



**EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES
TUESDAY, APRIL 16, 2024**

The Early Childhood Council convened in a regular meeting on Tuesday, April 16, 2024, at Permitting and Development Center, Room #1402, 6310 Wilhelmina Delco Drive, in Austin, Texas.

Chair McHorse called the Early Childhood Council Meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

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

Board Members in Attendance Remotely: Members Menard and Schennum

Staff in Attendance: Caitlin Oliver, Donna Sundstrom, and Cindy 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.

Nicole Robinson provided Workforce Solutions Child Care Services updates during public comment:

- **The first Provide Advisory Council meeting was well attended. At the meeting, the Council identified trends and areas to focus on.**
- **The first WFS family/parent resource fair was on April 6th. Fifteen vendors, 62 families, and 120 children attended. Thirty-one of those families were receiving Child Care Services, 23 were on the waitlist, and 8 families were not sure, but were likely on the waitlist.**
- **WFS received 567 Jeannette Watson award applications. Likely 468 of the applicants are eligible. Award letters will be sent out to educators in early May, with first payment in June or July.**

- **Currently, 4,200 children are on the waitlist. It has been a little over a year since WFS last did outreach to families on the waitlist. There is currently a 24-month waitlist estimate. WFS has adopted new waitlist procedures which includes reaching out to families every 3 months to assess whether they want to remain on the list.**

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approve the minutes of the Early Childhood Council Regular Meeting on March 20, 2024
The minutes from the meeting on 3/20/2024 were approved on Vice Chair Green-Otero's motion and Member Hedrick's second, on a unanimous 10-0 vote.

STAFF BRIEFINGS

2. Updates from Caitlin Oliver, Austin Public Health (APH), regarding the APH plan to resubmit a Chapter 26 application to PARD this spring for a portion of Civitan Park to continue to be used by the Mariposa Family Learning Center; updates from related early childhood groups; and the required training for boards and commissions members

Caitlin Oliver, staff liaison, gave the following updates:

- **Based on APH's submission of the Chapter 26 application to the Parks and Recreation Department (PARD), PARD calculated mitigation fees that would be owed which were too high for Mariposa Family Learning Center. Mariposa engaged architects to do a conceptual design that will help them break out the number of square feet of parkland they will need by how much they need for permanent use and how much they only need for temporary use for construction. This step is expected to be completed this month. APH will then use those square footage details to resubmit the Chapter 26 application to PARD and hopefully those changes will bring down the mitigation fee calculation to a more manageable amount.**
- **ECC members are required to complete the sexual harassment awareness training module by May 10th to avoid any issues with their eligibility to serve on the ECC. The Office of the City Clerk will be offering an in-person session at City Hall to complete this training.**
- **To help prepare child care providers for fire season, the City of Austin is hosting a two-part emergency preparedness training series for Austin-Travis County child care directors and assistant directors. These trainings are being hosted by the Austin Fire Department, Austin Public Health, and City of Austin Homeland Security and Emergency Management, Texas Health and Human Services Child Care Regulation, and Workforce Solutions Capital Area (WFS). There will be a one-hour virtual training session on May 29th and an in-person 4-hour tabletop exercise on June 22nd.**

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS

3. Conduct officer elections for the positions of the 2024 Early Childhood Council chair and vice chair

Member Hedrick shared that the ECC nominating workgroup nominated Cathy McHorse as chair and Dr. Choquette Hamilton as vice chair for 2024.

The four-year term limit for ECC chair was waived on Vice Chair Green-Otero's motion and Member Gordon's second, on a 9-0 vote. There was one abstention from Chair McHorse.

Cathy McHorse was approved as chair and Dr. Choquette Hamilton as vice chair on Member Hedrick's motion and Vice Chair Green Otero's second, on a unanimous 10-0 vote.

4. **Vote to endorse the Austin Children's Funding Project Workgroup white paper**
The recommendation that the City of Austin endorse the Austin Children's Funding Project white paper was approved on Member Navarro's motion and Member Hedrick's second, on a 7-0 vote. There were three recusals from Chair McHorse and Members Hamilton and McCollum.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

5. **Presentation from Dr. Choquette Hamilton, founder and CEO of RISE Center for Liberation in Early Childhood Education, regarding the services RISE plans to provide with the APH Early Childhood RFP funding they were awarded**
Member Dr. Choquette Hamilton presented information on RISE programs, including the drop-in child care program RISE will launch using the APH early childhood social service contract funding.

Mission

- **RISE believes that all children deserve a high-quality, anti-racist early childhood education; an early education where teachers are deeply aware of their implicit biases and internalized anti-Blackness and have the skills to disrupt them; an early education where the need to control Black and Brown bodies is replaced with curiosity; and an early education where the practices, policies, and pedagogy work together to create an environment that nurtures and culturally affirms all children but especially children of color.**

Current reality

- **Black children are expelled at twice the rate of their peers and children of color are less likely to have their needs met and are more likely to be suspected of misbehavior even when the child was not misbehaving. Because of systemic racism and color-blindness ideology, these inequities are perpetuated despite well-meaning early care & education (ECE) teachers and administrators.**

Anti-Racist Early Care & Education Learning Series.

- **RISE partners with preschools and child care centers to help educators build new skills, mindsets and practices, and to build anti-racist learning environments. The Learning Series is for both ECE teachers and administrators and uses a cohort model.**

Drop-in care for Black mothers

- **With the social service contract funding, RISE will provide free or low-cost, short-term, culturally congruent, high-quality drop-in child care, designed for Black mothers and their children ages 6 weeks through age 5, at The Village Place. This is not babysitting; it is high-quality care. The program will also offer support to parents searching for long-term child care options.**
- **The team of caregivers, making \$28- \$35 per hour, will be trained in RISE's anti-racist pedagogy.**
- **In Phase 1 of the program, parents will be on the premises and engaging in work, education/ training, enjoyment activities or rest. The Village Place provides spaces to several businesses and organizations, including Mama Sana Vibrant Woman, a massage business, and more.**

Program goals

- **To serve 180 mothers/parents and 360 children**

Challenges to discuss

- **Qualifications for the APH early childhood social service contract funding. The contract bases eligibility as 200% of the federal poverty level, but that leaves out a group of people who may still need care. Members discussed that this may take City Council action to change the income eligibility for clients served through this funding.**

6. Updates from Member Eliza Gordon, liaison to the Success By 6 Coalition (SX6), regarding upcoming events and the roll-out of the new strategic plan

Member Dr. Eliza Gordon provided the following updates from the recent SX6 Leadership Team meeting:

- **The SX6 Leadership team discussed the strategic plan roll out plan; There is a target release date of May 15th.**
- **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 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.**
- **Member Gordon will provide ECC updates for the April 24, 2024, SX6 Leadership Team meeting.**

7. Discussion about items to take to the Joint Inclusion Committee

Members did not discuss any items to take from the ECC to the next JIC meeting.

WORKING GROUP UPDATES

8. Updates from the Quality-of-Life Study Workgroup regarding the vendor approval timeline **Alejandra Mireles, Equity Office, shared that a vendor, Decision Information Resources, Inc., has been selected for the ECC QoL Study. The vendor contract approval is set to be on the May 30th City Council meeting agenda. Once approved, Mireles will reach out to the vendor and the ECC workgroup to set up an initial meeting. Between now and May 30, the ECC QoL Study Workgroup plans to update the workgroup member contact list and may set up an internal planning meeting.**
9. Update from the Budget Workgroup regarding a budget workshop on May 7, 2024, with City departments and other boards & commissions on the Joint Inclusion Committee **Alejandra Mireles, shared that on May 7 the Equity Office Team is hosting a virtual opportunity for board and commission (B&C) chairs, and/or members from B&C budget workgroups, to connect with City departments, including Austin Public Health, about how the recommendations can support department goals. To avoid a quorum, commissioners are asked to register in advance.**

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Members listed the following future agenda items:

- **Presentation on the new Success by 6 Coalition strategic plan**
- **Discuss the federal poverty limit and livability in Austin**
- **Discuss federal funding for small businesses and for climate change efforts that could possibly be used by child care programs**

Chair McHorse adjourned the meeting at 7:15 p.m., without objection.

The minutes were approved at the May 8, 2024, meeting on Member Hedrick's motion and Member Menard's second, on a 7-0 vote. There were two abstentions from Members McIllwain and Vargas.