

RESOLUTION NO. 20210325-067

WHEREAS, in mid-February 2021, Austin and the State of Texas experienced winter storms unprecedented in their duration and low temperatures; and

WHEREAS, damage to power generation plants and an increase in energy use statewide caused the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) to mandate forced outages, and approximately 40 percent of Austin Energy's customers were left without power for multiple days during some of the coldest weather on record; and

WHEREAS, the prolonged power outages caused considerable physical suffering and emotional trauma; and

WHEREAS, the combination of the ice storms and power outages affecting hundreds of thousands of Austinites caused substantial damage to private and public infrastructure, prompting a proliferation of burst pipes, the rapid depletion of city water capacity, a citywide boil water notice, and continued interrupted water service for hundreds of individuals in our city even weeks after the event; and

WHEREAS, though road conditions were treacherous and many city employees and their families were themselves suffering from storm impacts, City of Austin first responders, utility employees, and other staff worked tirelessly to repair electric and water infrastructure, to provide medical care, to transport vulnerable individuals, to staff shelters, and to meet community needs in a myriad of other ways; and

WHEREAS, the City Manager and his staff will conduct an after-action analysis, as is typical with an event of this magnitude; and

WHEREAS, on February 25, 2021, City Council voted to conduct its own process to analyze "the circumstances leading to the crises caused by prolonged

interruptions of energy and water, including critical needs related to shelter, food, water, and medical care” and to develop recommendations and implementation plans; and

WHEREAS, public conversations will assist decision-makers and Austinites in better understanding the course of events that unfolded, as a means of acknowledging the extraordinary efforts of city staff while also creating a space for identifying strategies for building a more resilient, better-prepared city and community response in the inevitable event of future disasters; **NOW, THEREFORE**,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

The City Council will conduct a series of focused conversations with briefings from staff and community partners. Sessions will be focused on critical topics including energy, water, sheltering, communications, emergency operations, intergovernmental coordination, coordination with community organizations, and other related topics. The draft work plan and schedule appear as Exhibit A; it is Council’s expectation that these sessions will be scheduled as soon as possible for a day-long special called meeting or two half-day sessions.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Auditor is directed to undertake an audit of the city’s response to the winter emergency. The Auditor shall refine the scope of the audit in coordination with the Council’s Audit and Finance committee. Topics of interest to the Council for this audit include the following topics: City’s pre-storm preparations (including outreach to vulnerable populations, establishment of shelters, winterization of city facilities, and coordination with community groups, individual volunteers, and other governmental

entities); response during the storm (including briefings to and coordination with Council, interdepartmental and intergovernmental coordination, the establishment of warming centers, and other steps taken to ensure safety of staff and community members); and recovery operations post-storm (including the procurement, equitable allocation, and distribution of food and water resources; coordination with community groups; communication and coordination with Council); steps the City has taken to ensure it can continue critical operations during a disaster as well as contingency plans in the event that critical services are not available; the City's internal and external communications and communication strategies as these were deployed in advance, during, and after the winter storm with particular emphasis on the use of diverse platforms and accessibility to a diverse public; and how the City's Emergency Operations Center functioned during the emergency in light of best practices in emergency management.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Council creates the Winter Storm Review Task Force under section 2-1-2(E) of the City Code for the purpose of holding open public listening sessions during which individuals and organizational representatives can share information, experiences, and recommendations related to the winter storm and resulting crises. The task force's role will be to create a structured public space for these comments and to summarize these into a final report for the City Council. The task force should structure its hearings in such a manner as to provide opportunities for as many people as possible to participate within the limited timeframe. The City Manager shall provide appropriate staff to assist the task force.

Each of the following commissions shall appoint one member to the task force: African American Resource Advisory Commission, Asian American Quality of Life

Advisory Commission, College Student Commission, Commission for Women, Commission on Seniors, Commission on Veterans Affairs, Early Childhood Council, Hispanic/Latino Quality of Life Resource Advisory Commission, Human Rights Commission, LGBTQ Quality of Life Advisory Commission, and the Mayor's Committee on People with Disabilities. Each commission shall designate a member no later than April 8, 2021. If a commission is unable to meet within a timely fashion to designate a member, then the chair of that commission shall either serve as the designee or shall delegate that responsibility to another member.

The task force shall convene no later than the week of April 12, 2021, to elect a chair and vice chair. The task force shall begin hearings no later than the week of April 19, 2021, as long as at least five of the appointing commissions have designated representatives. The task force shall conclude its hearings no later than June 30, 2021, and submit a final report to the City Council no later than July 30, 2021.

A quorum of the task force shall be six members. No vacancy in the membership of the task force shall impair the right of a quorum to exercise all of the rights and perform all of the duties of the task force.

Any member of the task force may be removed by Council for malfeasance, failure to attend three or more consecutive meetings for any reason whatsoever, or willful neglect of duty.

The task force shall be subject to the Open Meetings requirements of City Code Chapter 2-1 and the provisions of Chapter 551 of the Texas Government Code (*Open Meetings Act*).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to create a “SpeakUp Austin!” public portal, linked from the Community Task Force web page, where members of the public can submit written or video testimony describing their experiences, observations, and recommendations. Public testimony, images, and other information submitted via the online portal or through the task force hearings shall become part of an archive at the Austin History Center created for this purpose.

ADOPTED: March 25, 2021

ATTEST:



Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk



<p>Note: Participants in these sessions are intended to be City Council and appropriate city staff unless a particular organization is noted as one that will be invited to participate. Bolded topics are those proposed for discussion during the work session; un-bolded topics are those Council Members would like to raise for a quick explanatory discussion with the intent of directing the City Manager to address in the after-action report.</p>			
	Pre-Storm	Storm-Response	Looking Ahead
Austin Energy	Plant winterization Communication with ERCOT Designation and updates of critical circuits Vegetation management Implementation of recommendations from the 2018 “Climate Resilience Action Plan for City Assets and Operations”	Segmentation, including restoration of power and prioritization of circuits Communication with customers about severity of energy crisis and duration of outages Outreach to medically vulnerable registered customers Work with industrial energy users and commercial businesses to reduce load Support for hospitals and critical infrastructure Cold load pickup as factor in power restoration Performance of Austin Energy’s plants throughout emergency Load shed required of surrounding municipalities Output of Austin Energy’s plants in comparison to what total load would have been without forced outages Performance of solar panels Information about power plants offline statewide (which types, and were all offline for weather-related reasons? How did investor-owned utilities compare to municipally-owned utilities in terms of outages?) Accuracy of outage maps, especially during restoration	Circuit design Future of grid Battery storage Medically vulnerable registry Real-time outage information Thresholds for public messages about curtailing particular uses

	Pre-Storm	Storm-Response	Looking Ahead
Austin Water	<p>Plant winterization</p> <p>Redundancy of power sources for critical water infrastructure</p> <p>Relationship between water infrastructure and critical electric circuits</p> <p>Implementation of recommendations from the 2018 “Climate Resilience Action Plan for City Assets and Operations”</p>	<p>Support for hospitals and critical infrastructure</p> <p>Performance and reliability of water treatment facilities, lift stations, and Longhorn Dam</p> <p>Assistance to properties without water</p>	<p>Infrastructure and system upgrades (including line maintenance and underground lines)</p> <p>Thresholds for public messages about curtailing particular uses</p> <p>Real-time outage information</p> <p>Public education campaign on water shutoffs and necessary equipment</p>
Transportation (Cap Metro & AFA)	<p>Preparations of city fleet, readying of specialty vehicles</p> <p>Implementation of recommendations from the 2018 “Climate Resilience Action Plan for City Assets and Operations”</p>	<p>Road treatments</p> <p>Communication about real-time road conditions</p> <p>Vehicle and transportation options</p>	<p>Road treatment options</p> <p>Vehicle upgrades and alternatives</p> <p>Mapping vehicular assets across departments/partner organizations</p> <p>Options for real-time road conditions communications</p>
First Responders	<p>Communications and preparation</p>	<p>Range of incidents and involvements</p> <p>Challenges</p> <p>Staffing levels</p> <p>Estimated costs of overtime</p>	

	Pre-Storm	Storm-Response	Looking Ahead
Sheltering (City)	<p>Shelter designation</p> <p>Outreach to individuals experiencing homelessness (HOST, PATH, other city staff)</p> <p>Staff/volunteer recruitment</p> <p>Coordination of services (food, water, behavioral health)</p> <p>Coordination with community-led efforts</p> <p>Implementation of recommendations from the 2018 “Climate Resilience Action Plan for City Assets and Operations”</p>	<p>Identification of additional shelters and warming centers; correlation with outage areas; designations of 24-hour facilities</p> <p>Statistics on those sheltered</p> <p>Staff/volunteer statistics</p> <p>Provision of services during/after storm (food, water, behavioral health)</p> <p>Facility challenges</p> <p>Information about where individuals experiencing homelessness went when shelters closed</p> <p>Estimated costs</p>	

	Pre-Storm	Storm-Response	Looking Ahead
<p>Sheltering (Community-run)</p> <p>Invitations will be extended to some or all of the organizations noted below; these are not confirmed speakers.</p>	<p>Shelter designation (Commissioner Howard, St. Martin’s Lutheran Church; Austin Disaster Relief Network; Austin Firefighters Association, other Cold Weather Shelter Activation community partners)</p> <p>Hotel/motel strategy (Survive2Thrive, Austin Area Urban League, Austin Hotel & Lodging Association)</p> <p>Outreach to individuals experiencing homelessness (Austin Area Urban League, Austin Mutual Aid, ECHO, Downtown Austin Alliance Ambassadors, 10,000 Fearless First Responders, Community Resilience Trust)</p> <p>Staff/volunteer recruitment</p> <p>Coordination of services such as food, water, behavioral health</p> <p>Coordination among community groups and with Emergency Operations Center (Community Resilience Trust)</p>	<p>Identification of additional shelters and warming centers (AISD, Austin Disaster Relief Network)</p> <p>Statistics on those sheltered</p> <p>Staff/volunteer statistics</p> <p>Provision of services during/after storm (food, water, behavioral health, medical care) (BASTA, United Professional Organizers, Austin Firefighters Association, Austin Needs Water, Drive a Senior, Austin Mutual Aid, Austin Area Urban League)</p> <p>Facility challenges</p> <p>Information about where individuals experiencing homelessness went when shelters closed or at end of hotel stay</p> <p>Estimated costs</p>	<p>Communication and coordination with community efforts (pre-, during, and post-disaster)</p> <p>Pre-identification of civic and community facilities and assets</p> <p>Neighborhood-level resilience hubs and strategies</p>

	Pre-Storm	Storm-Response	Looking Ahead
Emergency Operations	<p>General disaster-preparedness public education (including Community Emergency Response Team)</p> <p>Communication to public about impending storm</p> <p>Preparation among city/county departments</p> <p>Intergovernmental coordination (AISD, UT, Capital Metro, Travis County, other area partners)</p> <p>Coordination with disaster-response partners, such as Austin Disaster Relief Network, American Red Cross, FEMA, and National Guard</p> <p>Implementation of recommendations from the 2018 “Climate Resilience Action Plan for City Assets and Operations”</p>	<p>Command structure</p> <p>Communication with public about severity of energy crisis and duration of outages</p> <p>311 inoperability</p> <p>City of Austin website challenges</p> <p>Alternative communication methods</p> <p>Coordination with community efforts related to sheltering, food/water distribution, other (Austin Needs Water, Austin Firefighters Association)</p> <p>Intergovernmental communication (AISD, UT, Capital Metro, Travis County, other area partners)</p> <p>Communication, briefings, and coordination with Council Members</p> <p>Coordination with disaster-response partners, such as Austin Disaster Relief Network, American Red Cross, FEMA, and National Guard</p> <p>Procurement of supplies (food and water)</p> <p>Allocation of supplies</p> <p>Designation of food/water distribution efforts</p>	<p>Supply storage</p> <p>Asset mapping for water and food resources</p> <p>Mapping senior centers, boarding houses, and apartment communities with highly vulnerable residents</p> <p>Formalizing systems of notification and outreach for seniors, individuals with disabilities, and other vulnerable populations</p> <p>Back-up generators</p>