



**EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20, 2024**

The Early Childhood Council convened in a regular meeting on Wednesday, March 20, 2024, at Permitting and Development Center, Room #1406, 6310 Wilhelmina Delco Drive, in Austin, Texas.

Chair McHorse called the Early Childhood Council Meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Board Members in Attendance: Chair McHorse, Vice Chair Green-Otero, and Members Cormie, Gordon, Hamilton, Hedrick, McCollum, Menard, Navarro, and Vargas

Board Members in Attendance Remotely:

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

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION: GENERAL

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

There was no public comment.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approve the minutes of the Early Childhood Council Regular Meeting on February 14, 2024. **The minutes from the meeting on 2/14/2024 were approved on Vice Chair Green-Otero's motion and Member Hamilton's second, on an 8-0 vote. Members Navarro and McCollum not present at time of the vote.**

STAFF BRIEFINGS

2. Updates from Caitlin Oliver, Austin Public Health, regarding a planning grant from Home Grown to build a comprehensive network for local child care home providers and SX6 FBCC Workgroup Tour of Family Based Homes on April 20

Caitlin Oliver, staff liaison, gave the following updates:

- **The Austin application for the Home Grown Building Comprehensive Networks cohort was accepted. APH will be receiving \$25,000 in planning grant funds. Once the planning grant period is over, the City would be eligible to apply for the implementation grant funds in November, which would require matching funds from the City. More information is in the one-pager posted as backup.**
- **The Success By 6 Coalition’s Family-Based Child Care Workgroup, or FBCC Workgroup, is hosting a Tour of Child Care Homes on Saturday, April 20, from 8:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. The tour gives child care workers & local leaders the opportunity to visit four home care providers and learn more about various programs. Participants will receive a certificate with four hours of professional development credit. The tour is free of cost. Spaces are limited, register by next Monday, March 25, 2024.**
- **The Week of the Young Child is April 6-12. Council Member Fuentes will be reading out a Week of the Young Child Proclamation on Thursday, April 4, in the City Hall Boards and Commissions Room at 9 a.m. Early childhood stakeholders are welcome to attend. The Austin Chapter of the Texas Association for the Education of Young Children will be accepting the proclamation.**
- **Child Care Regulation launched an updated provider portal and the Search Texas Child Care website for the public.**
- **The Travis County Early Childhood RFS is scheduled to be released in early May.**

DISCUSSION ITEMS

3. Updates from the Quality-of-Life Study Workgroup regarding the vendor approval timeline **The responses to the QoL study solicitation are being evaluated at this time. The goal is to have a contract signed in time for the May 30th City Council meeting. However, if the contract with the vendor is not signed by then, the approval will be moved to the July 18th City Council date.**
4. Discussion about ECC officer nominations process
Caitlin Oliver, staff liaison, reminded the ECC that a Chair and Vice Chair for 2024-2025 need to be approved by the end of April. Chair McHorse has served as Chair since September 2020. The ECC bylaws state, “A person who has served as an officer in a designated position of a board for four consecutive terms is not eligible for re-election to that designated office until the expiration of two years after the last date of the person's service in that office. The board may override the term limit provision for an officer by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the authorized board members.” Member Hedrick volunteered to serve as the nominating workgroup. He will contact members of the ECC to determine who may be interested in serving as officers, gather suggestions from other ECC

members on who they'd like nominated, and bring forward names at the next ECC meeting.

5. Presentation from Margo Kinneberg, Senior Projects Manager at United Way for Greater Austin (UWATX), regarding the Austin Children's Funding Project Workgroup

Margo Kinneberg, on behalf of the Children's Funding Project Workgroup, presented on four strategies for local investment in early child care. Kinneberg's presentation included the following information:

- **The Children's Funding Project cohort**
 - **Austin is one of several municipalities nation-wide working with Children's Funding Project (CFP) to expand opportunities for children and youth through strategic public financing.**
 - **The Austin workgroup is comprised of members from City and County agencies, elected officials and their staff, WFS Capital Area, United Way for Greater Austin, and other child care stakeholders, including Chair McHorse and Member Hedrick.**
- **Additional background**
 - **The recommended strategies are informed by 35+ years of community engagement, including by the Success By 6 Coalition and the Early Childhood Council; lessons learned from the pandemic and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) investments; Urban Institute study on nontraditional hour care and the nontraditional hour care pilot program; and the cost modeling project.**
- **Recommended investment strategies to stabilize the industry and increase access to affordable, high-quality child care in our community:**
 - **Strategy One: Subsidize birth through 3 contracted slots**
 - **This would be guaranteed capacity that would pay providers the true cost of care.**
 - **Focus on birth to 3 because this is the most underserved group that is the most expensive to serve. While there is some free public school pre-K 3, most of those programs are half-day programs.**
 - **Strategy Two: Expand nontraditional hour care**
 - **This would be providing incentives for providers to offer care during early morning and evening, overnight, or during weekends. This would benefit all age groups from families of all income levels.**
 - **Currently, Austin's supply of nontraditional care serves only 25% of the need.**
 - **Strategy Three: Build quality and capacity using four tactics**
 - **Expand shared services hub for providers this is currently funded through ARPA.**

- **Expand current efforts for child care workforce capacity building, such as wage stipends.**
- **Expand current efforts and adopt new programs to increase quality of family-based programs.**
- **Offer “gap” funding, or an additional stipend to providers to help close the gap between the current subsidy rates and the cost of quality.**
- **Strategy Four: Create a business-government alliance**
 - **Incentivize businesses to contribute to the cost of child care for employees by matching public funds to employer contributions, up to 50% of the tuition cost.**
- **Cost of implementation**
 - **The CFP Workgroup recommends holding a Tax Ratification Election (TRE) in November of 2024 to fund the proposed strategies. A 2 cent property tax could generate enough funds. If held in Travis County, the projected property tax revenue would be \$61.4 million, and, if in the City of Austin, the projected property tax revenue generated would be \$49.4 million. The budget for the County would be \$60.9 million, and for the City would be \$46.4 million.**
 - **With this estimated budget, the workgroup predicts they could impact 40,000 families over 12 years.**
- **Administration and governance**
 - **This public funding stream would need an administering body to distribute the funds and implement programs; an oversight body empowered with accountability and quality assurance (e.g., County Commissioner’s Court); and advisory board of parents, providers, and experts; regular independent evaluation and a timeline for reauthorization; and a 1% cap on administrative costs.**

Members discussed the proposed strategies, including:

- **Contracted slots implementation**
 - **The income requirement would likely be the same as the income requirement for WFS, so as not to compete with WFS.**
 - **There would likely be several factors to determine which programs receive the contracted slots, such as quality-rating, if they are in a child care desert, distribution of home-based and center-based options, etc.**
 - **This would hopefully reduce the waitlist for child care subsidies and expedite the process. It's hard to estimate exactly how much the wait time could be shortened, but in Houston’s Early Reach contracted slots program, it took 6 months to get 800 children in seats.**

- **Nontraditional hours implementation**
 - **The proposal is similar to the Austin pilot that provided small grants to programs so they could expand their hours. There was a huge interest in the funding, and they had to turn away interested providers due to lack of funding. It is important for providers wanting to expand hours to do a needs assessment in the community to learn what hours local parents need child care.**
- **Business-government alliance implementation**
 - **The workgroup has not made any alliances with any particular businesses at this time. They would like the focus to be on employers with lower wages and hourly employees. The government portion would decrease as employee income increases. So far, the workgroup has presented at many of the chambers of commerce.**
- **Anticipated barriers**
 - **The workgroup is assessing the political will at the City and County and whether it is time to start public engagement and the education campaign phase. If it were to move forward, a campaign with a PAC would launch in the summer.**
 - **There is the potential to add youth development supports and after school programs into this initiative.**
 - **There are no bonds tied to this proposal and some schools districts have done TREs in the past.**

Members discussed possibly endorsing the CFP Workgroup's white paper on the proposed investment strategies at a future meeting. The endorsement could be sent to the County or City, should one of those bodies take action. The workgroup also requested assistance from ECC members in identifying organizations that would like to be part of a coalition to move the proposal forward.

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS

6. Discussion to approve a recommendation regarding early childhood investments for the FY 2024-25 City budget

The fiscal year 2024-25 City of Austin budget recommendation regarding early childhood investments was approved on Member Menard's motion and Member Navarro's second, on a 9-0 vote. There was one abstention from Chair McHorse.

Chair McHorse shared that the ECC can add recommendations, as needed, once the City budget process gets started. Traditionally, ECC members set up meetings with their council member's office to advocate on the budget and share more specifics. Members also discussed the new ECC social service contract awardees- Austin Child Guidance Center,

Any Baby Can, Todos Juntos Learning Center, Mainspring Schools, RISE Child Development Center, and Vincare Services of Austin; City funding for pre-K classroom start-up costs and pre-K partnerships; and child care aspects of the City's Infrastructure Academy.

7. Discussion to appoint an ECC member to serve as liaison to the Success By 6 (SX6) Coalition Leadership Team
Member Eliza Gordon was approved as ECC appointee to the SX6 Leadership Team on Member Hedrick's motion and Vice Chair Green-Otero's second, on an unanimous 10-0 vote.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Members listed the following future agenda items:

- **Invite new early childhood social service contract awardees to present their project being funded by the City.**
- **An update from the Austin Children's Funding Project Workgroup.**

Chair McHorse adjourned the meeting at 10:12 a.m., without objection.

The minutes were approved at the April 16, 2024, meeting on Vice Chair Green-Otero's motion and Member Hedrick's second, on a unanimous 10-0 vote.