adjust and so with that emergency plan underway, that doesn't mean that we can't put language access as a priority. And we can. I'm I'm a fan of iterating and making sure that we can test and pilot and try. So as that plan is being developed and codified Eid, I think that there is still work that we need to do to actually implement and practice. So I

don't want to think I don't want to walk away from this table thinking that we are not doing anything and that we're just writing a plan. We are practicing iterating and part of that component is really developing a plan to bring in staff who are already bilingual, paid so that when the need arises, we can bring them in

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quickly. I think if we have that plan in place, that will help in many ways address language access needs for our emergency response. Thank you. And you know, just to add to that, I think what you'll see is the a lot of that information is going to be on our website getting ahead of it, making sure that we not only are providing a translation services, but also getting that information Ann out and to the public so that they can see it ahead of time. So that they know what the information is so that they are able to better react in a in an emergency or disaster based on the information that we're passing to them. Thank you. It just occurred to me that it might be a good idea for you to have some conversations with some of our quality of life commissions where there are different languages spoken and enlist them in helping to make sure the communities know about it and get their ideas to make sure the community to know about these services and how to access them and, you know, have them help you provide some of the feedback that we're not we're not getting at this point. I

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think the distinction you made between sort of the proactive steps and where we are with that, obviously, we have I think it's the ready, set go guide, which is now translated Eid multiple languages. We didn't have that. And there are some other there are some other pieces there. I do think that this is still very much a priority for council. I don't think we have fully met. You know, the needs that were identified in the storm Mario in the storm uri after action report that were were leaning. We were looking at. I think that we still have to have that better understanding if we're meeting the needs of the community and whether this is working as we build the ship, as we go. I want to just flag that , that it won't be closed out until until we get to a point where we understand that. The other piece that was apparent was that there was a challenge that we see across many things where we try to do things citywide for departments that have scope that is citywide but don't have authority, which is

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that we have the language access coordinator or the pios not having the ability to require departments to do the work and so I think I'm not sure under the new system, miss king, who you're under Shaw as an acm. Veronica Briseno okay, so I don't see Veronica here, but I think that would be a concern Ann to have. We have made enormous strides, say with our computer security stuff by really having the city

manager's office lean in and say this is a priority and to the extent that you need that to succeed, I think that's a conversation that has to go up the chain to be able to figure out how to break any blockages that are happening there. You may be doing that, but it wasn't apparent in the audit. We are we are doing that . I think that cmo's support it, especially with hiring an additional staff person and ensuring that heesom has the staff to support the language, access specific interests for

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emergency response I think is an indication of cmo's support and willingness to give us the authority needed to move us forward. So I will continue to have those conversations and if there's additional work that we need to do in the audit, I completely agree with you. This is going to be a consistent and a consistent improvement on what we do. And so we are dedicated to making it work. Okay. And then the last question, which might be for the auditor's office, do you have a sense of where we compare to other cities in Texas with respect to their language access services? We didn't really look at that as part of our audit. So I can't exactly answer that, but I'm sure we could do that work. If you'd like to see a comparison. Okay. If someone is interested in considering a special project related to that, please let me know. We can look into that. Thank you very much. Look forward to seeing this work continue to evolve. Thank you for being here. Thank you. Next up is item four, the Austin energy vegetation management audit. And I'm just going to

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give a heads up that I'm going to see if everyone is here for the wildfire to keep the auditors work together. I'm going to try to do that after. Is everyone here from part it looks like everyone's here from fire. Okay go ahead. Thank you. Okay okay, miss Thompson. All right. Good morning, committee members. My name is Kathie Harrison. I am the audit lead on this project, and I'll be giving this presentation. Next slide, please. And. Okay thank you. The audit process is divided into three phases. Is in Eid. In the first phase, we conduct interviews and collect information to learn about the activity or program. In the second phase, we conduct more interviews and perform detailed test work that may include data analysis surveys on site visits, peer entities, work and more. In the third phase, we draft a report and work with the department management to develop

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recommendations and set due dates for those recommendations . As for this audit, an update was requested in may per council resolution. So this update is occurring just after we finish our first phase and started our second phase. Next slide, please . As you know, in February of this year, the city council passed a resolution directing the city auditor to conduct an audit of Austin energy's vegetation

management in response to the most recent winter storm where heavy ice caused trees to break and fall on power lines, causing citywide power outages and damage to more than 30% of Austin's tree canopy . This presentation will focus on initial steps taken to learn more about vegetation management . Next slide, please. Since this resolution was passed, we have conducted several interviews. We've analyzed a sample of service request data and we've reviewed documents and reports as shown

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on this slide. Next slide, please. As I noted on the previous slide, we reviewed information on the efforts Austin energy has taken to manage vegetation on or near power lines to determine which areas we would like to learn more about, including planning, execution and monitoring information technology, communication, safety, equity. The information collected in these areas will help us to answer the objective as shown on this slide. Next slide, please. As mentioned at the beginning of this presentation, we've started the second phase, and in this phase we'll conduct focus tests to address our objective, which will include more analysis of service requests, surveys of contractors hired to manage vegetation management on site visits with staff, peer entities , work and more. This work will be summarized into a draft

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report with recommendations and then we'll share the final report with you at the audit and finance committee in September. Next slide, please. This concludes my presentation, and I'm happy to answer any questions. Thank you very much, miss Harrison. That's all right. Harrison. Yes thank you. Sorry I had the wrong name. On here. Thank you very much. Council member Kelly. This was in response to your item. Did you want to speak to it? Yeah, I just wanted to say that I'm really glad this is moving forward. I appreciate the time that staff is taking to investigate it further. I know that as a council we definitely like to see the work that's being done and we look forward to the final results and the community as well. I've gotten questions at hoa meetings that I've attended recently about how the progress is going on this. And so now I have something we can put in our newsletter and send back to everybody. But I definitely think that it's something that's important and it looks like you have made

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quite a bit of progress. So thank you very much and thank you, chair, for the time to speak. Thank you. Any other comments or questions from others? I just want to call my. Thank you, miss Harrison. I want to just call my colleague's attention to an item on this week's agenda or next week's agenda related to vegetation management. This was in the works before storm Mario. I think it's important for us to

recognize that one of the key obstacles that we've seen with our vegetation management program is actually having the workforce to do the program. We have millions and millions of dollars already contracted to do this work, but it's been challenging for those contractors to fully staff their crews. So this was in the works before Mario it is set up in such a way that we will not cannibalize the crews of the existing contractors and that may be the wrong word for that. But but the basic idea is so that we can be setting up additional crews to get more of

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the vegetation management done. So I wanted to flag that for folks. Great. Thank you. If it's okay with my colleagues, I think I'm going to move to the item on the wildfire audit since we have so many people here for that from staff and it is keeping everything together for the audit. So it is, I guess my note . But item eight, item eight, yes. So as my colleagues know from smokey's visit last week to council may is wildfire awareness month. So we thought it would be a good idea to look at our 2019 wildfire audit and assess our progress. We're going to hear from the auditor's office and then allow other staff from the departments that were touched by this audit to speak. Stokes. As mentioned, this is our update on the status of recommendations from our 2019

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work in this area. Olga ovtsharenko manage this work and Henry contulmo is going to present to you, and this is not the Wright presentation. I went out of order on you. So. No, no, this is this is. Yeah, it's perfect. Good morning, council members. My name is Henry katumwa and I was the lead auditor on this project to give a little bit of background. And in 2019 our office conduct did an audit of the city's wildfire fire preparedness. The objective of the audit was to determine if the city was effectively working to prevent wildfires and adequately prepared to respond to these fires. We identified some areas where the city needed to do more to reduce the threat of wildfires, specifically by collecting data that reflects

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mitigation efforts, adopting fire related standards, and creating policies and procedures . Luz and developing and implementing land management plans. We issued four recommendations, three of these recommendations were addressed to the Austin fire department and one to the parks and recreation department. In this follow up, we verified three of the recommendations that we addressed to the Austin fire department have been implemented and the recommendation that was addressed to the Pakistan recreation department is still underway. Starting with the recommendations that we addressed. The Austin fire department for recommendations Ann one shown on this slide, the

department created a unified reporting tool. This tool gives stakeholders real time information regarding the status of key mitigation efforts. For example, all stakeholders are

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able to see information such as land treated and those requiring treatment that lands, not requiring treatment, and those categorized as untreatable. For the next recommendation, the department identified the cost impacts related to the wildland urban interface code. This is commonly referred to as the Walkes code, and they communicated this information to council. The we code a fire prevention Ann and safety standards intended to reduce the risk spread and damage of wild fires by requiring new constructions that are built within identified areas to meet specific compliance standards. Council adopted the code for the last recommendation, addressed the Austin fire department. The department created policies and procedures for the prescribed burn permitting process and developed guidelines for partner organization. The department

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also clarified fire permitting Ralls and responsibilities. We determine and that the recommendation addressed to part which is shown on this slide, is still underway. While the department developed a land management plan, the plan is still in draft form and has not been implemented. Manager Swint stated. Their goal is to present the plan to council in July 2023. This concludes our presentation and we will be happy to take any questions that you have. Thank you. Mr. Kuchma. I'm going to see if staff want to speak before we have questions or just answer questions. Okay okay, great. Thank you. Colleagues do you have questions? Okay. I have a couple of comments and questions myself. So first of all, I want to just appreciate the work that

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has been done on wildfire since this audit in 2019. There's been a tremendous amount of work led by AFD, but also with participation, Ann and action and leadership by other departments. The atx wildfire. Com website where you can get to the hub really does help us see our our wildfire risk, which was one of the other questions that we had a lot of discussion about when this audit came forward. So if you haven't taken a look at the atx wildfire comm hub, I really encourage you to do that. Since 2019, this, you know, this audit mentioned the need for the prescribed burn oversight and the code and kind of just the general pool information. But we've done a lot of other things. So we have implemented training, next level, wildfire training, which all of our firefighters will have called responding to the interface. We're the only urban fire department to be doing that. We

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have a new wildfire battalion that we're building out. We have several new fire stations in the interface. We've done a lot with our firewise program. I see Austin energy's here as well. We've done a lot of work with the vegetation management for high wildfire circuits. Austin water's working to harden their treatment plants, which are in this interface. And so vulnerable transportation and public works department has been working on evacuation planning through the smp, working together with the fire department, heesom and police department and ems R has been involved as a resource recovery, has been involved in debris removal, part is involved in this land management plan. We've also been doing the wildfire event exercises these are all ongoing efforts. We are not going to ever be done being ready for wildfire, which brings us to this audit and that the

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land management plan is not yet done. And I want to I want to speak broadly to the need for this plan. And then I want to ask some questions about where we're at with respect to the wildfire aspects of this plan. So this need for this planning and management of parts natural areas has long been recognized by staff partners in the community. It was highlighted in the audit. It's scheduled to be adopted this summer. Hopefully we maintaining these spaces catalyzes numerous public benefits. But it's not just wildfire prevention. There's climate regulation, water and air cleansing, restore native recreational opportunities. When we neglect our parks and preserves and the land management, these areas become increased, vulnerable to disease and wildfire. And so we need to be making sure that we are paying attention. And so funding for this plan is going to be very important to me in the budget. And I do do want to make sure that we are moving forward.

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That being said, the discussion today, though, is about wildfire and what is in that plan really related to wildfire fires. So if someone from park can come up and answer the question of detailing how this plan addresses the risk posed to life and structures that interface with city owned parks and preserves, I would appreciate it . Thank you, Mr. Good morning. Hi, Matt Micah. I'm a program. Should I just give the presentation or would you like me to just address that? I don't know what's in the presentation. So if you think it's if it's useful and necessary, please go ahead. It's up to you. I didn't see the presentation beforehand, so I can go ahead. However you would like me to proceed. Oh, you couldn't hear me? Not exactly.

[10:13:28 AM]

Sorry oh, sorry. Thank you, councilmember pool. I haven't seen the presentation, so I can't make a statement of whether it's valuable at this point or not. So if you think we should hear it, go ahead. Sure I think some of what's in the presentation will be redundant to what's already been presented here today. But I think I'll think the presentation answers some of the questions and then we can follow up. That's fine. Thank you. Okay. Sorry my name is Matt McCall. I'm the environmental conservation program manager for Austin parks and recreation. And I've been primarily responsible for directing the development of this plan so far. So just a little bit of background. This may be redundant when we speak about natural areas, we're talking about areas with natural character, typically dominated by native plants. The natural areas in this plan that's being developed are contained in many different park types. Greenbelts preserves other parkland,

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natural other parks. The majority of parkland acres are actually designated as natural areas in those park types that I just mentioned, about 74% of our parkland is natural area. As you mentioned already, these natural areas provide a whole host of critical services to the community. However, most have not been managed for ecosystem health and therefore our currently and will continue to be threatened by drivers such as heat, drought and disease and all of these as a complex correlate with increased wildfire risk. And so generally to the previous question on this, the plan that we're developing addresses these and other threats as a complex. Together they are all interrelated and hard to separate. And so that's the easiest way to answer. How does this plan address wildfires that we're for comprehensively, holistically, on a large scale,

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addressing the complex of drivers that collectively correlate with higher wildfire risk at large scales? This need has been highly recognized by the community for many years and was highlighted from a public safety standpoint in the audit. The audit specifically requested that we implement land management plans or a land management plan with a priority on high risk properties. We've been developing that the official title of the document is called climate vulnerability analysis and recommended management strategies. This is going to serve really as sort of our business plan, our guiding document that's going to help us accomplish the mission of addressing wildfire risk broadly across parkland. It will help address many other goals and align with many other plans at a high level, such as the Austin Travis county community wildfire

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prevention plan. Also called the bwp, at least nine park existing park vision plans. Our long range plan, the climate equity plan, the green infrastructure analysis and the healthy parks plan. And many others went one to many. So the exact scope out of park roughly. 17,000 plus acres this plan encompasses over 10,000, all protected as natural areas. The all park nature preserves and all parkland portions of the Austin Balcones Canyonlands preserves are included. We also went through a rigorous process to identify large park natural areas that are conducive to systems level restoration and management. So we looked for large contiguous areas of over 75 to 100 acres as areas that are natural areas that are not included in this plan are those that we say have a high perimeter to core ratio.

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These are highly fragmented. They have a lot of edge. They are very difficult and expensive to manage. So this 10,000 acres is sort of the lowest hanging fruit where that will allow us to manage and restore and address wildfire risk efficiently and economically. The components that this plan is similar to other land management plans of this scope and scale. In many ways, it contains a site analysis that tells us what we have. It contains management goals, which tells us where we're trying to go contain restoration, recommended restoration strategies, which tells us how we're going to get there. It contains some monitoring direction which tells us how we're going to evaluate progress. The innovative part of this plan, one of the innovative parts of the plan is the climate vulnerability analysis. As I mentioned, wildfire and the other suite of drivers that affect wildfire are highly affected by climate change,

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especially in the coming decades. So we needed essentially a way to quantify, modify risk and to map that sort of vulnerability on the ground so that we could plan specifically for that. So that's what we did. We identified and mapped the components of ecosystems that affect the climate drivers that we're concerned with, that affect. Wildfire we created custom vulnerability indices for the lands in this scope and we also incorporated social vulnerability as a component of risk. And this is actually well in line with our community. Wildfire protection plan as well. We say it's a ten year document with a 50 year horizon. And that means that these sorts of land management plans sort of as our business direction, they tend to live for about ten years without a major update. But we have a 50 year horizon because we are preparing for climate stressors that we know are coming in the next 30 to 50

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years and we are already a little bit behind the curve in preparing for that. This slide is really about the public input during the development process. So before we began this process, we already had an incredible amount of public input related to it. In park vision plans, the long range plan, the climate equity plan, the audit itself off the there's all of the robust community input gathered as part of these processes was all well aligned and clear as to what the community wanted and needed. During the plan. Development Burt. We gave numerous Luz briefings and presentations burns to over 50 stakeholder groups that were interested, and many of them are listed there. Shaw we're currently reviewing drafts we've solicited input from over 60 key city staff and others throughout Burt Austin,

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including and also as well as the Travis county fire marshal's office. And we're in the process of incorporating those comments and preparing a final draft in early June. And then during implementation. So when it's time to actually get to work on the ground, we will be continually engaging with stakeholder groups on pre project level. We say that we're still this is not honestly, this is something not that pard has done exactly like this on this scale. And so we're still learning exactly how we're going to do it and developing the vocabulary for what that's going to look like. But we can say that what that's going to look like is it's going to be unified management with stakeholder groups. Co-developing and working off of work plans and really that's going to allow us to bring what we bring to the table and work together cohesively over a very long term implementation. Ann is we some of the key strategies are related to woodland health, such as reducing density, competition and fuel loading and increasing

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diversity resource availability and sightlines. All of this improves woodland resilience. Prescribed fire is a key tool. Ecology it's also a key to our ability to do this work economically, where we have fire as an option, we can do it economically. Where we don't it becomes much more challenging. Invasive species management seeding and planting, grassland restoration. Those are all key strategies as well. All of almost all of this work is going to be in addition to what part is currently doing with current resources. And so we are going to need additional resources in the way of staffing primary staffing and also operational budget and also workspace to be able to fully scale up this work . We have a division submittal currently that I believe is working its way through the unmet needs process. This. And so we do plan on presenting to parks and recreation board and

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environmental commission in June and then coming before council in July. Thank you. Mr. Micah, can you hear me? Is that working? Yes. So thank you. I think this is really important and addresses a lot of needs within our parks and preserves for today. No, I think this is super important for our park system and climate change and everything else for today, I want to focus in on the wildfire piece and just, you know, I haven't read the full report because it's in the technical stages and hasn't been okayed yet. But, you know, to come to council. But I do want to make sure that as you're you're tightening it and you're fixing it, that the recommended actions from this audit about those interfaces of the parks and preserves with the structures and the people where we have the highest wildfire risk that that is being addressed and not on a 50 year horizon Ann but in a much shorter horizon because it's not

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through fault of yours. But this plan is taking a very long time with covid. It's cetera. And we have a lot of catching up to do in those Luz spaces now that we have the plan. And while there are competing priorities that we are going to have to address, and ideally we're finding environmentally friendly ways to do the wildfire management, I want to make sure that that's a key part of the short term plan for this plan. Even as we take the holistic approach to understand that and I'm not a land management person, so I'm not going to pretend that I understand all of the many nuances of how to do this holistically. I just want to make sure that when you come with that plan to council that we're able to really clearly see how in the short run we're going to be able to make significant progress at those interface spaces with the appropriate methods, whichever those are

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that that have been identified. Absolutely Jackie the plan on a broad scale addresses all of that. Mario a lot of the comments that we're receiving back that are well in line with the concerns you just expressed will ultimately be addressed on the implementation side. Those work plans are living documents . They're developed by professional level staff that we actually don't have yet. We have the strategies in place. We have our colleagues from AFD are here with respect to shaded fuel breaks. We already have processes in our departmental agreements, funding sources, contract scopes of work. All of that is ready to go. Prioritization Ann sometimes it looks like we can use that process as our first entry into a broader scale ecological size treatments. So there will be a chapter in there is a chapter in the plan about how we go about

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prioritizing implementation. And so that's just unfortunately it can't be dictated ahead of time. Mostly those those are happen in work plans and are sort of living documents and we take advantage of

opportunities to get work done where we can get it done. Okay. We'll just be helpful if that can be very clear for council when it comes to us how that's going to happen so that we can address, make sure that we're addressing these particular issues quickly. Okay. Thank you. And then of another question, which may be something that the fire department has to answer, which is with the wildfire hub, one of the things it's supposed to do is to be able to allow us to see where we're making progress. But I'm not sure what protocols there are for departments beyond AFD, like part or water or fire to be or Austin energy, for instance, to be sharing their work for dealing with wildfire. I think

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it's. Thank you. Sure. Good morning. Andre de la Rosa, assistant chief with Austin fire department over wildfire and other items that aren't pertinent today. It's a great question. The hub has been set up for a while. It's been where we've been trying to consolidate all of our fuels, fuels mitigation projects in. There have been the proper amount identified on what to report has been a challenge in there. We've been doing a great job of reporting the work done by a triple C, the Austin, the civilian conservation corps as well as different projects that were done previously by the Austin fire department fuels crew and some of our partners with pard and Austin water. We've been identifying which ones are pertinent and what are the information you all want to see on that. So we've been adding those in their continual conversations. We just had some great breakthroughs in with

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Austin water. It turns out many of our partners have different places where they are required. Also to report. So we've been trying to merge those databases on there. We've got good communication going on with pard on getting that as well as some additional information that have been identified with Austin water. And we have conversations going with Austin energy to try to get those lines that there that they've identified and they're doing mitigation. I'd love to get those on that Paige so a short answer to a longer previous thing is we are capturing some of the data. We're trying to expand that and we're working with our partners to do that. We continue to report those biannual at the public safety commission Ann on there and I think we've got buy in from everyone to continue to increase that the veracity of that information that's getting shown. Great. I would appreciate that because I would imagine as we're going through with the community wildfire protection

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plan, we're really going to have to have a good baseline to know what work is being done. So I would just encourage all of those departments to make sure that you're coordinating. And to the extent that the city manager's office needs to be involved to make sure that that data sharing happening happens, I

would appreciate that. But thank you for all your work. And Mr. McCall, I'm very excited to see this plan and I think it's going to be really valuable for our parks and preserves on on very many levels, but hopefully also for the wildfire piece of that. So and I hope that miss Mcneely and our staff will do everything to make sure that in the budget that this is resourced, we put a lot of energy into this plan and we want to make sure that we are taking the next steps to keep it, keep it moving forward. So thank you very much and appreciate allowing me to go out of order there. Thank you. If there are no other questions here, we will move to Mr. Gates

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for item. Five. I believe. Good morning. Committee members is Michael Gates financial services department here to give you a presentation regarding a proposed code amendment regarding relocation benefits. So a little bit of the background. This resulted from a 2017 flood buyout audit. This was the sole recommendation and it was to develop a citywide relocation benefits policy for voluntary flood buyout projects . Under current code, Eid relocation benefits can only be provided if the acquisitions are conducted under the threat of condemnation. Ann and while we were looking at this, it was an opportunity to kind of update Wright the code itself, the benefits butts that are in place

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under current city code have not been updated since January of 1995. Under current code, businesses aren't eligible for benefits and there's no last resort housing as well. And I'll get into a little bit of that. But just as an FYI, we've regularly had to waive current code since 2009, at least, and instead we've invoked the uniform relocation act, which is the federal policy that dictates how relocations are handled. And we've been required to do that because the Texas property code requires us to offer benefits consisting with uniform relocation act. So just the basic tenants of the uniform relocation act framework residences and businesses and farms are eligible for benefits . We can pay for property transfer expenses, essentially closing costs, moving and things like that. We've we're obligated to give individuals at least 90 days before they have to vacate their property. And in reality, we essentially, because we don't

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want to take ownership until they've got a place to move to, we have to give them at least 90 days. The reality is we give them far longer than that relocation advisory services are available to tenants and owner occupants who are displaced. We are obligated to make sure that replacement properties that we offer as comparable are decent, safe and sanitary. And it means we've actually got to go out to those properties that are listed for sale or rent and actually do a kind of a cursory inspection. Make sure that

the plumbing appears to work. Hvac systems, work electrical outlets, things like that. The current uniform relocation act, benefit limits are \$31,000 for the owner occupants who are displaced and 72,000 or \$7200 excuse me for tenants that are displaced. Also under the uniform relocation act, last resort housing is available. And what that means is basically if we can't find comparable housing that are under those caps, we're allowed to exceed them to make it practical for the displaced to

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be able to relocate and not incur any undue costs. So this is the section of Texas property code. Here. I've got an appendix. If you guys want to see the actual language here. But it requires that the city conduct relocation activities in a manner that comports with the uniform relocation act. And so we're proposing to amend our current code to mirror the way. It will allow for relocation benefits for voluntary flood risk reduction projects, erosion control projects, rehab projects and or demo projects. We can offer relocation benefits to displaced businesses. And again, the caps would be indexed to the current caps in the way. This is just the appendix, but with that, if you've got any questions. Luz. Thank you. And I think there's a press conference out in the atrium which may be impacting our dais here. I do

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not have any questions. Mr. Gates I think that makes a lot of sense. I appreciate you bringing that forward. Ms. Kelly do you have any questions? So when is what is the next step for coming to council? Posted to council? I'll just take a look and see what the available date is that it looks feasible and we'll get it posted. Okay, great. Thank you so much. Appreciate it. Thank you. So next up is item six, which is the city of Austin policy, financial policy change. Good morning, council members. I'm Eric Nelson with the financial services department division, chief of our budget and performance is just going to run you through hopefully quickly about four recommended financial policy changes for the

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upcoming fiscal year. The first two are related and they concern Ann the general fund, the general funds to reserve funds, the emergency reserve and the budget stabilize Ann reserve. We're proposing to increase the general fund emergency reserve from its current 8% to 10% of total ongoing general fund requirements. And we're proposing to increase the stabilization reserve from 6% to 7% of ongoing requirement. It's this would help us to align with government finance officers association burns recommended policy of maintaining Singh at least two months of reserves in of general fund reserves. We've been working towards this goal over the past really 7 or 8 years, revising our reserve policies and gradually increasing these percentages. In our recent experience base, we

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relied heavily on the emergency reserve to fund our response to the covid pandemic. We've also addressed other emergencies recent winter storm is thankfully due to budget restraint and also a massive resurgence in revenues in the aftermath of the pandemic. We're in a position where we could afford to fund this increase in the reserves as there's no formal accounting requirement. There is the gfoa recommendation. But when determining the proper reserve level, it's really a function of assessing ING our future risks and then comparing that with the flexibility we think our revenue will have to address that. So on the risk side, obviously we've experienced the pandemic. We just received a briefing about increasing wildfire risks. I think we've seen the effect of climate change increasing our risk from other disasters, such as storms we've experienced now winter storms in each of the prior two years, which have

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created significant unanticipated expenses for the city. We have ongoing concerns about flooding and things of that nature. On the revenue side, as you're all aware, and you know, always beating the drum about this, we have less flexibility than ever as a result of the 3.5% revenue cap that the state imposed a few years ago on top of that sales tax continue to be a growing source of general fund revenue. However, it's also the most volatile source. Not only is it the most volatile source, but that volatility spikes usually to the downside at exactly the moment you're experiencing emergency right at the height of the pandemic, we had our first year of negative growth in sales tax in some time. So while we have the opportunity, we'd like to update this policy, make sure that we're using our current financial flexibility to put us on the best possible footing to respond to future emergencies.

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This next proposed policy revision is just some clarifying language regarding the tax increment financing policy, which was updated during the fy 23 budget. I believe that council's direction we updated that to say that as our tirz or rather approach reach completion, that we look at any surplus revenue that may be available and make sure that we prioritize that to address affordable housing or permanent supportive housing or other eligible services for people experiencing homelessness. This again is just some clarifying language, direct Singh that the city manager will bring forth the plan to close the zone Ann and dispose of those funds in line with those priorities. Finally, we have an update for the general obligation Ann debt

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financial policy. As you may know, in the 2021 legislative session at the state, they restricted the ability of cities to use non voter approved debt. So we're just adding this language to clarify that we need to always be checking that we're complying with this new state law. When we think about using non voter approved debt and then we also wanted to make sure that we specifically itemized expenditures that address life and health safety issues at city facilities or extend their useful life or help with their refurbishment Burt as an acceptable use. Those type of improvements are specific called out in the new legislation as acceptable, and we're just highlighting here that if there are life and health safety issues, that's certainly something we would consider using non voter approved debt to address as quickly as possible.

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That's my hopefully brief briefing and I believe your notice to take action if you'd like to recommend any or all of the policy changes to the full council. Otherwise I'm happy to leave it as a full briefing. And of course to address any questions. Thank you. Thank you. We're actually not noticed. We're not noticed. Sorry. Apologies but thank you, colleagues. Questions. Councilmember Ryan, thank you very much, chair. I was wondering if we could if you could answer a question related to the tiff policy under the way this policy is reworded or reworked, would we be closing tiffs quicker than how? If we didn't, then if we didn't change the policy? I think the no and the policy is just meant to outline how we will go about the closure of a tiff. We sort of don't want to leave the tiffs in

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limbo. State law says that tiff should close when the timeline runs out or all the expenditures and debt from the project and financing plan are paid. And so we're just memorializing that in our policies and laying out an explicit policy for complying with that law. So do you believe the language as it stands today, does not comply with the current law? It's not. I think it's just vague. I think the intent is if the approved project plan is completed ahead of schedule, that sort of equates to closing the fund. Certainly nothing would preclude counsel from amending Singh a tiff plan to include more expenditures. At that point, it would trigger a review to make sure that those planned expenditures are going to drive further incremental. But for value within the tiff. So you don't believe anything in this change would have any impact on the provision that we're really focused on of any

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extra dollars going to affordable housing or homelessness? No I think it's just meant to strengthen Ann that provision and direct the city manager to bring forth a specific plan to use those dollars. And then a quick question on your debt financing policies. The addition of health and safety. We're just saying that's a new so we're broadening Singh the pool for now on non voter approved debt. We're not saying that it needs to be limited to this. This is just a new category sherry of potential use. Yeah, absolutely. You could argue that some of these expenses would be covered under the urgent category, but we just wanted to make sure we called it out that this is something we're going to actively do if we need to address the life excuse me, a safety issue within a facility. We're going to do that immediately. And if that

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requires using non voter approved debt, then then that's something we're prepared to do. Thank you very much, councilmember chair, vice chair pool and then councilmember Fuentes. Thanks for the presentation. I'm support of the recommended Eid updates and changes that staff are bringing for our general fund financial policies across the board in particular, I think that the emergency reserve fund going up to 10% of total fund requirements is a smart move at this point, given the uncertainties of the future in in many sectors. So I appreciate that update from staff and that recommendation and I will be supporting that. Do you have a sense of how a 10% total fund

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requirement Swint fits in the larger frame of other reserve funds? For example, they might be like a four month reserve or a three month reserve, which would be like a 25% or a 30. And how our 10% lines up with that, do you mean in terms of other cities or other policies? Well, I think, for example, I sit on the city of Austin employee retirement system board and have for eight and a half years, and we look at our reserves and the percentage reserve fund is larger than than the 10. We look at a number of months. Oh, I see . I think that. For funds that have sort of non discretionary liabilities such as dead funds or a pension fund tend to have slightly higher reserves. And so that may be 25. I've seen a lot of other cities have have financial policies where they have 25% for their debt funds. And we're certainly happy to

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work with you to get there for the general fund as well. But we think this is a good incremental step to get us to comply with the gfoa and just reflect some of our historical experience about how we may need to leverage these funds. So great. That's that's important. And having the support of the government finance officers association and aligning with their practices is a really good idea for the city. Thank you. And I would like us to continue to do that. Thank you. Chair councilmember Fuentes

thank you . So my question is regarding the proposed to increase the percentage of amount for the both both of the reserve funds. We received an update at our last work session or a couple work sessions ago regarding the it was during the financial forecast and I believe the briefing also called for us to consider increase Singh up to 14. Is that right? 14% is the current policy. We're at 8% in

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the emergency reserve and 6% in the stabilization reserve. So it's 14. And this would increase both the reserves. So we'd have a total of 17. And but during that presentation, what was the recommendation? Was it 17, the 17% was also the recommendation in the forecast? Yes. And the forecast. Okay. And did you all consider our I support us increasing our reserve percentage that where I still have questions about is whether or not to do it within one fiscal year budget. It did you all consider any alternative ways to perhaps staggering that increase? We didn't because we currently have balances in the reserve funds that are sufficient. So it's not like we're going to require any transfer of ongoing operating dollars to build these reserves up to that level as of the forecast, we were anticipating ending fy 23 with 19.4% total reserves. Okay. Okay. And

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how did how if we were to adopt this recommendation during our budget process and increase the reserve percentage to 17% for both cumulatively, how does that fare compared with other cities of our size? Dallas policy is that they will have total reserves of at least 50 and not more than 70 days and their most recent report shows that they're at 65.95 days, which is about 18. Jesus Orton's policy is 7.5, plus an additional 1% contingency. So a total of 8.5. So Ann Antonio is a minimum of 15, plus an additional \$1 million contingency. Fort Worth is. At 6.67. So pretty much in line with the 17% we'd be recommending. And El Paso is a

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bit smaller of course, but they're at 5% plus provision to maintain an unspecified contingency. Okay. So this would put us in line with Dallas slightly above or slightly above San Antonio, in line with fort Worth and Ann, and significantly higher than Houston or El Paso. So in line with Dallas. But having the highest percentage of reserve funds or city in Texas, we'd be slightly below Dallas essentially equal with fort Worth and just above San Antonio. Okay. Okay. And that and by going to the 17, we would still have the 17 Ann. What would be the surplus in sales tax revenue. And we can have this conversation Ann offline as well. So well, other question I have if you're wondering about

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the impact it works out to the 3% is equal to about \$37.4 million. So we'd be maintaining that level of additional balance which will help us to respond to fluctuations in the in sales tax volatility in the future. You do. Thank you. The question I had regarding the tiff policy, can you remind us what how many tiffs the city has current Leslie tiff Zones and then the one that is closest. To completing so with the approval of two very recent ones, we now have five and we also have a homestead preservation zone that mechanically acts like a tiff, but is governed by a separate section of state law. And I don't think that has an end date. So I'd say five at. And while our creek, although it was recently amended to extend its term still has the closest date

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term which is for its scheduled ending which is fiscal year 2041 . Okay, great. Because I thought the Seaholm. Yeah, I should add Seaholm is not scheduled to expire until fiscal year 2043. But my understanding Singh is that essentially all of the planned expenditures from the project and financing plan are complete and so, I mean, really, it's just a testament to what a success the zone has been that we were able to fund that we never had to issue debt. All of the plan has been completed. So now what do we do until the 2040? Excuse me, 2043. We need to come up with a plan. And this policy is aimed at providing the structure for developing that plan. Good deal. Thank you. Thank you. Appreciate

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councilmember Fuentes asking several of my questions. Is so the three percentage I'm pretty sure we said 16% at the last meeting and now it's up to 17. But that's 37.4. Yes okay. And the comparatives, that was very helpful. Can we get that? Yeah, absolutely. Share that. We had asked the auditor's office. Councilmember pool and I had asked the auditor's office to do some some work on that comparative piece. So perhaps you can get with the auditor's office. Yeah, we have a meeting scheduled for this afternoon. Great. So that we're not creating extra work, but that we can get the answers. And when is this when would these changes come to council? They would be included in the proposed budget. Okay. So I'm comfortable knell with the latter two. I'm still

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concerned about jumping as council member Fuentes said to the 17% this year and I may need to have some additional conversations over that. If you could also share the gfoa wording for the compliance. It is very helpful to get a sense of where where the other where the other cities are and what's being done

with respect to those. I think that's a very helpful set of information. There Shaw so this would be something we'd be voting on in August then? Yes okay, great. So hopefully we can continue to have those Conway discussions. Are there any other questions, colleagues? No. Okay. Thank you very thank you. Appreciate your work on this. Our next item is, is item number seven, which is procurement, local and small business preference programs. And we have Mr. Scarborough here

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to speak with us. This is a proposed program that grew out of direction that I offered and council unanimously approved when we adopted the mwc disparity study report last fall. The goal is to make sure that all these investments we're making locally with all of those that our small businesses have opportunities to participate in contracts. Mwi just a reminder applies to sub prime contracts and this would be able to apply to prime contracts. Mr. Scarborough thank you. Committee chair. Alter members of the committee. Good morning. James Scarborough financial services department, as committee chair indicates. Eid I'm joining you today to give you an update on the work that staff have been performing as a follow up to further direction from council last fall. As you'll recall, when the. Disparity study came

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to council for council's acceptance that there was an indication of a change of availability of minority owned and women owned firms within certain segments of the Austin market. And that could potentially down the road have an impact on mwb goals for certain contracts. As a result, there's some increased interest in the in the market in the community for other programs that might be complementary or also be beneficial to the city's mwb program. That would not be limited only to mwb certified firms. So we received the further direction from council to look at other programmatic opportunities. Rs that would also address the mwb firms, but not be limited to them, which would include small companies, which all mwb firms certified by the city are small Ann and local companies, which a large portion

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of the city certified mwb firms are are local. So since that time we have met with a number of constituent stakeholder interest groups representing small and local firms. As you can see, actually we have the meeting with the Austin black contractors association scheduled for tomorrow. But we have met with Austin chamber of commerce, Austin, lgbt chamber of commerce, local business stakeholders at Ann. The meeting recently we representing various small and local companies, greater Austin, hispanic chamber of commerce, commerce, us hispanic chamber of commerce. We have more meetings planned in the coming months and we also have a survey that we have been sharing with those in

attendance at these meetings and we are making it available to all that are interested to give us feedback on kind of the market and community priority for these programs, whether small business

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So opportunities or local small business opportunities are preferable or are are similar or what have you. So this is kind of all being used to develop the programmatic intelligence to put forward a series of recommendations for the city's current programs for these areas. So looking first at local preference, the city has maintained a local preference procurement program for a number of years. It's based on what provisions in state procurement statutes, specifically chapter local government code, chapter 2 to 71, and specifically it identifies a company's principal place of business. Historically that has been the municipality were within the municipality or full purpose district jurisdiction of the city. There are limits on the amount of local preference for construction. It's up to 5% for

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contracts less than \$100,000 for goods and services. Luz it's up to 5% preference for less than \$500,000. Contracts and goods of any amount up to 3. Local preference is not allowed by statute for construction related professional services. That would be architects and engineers and similar similar services which must be based on qualifications alone and also local preference is not allowed for contracts using federal funds. So the definition of principal place of business for the city's program historically has been, of course, the company's headquarters, but also the company's branch office. And that has been based on where the services are being provided and which staff of the contractors will be overseeing those services. As there's a bit of a wrinkle with that particular definition that we would like to address in the in the

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recommendations to come also within the municipality, as I mentioned, we have applied definition of full purpose jurisdiction Ann to date amounts of the city's current program for local preference. Again Ann 5% for 100,000. Also we have applied a preference for construction contracts with regard to the offers experience with Austin interest granting up to 1010 points for their experience in working in Austin on construction projects for goods and services. We've been pretty consistent in applying a 3% bid price discount for isvs and up to a 10% point preference for rfps constraints. The definition of local has been a bit challenging with regard to it's being limited to the full purpose jurisdiction. Ann it's difficult also to apply in the informal and small dollar space

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because we don't have a quick and ready way of identifying local firms because there isn't necessarily a certification for that. So we're we are challenged to identify local firms in advance. We can identify them after they submit their offer. But for small dollar and informal purchases, we usually need to identify them in advance so we can extend to them a request to provide us a small dollar. Quote, we also limits our ability to pre certify because we don't know zo if they have a branch office or not. That provides those services. Let me back up. So what we're thinking about now in terms of recommend enhancements and we'll discuss later, but we will come back to audit and finance committee with a set of formal recommendations later this summer. But right now we are discussing with law and with interested stakeholders and market representatives expands

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ING the definition of local to include the austin-round rock msa. That would be the five county area. This would be more consistent with what we see in the market in terms of corporate locations. It's also aligned with the city's mwb program, where establish in city code the slb or the significant local business presence actually defines a similar five county, Austin Round Rock msa area. So this would actually create more alignment between the city's mwb program. The city's local preference and the city's small business program. We'd also like to revisit the approach for identifying branch office as an indicator of local presence. There may be other ways to identify corporate presence other than their headquarters that can be identified in advance. If we can identify those in advance that would make local preference a consideration for small dollar and for

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informal procurement source selection. So moving to small businesses in in this space, there are substantial, really fewer regulations than you see in local preference. But essentially the programs just need to serve a government purpose. There are substantial benefits to small business programs. One, they have broad appeal as small businesses make up the largest number of our employers. Also, these programs allow us to focus on prime contractors. As you know, the city's mwb program is primarily focused on subcontractors, small business programs allow us to like we do for local preference , focus on prime contractors in general. That makes the program easier to administer and does not necessarily slow down the procurement process. It also amplifies these programs, also

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amplify the benefits of other programs. So for small business certification, burns, we don't necessarily have to have a new small business certification. We can look at other certifications that happen to include the small business administration's sba's size standard, small business size standard. So by using the credentials recognized by other programs, we actually make those other programs more attractive to those that may be may want to be certified because they would then have the benefit of that program and the city's small business program. So in the early 2010, the city established the kind of the genesis of our small business program in the construction procurement space. This program was targeted for construction projects of less than \$50,000 when there were small business available to perform those types of contracts , we would limit the request for quotes to just those businesses

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in so doing, we would also recognize minority owned and women owned businesses as as they were both small. Unfortunately, the program had fairly limited success because construction projects in general are usually higher dollar and do not fall within the \$50,000 space that often Ann. More recently, we have expanded the small business program into the informal competitive space. This would be for contracts between five excuse me, 3000 and \$50,000. We have added a new informal procurement process. We have tagged information excuse me, invitation for quotes. This is actually a two step process where when we receive a request from a department, we will then look up in our vendor database to see if there are sufficient numbers of certified firms. If there are, we will limit the invitation Ann to those firms only if we receive responses

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from those firms in sufficient quantities, we will limit the contract award to those firms only if there are not sufficient quantities of certified firms certified. By that I mean small firms. Small companies. If there are not sufficient quantities, then we would just release the notices to all registered vendors. So basically if they're there, we would try to limit competition to them. If they respond, if they do not respond or do not respond in sufficient quantities, we will hold those responses and we will then amend the solicitation, send it out to everybody that's registered at their response to the ones that we received in the first phase. We've been doing that now for a number of months. We don't have a full year's worth of data yet, but this was our latest addition to the city's small business procurement program. What's unique about this particular our addition to the city's program is that we are also recognizing state historically utilized underutilized businesses or hubs

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because all state hubs are also small businesses. So what we're contemplating doing in the small business space is this we have addressed the informal competitive procurement. Space, 3000 to 50,000 last year. We are now looking at expanding the program into the small dollar non competitive space under. \$3,000. And essentially what we would do is further develop our mechanism, our online resource for the departments to allow them to quickly, easily conveniently identify small firms that are registered with the city based on the products and services that the departments are looking to purchase. And then to incentivize them to buy from small businesses whenever possible. We would then report back to the directors and city leadership to show the

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performance of the various departments butts and use that as incentive for them to continue and to increase their spending with small businesses below \$3,000 in the formal procurement space above \$50,000, we're contemplating the addition of a small business preference to mirror the preference that we provide to local companies. So as we mentioned before, we provide a 3% up to a 5% or five point preference for local companies, we're contemplating doing the same for small businesses. We'd also we're also contemplating extending the preference to small subcontractors. The same as we currently do for local subcontractors. So rolling these recommended enhancements together for our local and small programs, we are contemplating updating the definition of local to expand to the greater Austin

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msa. We're reviewing the branch office approach to allow for more program program options, perhaps make it so that that definition is non-transitory. It's something that we can identify up front and perhaps even certify down the road. We also contact plating expanding small business program into the small dollar space below \$3,000 and into formal competition or above \$50,000. And then to apply local and small business programs separately, we contemplated a number of different approaches. One would be to roll local and small together that certification does not exist in this area yet. We could certainly pursue that, but that might take a fair amount of time and we're not sure about the resulting outcome that's actually going to move the needle. But what we have seen is that we can utilize existing program arms, existing certification, Luz, apply both

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programs, and in doing so, we would compound and the benefits of both programs for those companies that are both local and small. Shaw so next steps we will determine the specific procedural conditions and changes that will be needed for a to implement these enhancements for both programs, we would need to look at which contract categories would apply. Again I mentioned earlier that certain

construction related professional services we cannot apply a local preference to, so we would need to look at the various categories and see where we could and could not apply these enhancements to. We'd also look at which solicitations these enhancements would apply to. Each solicitation has a different mechanism for expressing a, a, a preference, like I mentioned earlier, for the ifb, we can apply a bid discount where you would apply a preference to their price lower the price by a certain

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percentage Paige for purposes of the competition. Ann not for purposes of the contract and then for rfps and requests for qualifications. A point preference. So we would look at how those actual mechanics of the procedures would would apply . Then we would need to look at the actual amount of the discount for the price and the actual amount of the evaluation point to see which amounts would actually change the outcomes and to and to what extent those may increase city's contract costs or not. And to what amount based on our estimates, this may change those those prices we'd also return to audit and finance committee in August with final recommendations and further details on our implementation plan. Subsequent to that meeting, we would then implement program changes so we would spend the remainder of the

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fiscal year communicating with stakeholder tirz and supplier communities. Updates and finalizing our procedures, documents, training staff and then go live with our local and small program changes starting fy. 24th October one. With that , I'm open and available for any questions that you may have in this regard. Thank you. Mr. Scarborough and I appreciate you and your staff's work on this and reaching out to the community. And I trust those conversations will continue to be productive. I wanted to clarify. So this is coming back to audit and finance, but does not require council vote because it's a procedural issue. Is that correct? At this time? The nature of these programs is not subject to a legal requirement that would cause it to require a council vote. If that is the preference of council and the committee and city leadership is agreeable to it. And just let me know and we'll be there with the recommendations. But at this time, we understand that it's not not required. Okay maybe

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when we do the agenda for August, we can at least leave it that we can take some action as a committee if we want to. I don't think we have to do the extra hoop unless we determine there's something that we're concerned about. Okay in August, which I'm not anticipating Singh in term for that. So, so I think that's, that's great. And I appreciate the speed with which we're going to do that. Do you know when the goals will be coming back? The mwb ordinance is staffed by the members of the

city's small and minority resource business department. I'm not aware firsthand of their timeline. I believe it is also going to be in August. But ideally, we would like to be side by side with our smb colleagues as they recommend their code changes and we recommend our program enhancements. But I'm not familiar with the specific dates. Okay, great. Thank you.

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And then if you could just provide an example of the stacking of the local and small and how it impacts how it might help or impact a business that had that had Eid qualified, we'll do, oh oh oh right now. Okay. I just think it might be helpful. Okay. Okay. Sure. If you can. So let's imagine a 5% preference for small and a 5% preference for local. I'm just using round or square numbers for purposes of the example. So if currently if you are a local company and we determine that your local when you submit your offer, you indicate your either your corporate headquarters or your branch office address will actually look that up and, and then we would add a 5% point preference to your to your score . What we don't do now and what we were contemplating doing under these enhancements was to

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also have a point preference. If you are small and so when you would submit your offer and we would see that you are city certified mwb mba, wb state certified hub or any other established Pichette certification that the program would recognize. We would also then grant that 5% Preference. So whatever your point, whatever you earn in your available points for the remainder of your evaluation Ann let's say it's 80 out of 100 points, then it would be five for local knell, five for small and add them together. That would take you to 90. So you would compete as as a 90 out of 100 as opposed to an 80 out of 100. Great thank you. I'm very excited about about moving this forward. We're making a tremendous amount of investments in our community and in our infrastructure future. And we really want to make sure that our small businesses can participate. Colleagues do you have any questions or. Councilmember Fuentes the

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question, you know, and I appreciate that we're taking a look at our local and small business programs and I think we all here know that that the amount of change and investment that our community, our region is going to go in or is going to have over the next decade, billion dollar investment projects happening throughout the city. Are you looking at this through the lens of the scale of opportunity Katy that our local businesses and small businesses will have? I mean, I to me it seems like we are we are making the recommendations and conversations that are coming from stakeholders are to get us to

what, being the 10th largest city in this country, what our program should have, but are we thinking big enough knowing what's ahead and committee member we are or are. We're trying to create a series

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of examples. So if we do this with the program, what will that impact city contract? And if we do a higher level of preference, what will that do to the city? City contracts? And essentially we this is a policy matter. So the bigger the impact that is desirable to council that would just be reflected in how we apply the policy to cities contracts. We would just then show you roughly to the best of our ability to estimate if we made the following changes. Here's what we believe the following outcomes and here's what the cost impacts may be. And wherever the city is comfortable, we can adjust those policies to meet that magnitude. But we are building this with the idea that it will scale, it will scale based on cities growth, it will scale based on cities, contract growth. We are trying to build enhancements that are straightforward, that are simple relative Leslie

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simple to apply. And through that, hopefully we won't run into unexpected complications programmatically or or contractual early, but we do intend this to intend these enhancements to scale to the majority of the city's contracts. Thank you. And I appreciate that. And certainly I look forward for the final recommendation that come forward because that certainly is what I'm going to be looking at, is that scalability and how can we ensure that as many businesses as possible that are local knell, that are small businesses are able to participate and to what extent are they able to participate? Thank you. Councilmember Fuentes if you have folks that you think that procurement should be speaking with, who they haven't, they're definitely trying to make this as broad of a stakeholder process as possible. And to communicate that. And I think some of the detailed levels of

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how much preference and the category levels is where where some of that differentiation happens. And I think they're still gathering that information and figuring out, given the scope of the contracts we have, where we should be segmenting across the different categories, I will also add that this is a conversation that atp is also having and engaging in and would very much like to participate in and us having the program will make it easier for them to do that as well. Councilmember alter, do do the surrounding counties have any program like this? Like does Williamson county have a preference for local small business councilmember excuse me, committee member that is a very good question. We have primarily looked at our qadri leagues in the other larger municipal cities. In looking at their

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programs and their approaches, their levels of preference and so forth. But we haven't actually spent as much time as we probably could have in looking at the programs of those that are of our of our colleagues in the surrounding counties. We fairly regularly communicate with our colleagues at Travis county, but with the other four counties and the municipalities in the four counties, that's actually a really good idea. I think that there may be some synergies there that would be of benefit, not only to Austin but to them as well. So well, that and the reason why I'm asking while I don't even think about where you're headed with it, but really, if we're going to be giving any kind of preference to an entity in Williamson county or hays county, if they have a similar program, I think it is right for us to ask them that they do the same to Travis county and so that we are having that reciprocity in our regional approach to this rather than

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kind of a one direction Ann approach. So I appreciate that. Thank you. I think that's a really good idea to pursue. I know that when we looked at some of the other cities, the way that we're doing it is innovative and simpler. And so the goal would be, you know, some of the other cities have these programs, but I think that the direction that Mr. Scarborough is going in allows it to be simpler and to work Mok in a way where the where the where you're moving the needle. And so from what we saw with those, this was a big advance above those in terms of how how we're thinking about it. Great well, thank you very much. Mr. Scarborough we look forward to you coming back in August. And maybe you and I can have a little more conversation on on timing issues at some point as

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we get closer. So thank you very much for being here. And our last major item is item number nine with chief Luckritz. And thank you for being patient. As you can see, we had a lot on our agenda today. We appreciate you being here. Yes, thank you very much. Thank you, chair. Thank you. Committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to join you here to give you a little bit of an update on the ems billing revenue cycle, I'm also joined by assistant director Carlos Ledesma, who may come up and join me for any tough questions that I can't answer myself. So just to a brief overview of kind of where we were and where we where we've come to, for those of you that have seen this presentation in the past, traditionally I've given you a little bit of a shorter snapshot of the improvements that have occurred. But what I wanted to do here was to give you an overall snapshot going all the way back to 2021 during the pandemic, as we did see that continued increase in backlog of claims that we needed to have processed. You can see that that those claims increased

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into the early months of 2022, at which point we started a few initiatives in order to try to address the claims in one sense, we engaged with a consultant that was using some new technology which resulted in some rapid drop in our claims backlog, but the correlating revenue was not there and we determined that it was not in the best interest of the city to move forward and continue with that consultant. However, we were able to stabilize and even if you look very carefully, you can see a slow decrease from about the middle of 2020 to in through the end of the year. As we worked through with the existing staff that we had to process those outstanding claims as we went through the budget process last year, we did request additional ftes, which we did receive in the budget. We did hire those. However, the onboarding process does take some time between the time it took us to get them hired and then trained. What you see at the end of 2022 where you see a quite a bit of a leveling out

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and even a little bit of an increase was that onboarding process where the overall process slowed as we had to use individuals as trainers and get folks up to date with how it is that they were going to process the claims. The exciting part to see, though, here is at the end now that we have the individuals up and trained in through March of this year, we've seen a precipitous drop in the claims backlog that we have to the tune of close. To a thousand claims a week, if you will. So about 200 claims a day. And so given that we're right now at about 10,000, actually slightly under 10,000, that's about 9500 at this point, we expect to see another 9 to 10 weeks and we anticipate that we should have those claims completed, barring any unexpected personnel changes or things that may come up. A little bit of an update on the revenue side, very exciting news. We do see we do project a significant increase in our revenue over budget this year. So these are numbers anticipating revenue at 27.8 for ems, our budgeted target revenue

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was 25.2. So we're seeing about a 2.6 increase over budget from where we anticipated being what's kind of unique and what I'm excited to share there is that actually includes the 4.6 million in charity care. And we had actually budgeted over 5 million. And so the actual net net delta for patient reimbursements for transport fees is actually higher than that. Excuse me, that 2.6 that you see, speaking of charity care, we did submit our charity care in March of this year. We increased our submission by 11.36. However, as I as I just mentioned, or alluded to, I should say, and you all know, the charity care dollars are not tied specifically to the submission. It's based on a holistic whole pot for the state. And so the amount that we receive will be contingent on what other cities submit. And so we

won't know until the actual dollars are issued where we actually land in terms of our payments. I'll just briefly take

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a slow down a little bit on this slide here. It's very busy and I apologize for that. But one of the things that we talk about is, is revenue cycle and the processes in terms of how it is that we determine what we're going to bring in for funds. And questions often get asked about our fees. And so what I've done here and what we're working on right now is working with the city manager and the budget office to really evaluate Wright the overall way that we approach fees for ems in the city of Austin. Traditionally, it's we've remained what's called out of network. You may have heard questions about surprise bills and different things that hit the media. We also have been pretty focused on our transport fees and so before we can move forward with what that looks like for us for a fee schedule, we really need to understand our cost of service. And there's a number of different ways that you can evaluate that. But what we want to do is make sure that it is truly reflect of, of what our cost of service is, particularly looking at our ems transport piece, but also looking at how it is that we factor in or address some of our

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non transport services that we provide with that at that kind of brings me into that that examination of the fee schedule . And so as I said, we look at transport and we look at how it is that we restrict our fees and tie them to the cost of service. But what we want to do is one look at similarly sized cities, specifically similarly sized cities in Texas that have the same restrictions and same state laws, but most importantly, we want to have a focus on what are our fees for our community health paramedics, what are our fees for our for our collaborative care line and all those instances where we may provide care, but not take the patient to the hospital because we think that in the long term, if we can start working with payers and some of the new initiatives through the federal government that allow us to be reimbursed for those fees when we don't take a patient to the hospital, we can really have an impact. If you're unaware in the traditional ems billing model, we do not get reimbursed if we do not take someone to the

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hospital. So the incentive is backwards in that it encourages us to take people potentially unnecessarily to the hospital in order to get paid. And so one of the pieces that we want to look at is how do we negotiate with the insurance companies to get them to pay us if we don't take some to the hospital because ultimately the cost to the insurance company is greater if they go to the hospital because they're faced with all of those other bills. And so these are the discussions we want to have. It will be a

complete paradigm shift for the city, for our ems department to engage in those negotiations, because traditionally, the reimbursement will get for transport potentially might go down from those insurance companies. But if they're willing to pay us for those other calls, we think that the overall benefit is there. But it is a very long and arduous process. I share with you here on the right this little pie chart, just to give a sense, because one of the misnomers that I often hear is if we are raising fees, does results in massive amounts of revenue. And the truth is that in health care and in ems,

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that's just not the case. This pie chart represents our total fees that we that we charge for patients, particularly in those patients that have some sort of insurance. I intentionally took out those that don't have insurance that because they'll skew the numbers. And if you look on here, you'll see that of our total fees for those patients that we collect, about 38% of those fees that doesn't seem like much. It seems like we need to do a lot of work to improve that. But I bring your attention to the yellow, which is our contractual adjustments. Those are the fees that we cannot not ever collect those are our agreements with medicare, with medicaid, with insurance companies, with map, whatever it is that says you must accept this certain rate. And so the real the reality is the only way that that the only revenue that we can recoup is that potential uncollected revenue which represents patient claim denials. It could represent patient deductibles and co-pays, all of these different types of things. And so to move the needle, if we're

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able to negotiate those those contractual adjustments, if we can start working with the insurers, that would be the only way that we would be able to make that piece of the pie any smaller and to increase the amount that we collect and for terms of documentation and compliance, that is also an issue that I've brought here, just making sure that our forms are completed, they're completed timely, they're accurate, they have all the signatures and the I's dotted and the T's crossed that are required for us to submit those claims and so we did completely revamp our training for our academy. Again, as we see new group of individuals coming into this profession, making sure that they have adequate education on what's necessary. And then we did complete the early alerting system for data validation. So it really looks in real time to see our charts completed. Are they missing any fields that are necessary for billing with that being said, training and alerting systems does not immediately equate to improvements. And so we are continuing this monthly audits as we work to train and educate our teams in terms of making sure they know what needs to be

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submitted. With that, I'll take any questions. Thank you. Chief Luckritz, are there questions that folks have? Councilmember Ryan alder I wanted to circle back to the discussion you had about negotiating Singh that piece of it and really to add another layer of complexity on something that is already incredibly complex, that if we have an individual that we're serving that through a community health paramedic or, you know, another on site rather than taking them to a hospital, if it was a charity care patient that is a patient that then the hospital would have to eat some cost because even their charity care pool same pool and they're not getting fully reimbursed for their costs. So the degree to which we can have conversations with our local hospitals to also say, hey, how can we help you either fund or how can you help us fund these specific programs

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to help keep your charity care costs down? I know it's a challenge and they're not going to jump to pay us money, but I think that's a conversation that could be fruitful because it does ultimately help their finances as well. Yeah, that's a great point. And I think that those are some of the discussions we're starting to have. Again, with budget and city manager's office is how do we start those negotiations with the hospitals, with central health, with some of the others where we're providing a financial benefit. There is a benefit to the system in that by having a community health paramedic program, it reduces the workload and the need for additional ambulances. But ultimately we've been able to identify and prove that there is a financial benefit to the hospital systems in the city, and we're now able to start to quantify those dollars and are seeing that the acuity of those patients that we take to the hospital are higher, which means that the hospitals are going to

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get better reimbursement and really focusing in on their receiving basically the patients that most need the hospital. And so I agree with you 100. And I think that in the coming in the coming months, we'll be exploring those conversations with the hospitals and health care systems, with central health and all of the other services that we impact. Thank you. And I just want to underscore that that elsewhere I've seen some of the data that chief Luckritz has been mentioning and the programs that we're doing with the paramedic practitioners and the C four program where we have five emts who are helping to triage 911 calls to the appropriate care. Our are are having an impact on the hospital system that you can now now sort of clearly see. So is my hope that as you've expressed, chief Luckritz, that when you have these conversations about the billing, it's kind of a broader conversation about the whole system and, and, and, and how

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some of these investments can be of great value to them. And it's not a huge amount of investment on their part. Relative to their bottom line to make these these major changes and to experiment. So I, I encourage that. Now, chief Luckritz, you have done some of this kind of conversation, at least on the billing side. Eid in your prior position is that correct? Yes and what was your experience? Can you speak very briefly to your experience? There are you speaking to the negotiations with payers or. Yeah. Okay. So his rhetorically, the in the grand scheme of insurance payments and what they pay out the ems is a very, very small portion of what insurance companies are looking at. And so traditionally as an industry, it has been very hard to get their attention to look at thinking about us more than just a transport. It's only been really I would say, since the covid 19 pandemic, quite frankly, when

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Ann so many things started changing that folks Ann, particularly insurers, started understand a little bit more about the capabilities of ems and what we could potentially do for them. And so my historical experience, if I go back pre-pandemic, has been a little bit of an afterthought. Not much interest in in having that discussion. In recent times, though, more and more of the payers, the insurance companies are open to have that discussion because we are able to identify Shea that the cost of keeping the patient at the cost of transport to them is so much more than just the ambulance and on our end, though, we need to realize that we have to balance that out where we used to charge higher rates for transport, it may be a lower rate that we receive, but the incentive is try to keep that patient out of the hospital and then we can receive a payment on that end. Thank you. And for council member Kelly and council member Fuentes, you may recall in the budget that we adopted a budget rider that said that this revenue that we would recoup from making these investments in

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the revenue management system would go into our ems system to provide additional funding for our ems professionals. So I want to just encourage you, chief, and I see a representative from the CMS office here for that. That is still the direction of council to make sure that as we improve the system and we find we identify this additional revenue that it be reinvest in in our ems professionals. I think across the board and council, we want to be paying our our ems more. So I would encourage that. I think the other the other piece that's underscored by this conversation is the importance of data for ems and how some small investments in data and data analysis could pay off in our ability to really have these broader conversations with the hospitals and the insurers. So we'd also like to encourage both my colleagues and the ems office

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to pay attention to that. The data part is not always the most glamorous, but it is perhaps just us getting these billing folks into those positions where we get the funding to fund our professionals at the level that they deserve. So and to be able to run the system in ways that that support everyone. So hopefully we can can do that. Yes. If there are no other questions or comments. Thank you for your patience. Waiting till the end here. Chief Luckritz, we appreciate that and we appreciate the movement forward and hopefully when you come back next, we'll be we'll have the backlog gone. Yes. Thank you very much for your time. Great. Thank you. I think our last item are our future items. Chair, I have a councilmember. I have a suggestion for a future item. Sure I'd actually like an update from Austin convention enterprises. I think it's been a while since we've heard from their board of directors and with the convention center expansion, I think it might be prudent for us to hear from them

[11:37:11 AM]

. I'm wondering I'm wondering if that would be better. I agree. But I'm wondering if that should go to the full council, maybe like in a work session briefing . We've previously had ace come before audit and finance, but I'm open to suggestions. However we get the briefing. Singh. I guess the vehicle doesn't matter to me so much as the information we receive. Sure. So are you interested though, just to clarify in full convention center or just with the snipes? Because we have in the past on the ace piece, I would like both if possible, but if I had to choose, I'm very interested in ace. So the hotel portion Ann. Okay, we will look at the schedule. I think there may be some space on the August. We don't have any space. I don't think on the I'm not sure if we have space on the July meeting, so we'll need to see if it's time sensitive. I think we do have space on the August meeting because we're not having a June meeting and I'll meet offline with council member Fuentes and discuss whether or not maybe we could broaden the topic for work

[11:38:13 AM]

session to alleviate some of the pressure from our agendas. Because I know that we do have a lot we talk about that's important here at audit and finance. Sure. We'll just keep we'll put a placeholder for now. Okay for August. And then if you guys can get back to us, just we don't have a June meeting. So July has gotten. Thank you pretty heavy. And thank you for your support, colleagues. Thank you. Great. So I show on the July 25th that's our next meeting on the July 25th agenda. We have two audits that we'll be presenting, one related to public information response and one related to the city's open data portal. Then Ann, I believe there's an item that that may actually be a memo related to transitioning contract employees . I think the probably an item that will take a bit of time because it involves a public item and an executive session item is cybersecurity follow up. So that's a report from my office on prior recommendations related to cybersecurity. That will be done in executive session. And then there's also a briefing on able to austin-bergstrom host enterprise

[11:39:13 AM]

Ann and that's I think similarly just an operations and financial update related to the operation of the Hilton hotel at the airport. So it might actually maybe we can maybe we can see whether or whether there's an opportunity since Abel and ace are kind of twin hotels in a certain way. But whether whether that's possible or not, sure. We'll look into that. Okay great. Thank you. As always. I appreciate your patience. And going past 1130, we try to notify you and we have a full schedule just so that we're able to get everyone through. Thank you to all of the presenters and the auditor's staff. I think this was a really substantive meeting. We got through a lot of a lot of important things and I appreciate everyone's work on that. Thank you. Mr. Scarbro, if you have a second, thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Okay, I need to adjourn the meeting. It is 11:40 A.M. Thank you