



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

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

Chair McHorse called the Early Childhood Council Meeting to order at 8:32 a.m.

Board Members in Attendance: Chair McHorse and Members Gordon, Hedrick, McCollum, and Vargas

Board Members in Attendance Remotely: Members Cormie, Hamilton, Jaime, and Schennum

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

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION: GENERAL

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

There was no public comment.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approve the minutes of the Early Childhood Council Regular Meeting on October 11, 2023
The minutes from the meeting on 10/11/2023 were approved unanimously on Member Hedrick's motion, Member Corie's second, on a 9-0 vote.

STAFF BRIEFINGS

2. Updates from Rachel Farley, Austin Public Health (APH), regarding the Chapter 26 application for park land at Civitan Neighborhood Park, the solicitation for early childhood social services,

and the Request for Proposals for a child care program operator at the Dove Springs Public Health Facility

Rachel Farley, APH Early Childhood Program Supervisor, shared the following with ECC members:

- **APH is in the process of revising the Chapter 26 application for park land at Civitan Neighborhood Park with input from the Parks and Recreation Department (PARC) and Mariposa Family Learning Center. APH staff will present application details to the Parks and Recreation Board at their regular meeting in late January.**
- **APH opened the Requests for Proposals (RFP) for the Dove Springs Public Health Facility child care operator on October 30, 2023. Responses are due December 20, 2023. APH will post questions and answers on the RFP web page.**
- **The City's early childhood social service solicitation end date is December 12, 2023. A technical assistance meeting for applicants is scheduled for December 11. Intent to apply is due November 14. Contracts will start April 1, 2024. The Travis County early childhood solicitation is projected to be released early February 2024.**

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS

3. Approve a recommendation to City Council regarding the Chapter 26 application for park land at Civitan Neighborhood Park

ECC members asked APH staff what is being revised in the Chapter 26 application. Rachel Farley, APH, answered that the edits being made are the exact square footage that will be used by the child care program and the amount of acreage that will be requested to be transferred to APH. The amount requested by APH will be 1.8 acres or less, out of the park's 7 acres total. The recommendation encouraging the City Council to approve the Chapter 26 application was approved unanimously on Member Gordon's motion, Member Hedrick's second, on a 9-0 vote.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4. Updates from Margo Kinneberg, UWATX, regarding the cost modeling project of early childhood services in Travis County

Updates on the cost modeling project will be moved to a future regular meeting agenda. Chair Cathy McHorse shared that the state constitutional amendment, Proposition 2, passed. The City Council plans to take action on Proposition 2 at the next City Council meeting. McHorse also congratulated Go Austin/Vamos Austin (GAVA) for hosting the Early Childhood Town Hall with Mayor Watson the previous week and thanked Member Choquette Hamilton for facilitating the conversation at the town hall.

5. Presentation from Leonor Vargas regarding the new Mental Health Toolkit developed by the Community Advancement Network (CAN) and the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Central Texas

Raul Alvarez, Executive Director of CAN introduced the new mental health toolkit and rationale for the toolkit. The updated CAN data dashboard shows poor mental health indicators trending up. For that reason, the CAN board decided to launch two campaigns: 1) a Mental Health First Aid training challenge and 2) a language access project. The toolkit is a product of the latter project, with funding through the St. David's Foundation. The toolkit is currently available in Spanish and English. Versions in Arabic and Vietnamese are likely next.

Member Leonor Vargas presented the toolkit. She has been leading trainings about the toolkit with local school districts, community organizations, and leaders. Data so far indicates that 98% of training attendees find the toolkit helpful, accessible, easy to navigate, and would like the toolkit to continue. The toolkit can be downloaded via QR code to families' phones so that they can have it on hand. The tool was first developed in Spanish and then translated to English. At training sessions, Member Vargas has been distributing the Austin Public Health and Integral Care "Ask, Listen, Talk, Repeat" bilingual conversation cards. The toolkit is separated into four sections: "Improve Mental Well-being for Me and My Family," "How Overall Well-being Impacts Mental Well-being," "Learn More About Mental Health," and "Get Help". The toolkit is built to be an interactive course with questions to check understanding. Hopeful images were intentionally used for the course, in order to be trauma-informed.

ECC members discussed the usefulness of this toolkit for Travis County programs and the school districts. The funding for this project only covers the development of the tool. CAN is searching for funding to support training the community on how to use the tool. The training session Vargas leads is usually an hour-long session. One idea brought up at the meeting was to bring the training to the next Workforce Capital Solutions Child Care Teacher and/or Director Symposiums, to reach the child care workforce with these resources for staff and families. If ECC members or community members have questions about the toolkit or would like to schedule a training session, contact Vargas or CAN directly.

- 6. Updates from the Joint Inclusion Committee (JIC) ECC representatives regarding the JIC Budget Town Halls and discussion at the last JIC regular meeting**
Alejandra Mireles, Equity Office and JIC staff liaison, provided updates on the JIC town halls about the City budget. The virtual town hall was the most attended by the community. Different topics were brought up by attendees at each town hall. Go Austin/Vamos Austin (GAVA) attended the Saturday town hall. Some community members discussed safe sidewalks for families to use. The Equity Office will send out notes and resources from the three town halls to the boards and commissions.

Member Vargas shared updates from the last JIC regular meeting. The JIC discussed improving community input processes for City vacancies, especially for various appointments.

7. Update on the ECC Quality-of-Life Study Scope of Work and procurement process
Alejandra Mireles, Equity Office, shared that the Equity Office has updates to share with the ECC Quality-of-Life Study Workgroup at the next workgroup meeting. The ECC staff liaison will schedule a workgroup meeting for late November or early December.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

ECC members listed the following future agenda item(s):

- **Update about the local child care cost modeling project**
- **Presentations from people and groups supporting local family-based child care**

Chair McHorse adjourned the meeting at 9:39 a.m., without objection.

The minutes were approved at the January 10, 2024, meeting on Member Choquette Hamilton's motion and Member Cynthia McCollum's second, on an 8-0 vote. Member John-Green Otero abstained.