

Austin Water Oversight Committee Meeting Transcript – 03/03/2021

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>> Kitchen: Thank you, councilmember pool. I'll turn to the Austin water oversight. Our purpose here is to -- we all -- people were hurt as part of this and some people are still recovering. So our purpose here is to make sure that we address the [inaudible] So that we can be sure this doesn't happen again. So our purpose is to ensure we are better prepared and more resilient in the face of continued climate change. So today, again, as has already been said, this is the beginning. Our committee will participate in the next joint committee with Austin energy at the end of March. We have also decided to schedule another meeting in April. So today our topics, we have

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four major topics areas. The system overview, which is really what happened. So we will walk through time lines, et cetera, on what happened to put us in the position where we had low water pressure and water outage. We will also talk -- second thing we will talk about is communications, preparedness activities and communications. Third thing is the bill relief, financial relief. Fourth thing is community recovery activities. And then we'll take a few minutes at the end to talk about next steps. We will spend most of our time talking about the system overview and the time line and communications. And that will -- we will spend about an hour, an hour and 15 minutes max on that topic. Then we will turn to the financial relief plan and we'll spend about 15 minutes max on that top he can. And then finally the support

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for community recovery activities which we will spend about 15 minutes on that also. So I'm going to ask that we hold our questions until after we get through the communication activities so we will have the presentation on the system overview and the communication activities and then we will pause and take questions. And when you ask questions, I'm going to ask that you ask one question and one follow-up. So that we can allow the most number of people to ask questions. And again, this is just beginning. What we're trying to do is help the public understand thoroughly what happened, start to drill down on what those issues are which will define how the committee continues to look in more detail at the water issues. So with that said, I'm going to turn this over to director mezaros.

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>> Hello council and mayor. There we go. >> Can we start up the presentation material? Thank you. So I am Greg Meszaros, director of Austin water and pleased to be here today. Council, when I last spoke to you, I spoke to you about the great work of our employees. And while they are clearly community heroes, I want you to know as leader of Austin water, I understand it's my responsibility to see that our system operates in a way that our employees to be heroes and do heroic things. Our system becomes more resilient and reliable and we don't put our employees in the position they have to do heroic things for the community.

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As we speak about resiliency, it's really a challenging time for the water industry. Particularly here in Austin. We face extended drought periods here in Austin that are being amplified by climate change. Our community has been affected by flash flash flooding also intensified and now polar vortexes and storms that are lasting upwards of five to seven days. So a challenging set of issues to work through. And when we talk about resiliency, it's not only our infrastructure systems, it's our communication systems, it's also our preparedness. I know with this event very difficult to secure emergency bottled water, to have water trucks available, other things to support the community through an emergency event, and Austin water is going to play a more significant role in seeing that those resources are secured and stored prior

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to any event. It's too difficult to lift those off the ground during an event to ask our eoc to do that and those are the kind of areas Austin water is going to be stepping up and examining and taking steps beyond the infrastructure of our system. I know that's the city manager's expectations that we have a thorough review. I have already reached out to the chairman of our well as the vice chair, commissioner Kristy Ann castlebury and asked for their sentence through our commission for -- assistance for after

action review. They are talented engineers in their own right and our commission has a lot of talent and I think it's critical we involve them in our after action reviews.

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Not only do they have talent, but they lived this event. I spoke to both of them here this week and both my chair and co-chair experienced significant water outage periods, communication difficulties and so they have that perspective to add as customers of our utility. I want to speak frankly that you may be feeling demoralized. I know it's something I felt during the event and here recently there recently there was an article about power issues at ulric, and that may have felt very demoralizing. I want to speak to you about that today in my opening remarks. Water and electric are intimately intertwined. As the electric system goes, so goes the water system. And you can't separate the two.

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And at our largest plant, we lost both party feeds. While the plant stayed on the critical circuits, the storm damage and isolating branches and trees disabled both power feeds to our plant, and it deenergized. While Austin water was able to re-energize the system in approximately five to six minutes, that is not appropriate for us to just start the plant back up. Our plant pulls thousands of horsepower of energy to drive our pumps and our systems, and a cold start of that plant requires significant checking and manipulation of our systems. What we have to avoid is doing something that would burst a large transmission main, surge the system, a catastrophic failure that would take days or weeks to recover from. I think as the council examines

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this, and as the community examines this, it's very important to understand those kind of issues. I would also speak to the understanding of the context which we were operating under. Extreme conditions and demands on our systems and our staffs. Even with regards to the electrical issues at ulric, we had over 20 lift stations out of service from the grid problems. While our major plants are on clinical circuits, our smaller facilities embedded in neighborhoods are not. Many of our electricians and staff were in the field during these conditions, trying to move generators around, powering those smaller facilities, cleaning up overflow, and assisting in those ways. We also operate longhorn dam for the city. We took over longhorn dam operations for a couple of years ago. We lost power at longhorn dam. We had to shift resources the hand-crank the Gates. These are huge facilities and

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our staff hand cranking those, very difficult conditions. It's just important to understand that we're not all gathered around ulric during an emergency that our systems were spread thin. We had people everywhere. And it was a very channeling situation. I want you to know too that we have systems in place to assess risk and to invest in resiliency. That's the promise here. Those systems are working. We have a risk-based cap allocation system. We invest approximately a billion dollars every five years, and we use risk assessment and resiliency to evaluate those investment areas. And electric reliability and performance is one of those keys. Even at ulric, the council may recall that at the end of 2020, you approved a large electrical system investment at ulric.

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We had a lot of discussions on that at the dais. There were stakeholder concern on environmental issues and some labor activist concerns about the contractor in. In the end, we were successful working you to get that approved and that project is under construction now. It took four years to prepare that project through engineering, permitting, and design, and now it's in construction. I wish it were done now, but it takes some time to do those. Those are other projects all across the utility at our Davis plant, at our wastewater plants, where we're investing hundreds of millions of dollars in infrastructure and other reliability and resill yen projects, and we'd like to share that with you in the community as you gather more information of what we're doing and how we could do it better. I think you're seeing the promise too of other adaptations that we're taking, and we'll highlight that for you today. But you're also familiar with water forward and our advance meter infrastructure project.

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We often call it my atx water. While that project is only nine months into roughly five-year construction period, and we're just completing the pilot, we did see the promise of that technology at a couple levels. Al one, we did employ our portal, our project includes a portal, where customers can get information on their water use data, but also, a way that we can push out information to our customers. And we employed that portal for the first time in this event. It wasn't quite ready to be deployed in that way, but we focused and decided to launch on it, and I think we have some good results. It clearly needs some more work as we implement the project. But we'll share that with you today. Also, in the few thousand meters we have installed, we were able to gather already insights into how customers were using water during the event, how much water was being used to drip faucets in certain homes, and that I think will help us shape our

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communication and our messages in the future as we're in these kind of events. And also, how we can better tell who's in water and who's out of water. Right now, with our analog system and the water piping network, it's very difficult for us to tell individual homes or neighborhoods if they're in or out of water, and that's going to start to change in the future as we have more Ami and we build out the data network and can have more devices communicating through that network. You know, water is much different than power, in the sense that it's heavy. Every gallon of water weighs over seven pounds. We have to have the water move through the system at only two to four feet a second. It's difficult to tell if water is leaking out through the break or leak. Elevation is very important on water, and water service availability. Your neighbor could have water, and if you live up on a hill, you may be hours or days away from getting water to your location.

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And we'll go into that a little more for you today. But there are important water dynamics that are different than energy and other utilities that we would seek understanding from the council. In closing my opening remarks, I would say as we work together to examine what happened and how we move forward, it's important on the water side to consider more than just water. More than at least the public water system. I think as you're all experiencing with your own constituents, there were tens of thousands of private water infrastructure failures in this event. We'll spend more time analyzing that data and to the degree we can understand it all, but between our responses, Austin fire responses, and others, there's clearly tens of thousands of buildings that experienced burst pipes, burst

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fire lines, burst water heaters, and it's very difficult to keep the public system going when you experience tens of thousands of private infrastructure failures. And I think that's an important part of our examination, is what were the contributing causes to all of that private infrastructure, how might plumbing codes change in the future to reduce that risk. How did the grid outage affect that? Having so many homes be without power for so long, having the temperature in those homes drop to very low levels, I think is something that needs to be examined in terms of how that may have contributed and how we would work through that in the future. So a lot of miles to go. I just wanted to give you an overview of some of those areas, and with that, I would turn it over now to our chief operating

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officer, assistant director Rick Coronado. >> Good afternoon, council. Committee chair. We have quite a bit of material that we want to go over. We can go to the next slide. I'm Rick Coronado, assistant director for operations, and I'll kind of go over the overview of the system as well as the timelines. We're

going to dive into some communications, but I want to give you a sense of the overview of the system to understand how the distribution works. And also, what we experienced over the storm event. Next slide, please. So if you're not familiar with Austin's design for the treatment and the distribution system, this here is to illustrate how water is moved

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throughout the city. It's intended to kind of be a graphic of not only the Zones that you may have seen through some of our publications, but also how water is moved from the lake systems, all the way to the highest elevations. And so, we have these named here as different Zones, starting from the lowest elevation, near the lake Austin, which is the central zone. That's going to be the lowest zone in which our two treatment plants, both Ulric and Davis feed into, and pump into. The illustrations also try to depict also the storage capacity. As you get into the higher elevations, we have some storage capacities that range anywhere from the largest system with our tanks as a 34 million gallon tank, which is Martin Hill, to some of our smallest reservoirs,

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which we call water storage tanks that are maybe less than a million gallons. So that varies from location to location. But this helps kind of identify areas of the south, and also areas of the north. One difference is that we also pull from Lake Travis, in which the water treatment plant is at a higher elevation. It also will feed into the northwest a zone. This is important to understand, as we kind of go into -- in comparison to the geography. Each one of these color codes also will be represented in the next map, which I will show you in a second. But I want to also point out that we have nine major pressure Zones. We have over 40-plus pump stations. And our storage capacity for the entire city is around 115

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million gallons. One thing to also note is we have significant transmission pipelines that go to each one of these reservoirs from each pump station, and that is probably equivalent to the amount of storage that we have aboveground as we do underground. So, as much volume as you have aboveground, we have piping volume that is equivalent below ground. So that will factor into kind of diagnosing what may have been experienced throughout this event. Next slide, please. So you may be familiar with the system map. This was utilized over the course of the event to kind of help communicate where in the city we had pressure, where we had outages, where you fell in relationship to these pressure Zones.

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So each zone is depicted with a different color, starting with the central zone being green. That is one of our largest pressure Zones. And the south is color coded in blue. As well as the north is color coded in blue. Those represent similar hydraulic grade line elevations, similar to the water level as you get higher and higher in elevation. We have also the southwest a, B, and C. Those are kind of in comparison to northwest a, B, and C. And if you recall, during the outages, the extremities, or the first to kind of experience water outages, and we'll go through that shortly in the timeline. There was concern about understanding how many individuals were out of water.

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That's right now a very difficult task because we don't have individual metering points to identify whether or not you have water or not. We have tank elevations, pressure indicators, but one thing we can't determine at this point, which we will be able to once we roll out a full citywide Ami, is where in the city individuals will have water and where they will not. That is one area that we are going to continue to grow in to identify outages. What we do know is that we can identify how many customers and also leaders are located in each one of these Zones, and these are major Zones. But each one of these areas also have separate Zones in between, or within these Zones.

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For example, someone who lives in the south zone may experience -- may not have experienced any water outage, because they are in a low-lying area. Maybe a reduced south zone. So there's even variations in some of these major Zones. So that's the complexity of trying to understand the outages that would have occurred. Next slide, please. So, I want to give you kind of a timeline overview. And I want to kind of spend a little time just kind of putting out the descriptions that you may see in front of you. The red solid line represents storage. Storage is kind of the indicator of how much capacity you have in the stored water tanks. This was a similar graph you may have seen communications. The blue pin represents the

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usage pattern. The usage pattern that's calculated once an hour. The green pen represents the production, how much was sent in to the system, and the usage is really a calculation of what is your storage change over that hour. It's kind of a water balance that we calculated on an hourly basis. The other point I want to make on this graphic is brackets on the freezing temperatures at the beginning and the end, which represents about an eight-day period of low temperatures overnight. That will factor into

a later graph in which they will see the amount of leaks that we experienced over the course of this event.

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Next slide, please. Let's talk about the initial storm response. Prior to the storm event and the freeze, the overnight freezes, we had experienced some events that I highlighted here. Lakewood main break, February 10th, 1:00 P.M. That is a spike of about maybe 15 million gallons plus of water usage. That is a 48-inch transmission main that fail after the event. That kind of gives you an indication that we, on occasion, will experience some of these large water loss events, that the system is capable of recovering in a short period of time. The red indicated that there was no storage reduction during that time, but that is just one

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single event. And so as you walk through this series sequence of events, I want you to keep in mind what may transpire when you have multiple leaks throughout the city. The next bullet and capture that I have there is because of that Lakewood transmission event, we put our Austin water incident command on standby, which meant that we were in situational awareness, identifying some of the needs that we would have to ensure that are met, should something arise during the situational awareness period. One of the other things I want to kind of point out is during this timeframe, preparations occurred from anywhere from scheduling changes, getting our fleet prepared, identifying, you know, what will be our workloads over the course of the next week as the temperatures may

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increase. It is not uncommon for us to have one to two-day freeze events. We kind of adjust our schedule, prepare our staff, how to work safely in some of these extreme weather conditions. We also kind of prepare for what is the incident command schedule over time. Those are things that normally will happen, including some of the facility preparations that include freeze protection, freeze protection of certain pipes, pipe equipment. We have a lot of chemicals and feed equipment at our treatment plants and they're susceptible to freezing just as any other outdoor piping. So there's quite a bit that has to go in preparation for any storm event. This is still pre, you know, storm event. But one of the initial incidents

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that we experience with a power outage was a sanitary sewer overflow on the 12th. This was probably one of the first things we were working through during the event was sanitary sewer overflows. We probably experienced anywhere from 20 outages of lift stations throughout the city, in which ten of those were restored fairly quickly. Of the remainder, we had to either pump and haul, make sure that, you know, we were cycling trucks to go to the locations, and pump out the sanitary sewer lift stations, and then continue that pattern until we either got a temporary generator or if we had full power restoration. So that was in addition to some of the other permanent and

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temporary generators that we were relocating throughout the city. So once power got restored, we mobilized that generator, and took it to another lift station. So we continued to do that for quite a few days through this event. Currently, we still have temporary power and controls for this lift station that took probably the largest amount of damage through this storm. Other types of preparation included coordination with Austin energy, because we are on the critical load list, and understanding that, you know, it's a very good partnership to make sure that our facilities are in power during some of these potential brownouts or blackouts. So, that is a critical part to understand who to contact with Austin energy key accounts.

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Another area that I would just focus on briefly is that we did have to tend to longhorn dam with the power outage during this timeframe, and ensure that we had coordination with Icara, as they also activated emergency operations and were also going to be generating hydroelectric electricity. Next slide, please. So this is going to be probably one of the busiest callouts that we have during this timeframe. And this is the phase in which we lost water storage. In advance of the water -- the boil water -- citywide boil water, we had a sequence of events that occurred on the 16th. The 16th was probably the first indication that was when the southwest -- if you recall the

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map, the geography is southwest area of Austin, was the first area to experience a water outage. And normally, when we get calls, the elevation that's the highest will experience a water outage, and will respond to that if we recover the system, that doesn't necessarily indicate that that's a boil water requirement. One of the things that occurred during that evening and overnight was that as we tried to replenish the system, some of the challenges that not only distribution system maintenance staff, as

well as the pump stations of reservoir staff experience was freezing of maybe level indicators where we had to go out and physically look and see what was the level, what was the pressure, what was the

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ratings. At the same time, if there were any leaks that were occurring, some of them were masked through the weather conditions. And so there was a lull in maybe some of the leaks that may have occurred. Another factor that could have played is that during this timeframe, there are two patterns of water usage. There's a morning peak and an evening peak. The evening peak would have coincides with a potential outage in the southwest B area. This would be typically the peak may extend anywhere from 8:00 P.M. To 10:00 P.M. At night where usage demand is the heaviest. This is what the southwest B experienced. We then started plans to activate the department operation center and activate

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incident command, and so by A.M., the next shift that came in was already in the incident command structure from the team that was already established, and that started the process of activating the department operations center. Overnight, there still was planning, because there was no way to identify how many individuals were out of water other than what I have estimated. We have a number of connections and meters per zone. And so, we were already in process to start the planning and the notice for the southwest B water notice -- or boil water notice. In addition to the southwest B, the power at lost creek went out during that timeframe.

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We have what we call hydronomadic systems, which do not involve water tanks, you know, water storage. They're essentially -- they're a combination of pressure and water. We pressurize the system, and that is how the community in that area for some of the hydronomadic Zones receive their water. With the power outage, we had to try to get a genator out there, but we had depleted the zone of any water, so that was also on the list to have a boil water notice as well. So those occurrences transpired into the southwest B and lost creek boil water notice about 11:00 A.M. About the time that was happening, we achieved a peak demand of the diurnal morning

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peak demand of over 330 million gallons achieved. So that was an indication that there was something that was extremely high, whether it was leaks being generated through public or private piping. That will -- that's something that we'll have to dig through some of our records and the afteraction. But that is an indicator that something in the system has gone wrong, meaning that there are leaks that we cannot identify and get to, or the private side experienced a large amount of water loss during that timeframe. Shortly after that peak event and the southwest B boil water notice, about 2:00 P.M., that is

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when ulric's power went out. And as was mentioned, that is an event that occurred about 2:00 P.M. We were not able to start the process, at least the first phase of the process, until about 5:30. So, with travel time, it took electricians that were attending to some of the lift station outages about an hour and 15 minutes to arrive. They assessed the system with some of the system operators, and started to restore the plant back within an hour's time. The first electrical start-up then starts with the check and balances for all the chemical feed systems and all the reactors that we have to mix those chemicals, to produce drinking water. So that took several hours before we could get the first

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level of production. That night, we were able to get ulric back to about the same level of production that they were prior to the outage. So about 1:00 A.M. That morning. With the depressurization of the storage, that triggered the citywide boil water notice. We were already facing kind of a dire situation with the demand peak at 9:00 A.M., and the storage dropping considerably in the very short period of time. So that kind of gave an indication that there were some leaks that we could not identify, and I'll kind of become a little more clearer in the leak demand graph that we'll show briefly. The citywide boil water

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notice was issued that evening and that started the process to recover the system from south central Zones to the outer Zones of the system. Let's go ahead and go to the next slide, please. So this here is system recovery. There's many factors that play into how to recover a system once you have depressurized it. One of the things that we have to ensure is that we have enough adequate pressure not only for fire flow protection, but also for safety reasons and adequate flow to our customers to sustain it. We did have to work with some of the critical customers, our hospitals in the central zone and eventually our south and

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north Zones, to try to get them water as quickly as possible by transferring some of these pipelines to them more directly. And so by doing so, we were able to sustain the central zone and some of the critical customers that were in the central zone, and this was one of the first areas that was lifted from the boil water. We had multiple conversations with tceq in which they approved this type of plan to kind of rescind the boil water in pressure zone stages. With central zone being the first, that was the first one we were able to establish, then north, south and northwest a were the next ones to be reestablished. Then finally the remainder of the Zones were able to lift the entire citywide

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boil water notice. Some of the things we also had to do was ensure that we took bacteria tests to ensure throughout the water was safe to drink, but those all came clear which allowed us to phase this rapidly in a short period of time from the central zone to the citywide. Otherwise we would have had to wait for all of the tests to come back, but this was our way to adapt how to get the system back to recovery. One of the things that we also made a point was we kept communicating what safety or safe levels of our storage looked like, and so we were trying to target and achieve at least 100 million gallons of storage throughout the city, and some areas definitely

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achieved that sooner than others. On the final note there, the emergency water restrictions were lifted on the 24th, subsequent the boil water notice being lifted. I also want to -- I want to point out that some of the things that we experienced, obviously with the data being relying on tank levels, if you go back one slide, please. One of the things that I want to point out is that when we reach the bottom of the storage levels, which was coincidentally about the same time we were able to recover Ulrich water treatment plant to full production prior to the outage, is that once a tank goes out of water, then

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the pipeline becomes the next volume to work with. And so I mentioned that there's about the same amount of volume above ground as there is below ground. And so one of the things we will go through in this after action is identify how much water we did lose because, you know, we had to replenish the pipelines before you could replenish the tanks. And so the reason why you see such a gradual climb is because we were refilling the pipelines before you could fill the tanks themselves. Next slide, please.

Thank you. I wanted to share with you some of the preliminary information that we have gathered here. This represents the time line, the event sequences,

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as well as a comparison of some of the leak and leak demands that we saw throughout this event. The bar chart on the bottom represents leak demands that include not only mains but also services and other types of leaks that are major. The first indicator that we had a -- some surface of major mains probably didn't surface itself until about the 16th. Then on the 17th there was a drop in the number of main breaks. On the 18th we had an uptick of about 17 main breaks. The 19th of 30. And then 23, 26, 12 and so forth. Now, just because that's when they surface doesn't mean that's when they

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actually -- when the actual main leaked. Because the conditions didn't materialize where you could see some of these main breaks, they could have initiated during the 17 -- at least a portion of those may have initiated during the 17. This is important because as we kind of look to some of the lessons learned and improvements as trying to invest in not only Ami but also some of the smart grid tools that help us identify leaks throughout the system, including pressure management as well as leak detection for the future. I think that will help us also drive improvements in understanding where areas of town may be experiencing more leaks than others. One of the things that we also have identified during this analysis is that about 90 percent of these leaks

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were related to cast iron pipes. They were the most brittle during to time frame and they were similar to what others experienced as well. That is an area of improvement we will be looking at to ensure how do we work through an event like this with some of the pipeline materials that we have. And so as we dive into some of that information and find the failure modes, we will look to see how we can enhance our capital improvement plans as well. With that, I'll turn it over to communication. >> That's Randy Jenkins, please, if you could have assistant director Jenkins become a participant. >> Thank you, director

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Meszaros. I'm with you all. Good afternoon, mayor, council and committee chair. As mentioned and noted, I am Randy Jenkins, assistant director for Austin water and I'll be providing an overview of communications. Few that we've been able to acclimate to the overview, I wanted to overlay and shed light on what occurred as we maneuvered through this event and how we adjusted our messaging throughout. And so we've remained keeping the systematic map in front of you so that you can have an idea as we walk through the days throughout this event. So starting with our communications, it really began before the event initiated. So even before the winter weather hit us on February 9th, we started pushing communications on cold weather preparedness, protecting plants, pipes and pets. We also issued tips on our

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website and we also issued a press release formalizing that notification to the media which the media did pick up and publicly run stories about colder weather preparations. Moving into the 12th when we started to begin to see the freezing weather and the sleet and the wind pick up and as power outages increased, we continued our frozen pipe messaging and then as assistant director Coronado indicated, we did have a sewage overflow that initiated on that day. And so we did provide public notice of that sanitary sewer overflow. And moving into February 13th and 14th, we continued our pipe protection messaging and how to locate your water shutoff valve for private property owners so that they knew if they experience add leak or break where they could cut water service so homes were not further damaged.

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Moving into February 15th, as conditions continued to worsen, we also had to engage our longhorn dam operations as director Meszaros mentioned. And so we had to push messaging out to our key stakeholders regarding those operations. We also then turned our attention to asking the public as we started to see water use spike to, you know, conserve and avoid the use of large appliances in their homes. And then moving into the 16th, as communities around us and neighboring utilities began to issue their own boil water notices, we, you know, did a lot of heavy lifting and effort around tamping rumors down so that our utility customers were aware we had not yet issued a boil water notice and we continued to provide those frozen pipe instructions and that at this time Austin water had

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adequate water to serve our customers. Next slide, please. And so moving into the heart of the event into the 17th, you know, which assistant director car gnawed dough indicated that's when we issued our bowl water notice and lost creek community, we issued mandatory water conservation notices and

pitched out messaging in that way. We also held our first of several virtual news conferences, and by 8:30 P.M. That evening on the 17th we had issued our press release and public notice regarding the citywide boil notice. And I'll get into in some of my later slides how we communicated some of that citywide and other efforts in more detail in a moment. On Thursday, February 18th , you know, our water treatment plant still at that time were

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operating in somewhat stable mode and so we were pushing out that information, but still encouraging our customers to boil their water, including messages in other languages such as Spanish, Vietnamese and Chinese and arabic and held another news conference and continued our conservation messaging. In the early morning hours of February 19th, we began to produce our daily operations up did it that continued throughout the event where we would update our website and all of our outlets twice a day so that we could continue to keep the public abreast of what was going on with Austin water and their utility service. We held another virtual press conference and did indicate at that time we were starting to see improvements in our system and are hopeful that we would be able to pull through this towards the end of the weekend. By Saturday, February 20th , we continued to call for conservation and for those that were starting to

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receive water back in their homes in the outer areas of our service areas, we did provide instructions for flushing pipes as individuals came back into service. And at the same time and day we issued our emergency use restrictions as we were hearing concerns in the community about car washes starting to open up as our temperature started to climb, and we I believe on that day had our first sunny day. Moving into Sunday, February 21st, we started to promote our water distribution sites that were set up for public that were still experiencing water outages due to private side plumbing breaks and continued to push out reminders to keep water boiling. At that time we had not lifted fully citywide. An additional item, we also participated with some of you are, our assistant director did join some of

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you in some of your Facebook live events so we can directly communicate with constituents on the fly as the event unfolded. So Monday -- next slide, please. So as Monday morning, February 22nd, we were able to pardon mely lift our boil water notice for the central pressure zone, asbestos the assistant director mentioned that was the lowest level of our pressure zone and nearest to our treatment plants that were able to have water restored first. As we moved water through the edges of our system. We launched on that same day an interactive map knowing we needed to give the public some direct insight

into exactly what pressure zone they resided in. We launched that day. We did have a few outages on that map, as the website was flooded, we had over 1.2 million hits on that map, which was great. That means that it was

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working and people were utilizing it, but we know that is something to look into is how can we better beef up our infrastructure on our website to support that effort. We also started to hear rumors and get information about scams that were occurring about repairs to water system, and on the private side so we pushed out scam alert mentalling to make sure that our customers knew when and how Austin water would be communicating them and when it was a legitimate outreach for them to respond to. By Tuesday, February 23rd, the boil water notice was lifted for all customers, and the mandatory water use restrictions remained in place. And so we issued the press release and issued notification through our one central Texas messaging, which is also referred to as reverse 911, as well as our my atx water portal utilizing the text message and email alert system.

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Again, we'll get into that about how that exactly works. And so as we pulled out of the boil water notice, we maintained the mandatory water use restrictions through the 24th. And again began to promote emergency repair resources for our residents and began messaging for our apartment and condo residents throughout the Austin area. Next slide, please. And so a high level overview of our communication activities and strategies, you know, as I mentioned at the onset of this event, we began social channels monitoring and responses throughout starting on February 9th as we were beginning to hear reports of the winter weather advisories. And so we then certainly moved forward into media coordination. We issued ten news releases during this entire event starting with preparedness messages and cold weather

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tips issued on February 10th. We provided media representation and stayed in constant contact with media answering questions and scheduling interviews throughout. We also held a series of virtual news conferences and Austin water participated in four of those. And then as I highlighted, our warn central Texas and portal notifications to give a highlight of exactly how many notifications went out using both of those systems. So through the my atx water portal, and I believe director Meszaros mentioned this in his briefing that this is our pilot portal and part of our pilot project that we're launching. We never thought we would utilize it in this way but we're certainly glad we had it. We were able to send approximately 175,000 text messages at a time, and we did that three times over.

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So just north of 552,000 text messages were sent through that portal. We duplicated that effort via email as well. And so when we first started hearing and learning of outages and our boil water notice in the southwest area, we initiated that portal message and then secondly when we issued the citywide boil notice and then when those boil notice -- the citywide boil notice was lifted. And so one of the issues, and I believe it was brought up in early discussion, that we experienced with our portal and are digging into what we can prevent this in the future, but one of the issues was the time line that it took once we geared up the portal to send out that notification, that it took many hours to get those text messages sent out through that portal. We've contacted the vendor and the vendor indicated we were not the only utility utilizing their system in Texas that experienced that delay in going through the text messages to get them

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out citywide. There was a time gap between the time in which we issued the citywide boil water notice to the time that maybe that last customer on the list of, you know, the 175,000 received that last text message. So we are aware of that time line and we are already digging into that activity and how we can beef that system up. On the one central Texas side, we worked to send alerts through the reverse 911 system, phone numbers, email addresses and cell phone numbers for text messaging. And so that message system was utilized in the same manner at the -- citywide boil water notice and at the conclusion of that event when it was rescinded. And so as I mentioned throughout the time line we -- once we stood up the operational updates, including the interactive

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map, we were updating that multiple times throughout the day. And then we kept a robust faqs and language translation documents so the public could access those. And we continued to refine and build on those faqs through the event as additional questions cropped up from council offices as well as questions that came in through public means. And so lastly, I'll highlight our online forms. So originally when a homeowner or customer experiences an outage or any kind of problem with their utility service, we encourage them to contact our customer service line, ultimately I like to refer to out our 911 for utilities. And with the high number of calls that were coming in, that system failed on several times throughout this event. And so we stood up the

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online forum to give people a direct link to communicate with what they were experiencing. And then we set up through not only Austin water volunteers but a series of volunteers throughout the city of Austin organization to conduct outbound calls and follow up on those online forms that were submitted. And so throughout that event, we conducted over 2,000 outbound calls from these volunteers in addition to what was provided through our dispatch phone line. >> Kitchen: Thank you. So this is -- so this is a great overview, we really appreciate this and we appreciate the level of detail that you all just went in for us. Went into for us. We're going to pause now and take some questions. We have until -- we could push it to 3:25 or 3:30 at the most to take questions.

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Before we turn to the last part, the financial relief plan and the support for community recovery. So I'm going to ask that each of you only ask one question and one follow-up, and please be brief so we give everyone as much opportunity to ask questions as we can. And we know, of course, this is not the last opportunity. So we'll start with councilmember Ellis. >> Ellis: Thank you, councilmember kitchen. I'm going to do my best to follow those rules because I have a lot of questions, but everybody does. So the system overview map that you were able to share in these slides was extremely helpful for explaining why a district like mine and possibly councilmember Kelly's were last on line and last -- pressurization. I have a hard time breathing because of my injuries. Your map says the boil water notice was issued more than 12 hours after my first

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constituents were off line. A lot of them had been without power or water for a very long time before getting a boil water notice. Why wasn't there earlier communication for those families who came off line very early and really didn't have even any emergency operations water supplied to them for drinking or for plumbing until Sunday? So can you tell me about those first 12 hours and where the lack of communication was on why we were first off and last on? >> I can start. So as Rick communicated, we were experiencing the start of the event, there was some -- some unknowns. Where are the tanks really emptying, was it instrumentation issues, how bad was the area. We had also thought I that first night that there might be a bad main break

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southwest that we were going to repair and the system would be restored. There was a lot of just unknowns before we would be in a position to issue the boil water notice. We wanted to make sure that

it was truly the system had depleted to the point of a boil water notice. And then there's logistics of boil water notice of writing up the notice and exactly what extent it would apply to which areas, how do we communicate the geographic bounds of that. I think some other issues we were wrestling with is the last time we issued boil water notice it created a bit of run on the water. Is that the system would very rapidly start seeing demand increases as people were filling bathtubs and others. We were trying to kind of prepare for that. So I think it was a sequence of events of kind of just the fog of war trying to ascertain what was truly happening as well as preparing for writing the

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event, issuing it and have support for the customers as they were experiencing boil water notice. >> Ellis: And so can you help me -- understand, parts of Austin were completely off line, there should be a place where people can go similar to the energy outage map to try to figure out is it on the radar. You have a leak map with Austin water that is very good about information of what's been reported. Where is it in the system, has it been investigated, repaired, what's the deal. But when it came to water outage, at first it was stagnant graphics, and then it became a gis thing that we were able to share with people. But the system overview slide you shared today would have been helpful two weeks ago and what the expectations are. We're very resilient in

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southwest Austin, we can take care of ourselves, we need to know how to plan. A lot of my constituents felt like they were left in the dark. And by the time the boil water notice came out, people were almost smiling, what water, what boiling? Like we are hours behind that situation. So that system overview map with the pressurization is really something that could have been helpful two weeks ago for people trying to take care of each other. >> Councilmember, your criticisms are right on exactly. That's the things we've got to get better at and make interactive maps and other tools a regular everyday business that we have, and we're not trying to create or invent it in the emergency. We need to have them running every day and as we experience different events there just automatically updated that data is a gap that we had and we had to invent some on the fly and

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there were lags and that's I think part of the after action is getting better there and making sure they can scale up. As Randy indicated, when we did get our interactive map, it was very popular, 1.5 million hits in a day, so we have to make sure the systems are scalable. I hear what you are saying. One last follow-up and chair, I promise I'll be down unless there's time at the end. You mentioned being able to provide protection for the infrastructure. Were any of those actions meaning other parts of town were

going to be delayed? Is that playing into the delay with some of my district getting water back on? >> I'll answer that. No, what it did is prioritize those critical infrastructures within a pressure zone. So obviously the first one,

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the first season in that had pressure was central. -- Zone. What we did was redistricted and made sure they stayed with water. That was one of the first things that we did to try to alter how to fill the tanks. So one of the things that we were experiencing is if we didn't redirect them to the tanks, which in the diagram, you know, you move the water to the next level tanks, and so that's what we were trying to do is redirect them to the next level of tanks so that way we can move water even further out, further reaches versus lose them through some leaks that we just hadn't identified yet. So it actually served as a dual purpose. >> Ellis: Okay. I pressure that clarification. I have more questions, but I will let others have a chance. >> Kitchen: Thank you, councilmember Ellis. We have other questions for this part. Councilmember alter. And then the mayor after

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councilmember alter. >> Alter: Thank you. I have a lot of questions. Let me -- >> Kitchen: We'll get to -- >> Alter: Do it the -- do you want us to focus on the time line or plant questions? >> Kitchen: Councilmember alter, it's fine, but remember one question with one follow-up. >> Alter: I understand that. I just wanted to get a sense if we wanted us to stay on the time line type questions or if it mattered. >> Kitchen: Whatever we covered so far, it's up to you. >> Alter: I have a lot of questions, posted many on the message board. I want to for now though dig down into kind of understanding how we seemingly have a crisis in the blink of an eye. We were being told one day we had no concerns about the water system whatsoever to boil water and no supply. So I would like to know what did Austin water know and

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when did they know it with respect to the loss of water pressure? >> So let me start off with the time line. What Austin water experienced where there was some concerns about water loss was during the night of the 16th, which is when the southwest B first experienced a water outage. Within 12 hours the demand did not decrease. It actually exceeded in every zone throughout the city by a factor of two and a half. So normally during this time frame the -- the average water use throughout the city is about 120 million gallons a day. That exceeded even some of our summertime peaks well over 250 sustained. And so that is when we started seeing that we could

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not -- even with our production plants, we could not sustain that level. In addition to that, we could not see or identify any leaks that were in the system that we could go shut off. The amount of leaks that tapered off on the 17th were lower than what we had experienced the day before that we were already addressing. And then we had another spike as the weather started to clear up as far as road conditions after the 17th. So we do have some voids in what information we could collect during that time frame. But the tanks were the indicator that kind of fell off on level in a very short period of time once we also had no additional pumpage for a short brief time. >> Alter: So then if we knew it on the 16th that

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there were potential supply issues, it's my understanding we didn't start with the conservation messaging until the Thursday. Why was there such a long delay in that messaging if the public could have helped with conservation messages for the storage? >> Councilmember, I'll answer that in part here. So you know, our emergency conservation is really focused on outdoor water, that irrigation, cooling, power washing, and the water use that we were incurring during the fitter part of this was -- fitter part of this was indoor -- first part was indoor water, flushing, those kind of things. It didn't strike early on that we would issue a conservation mandate given the system was behaving up until Tuesday night and into it. I think, again, we were

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struggling the last time we issued conservation, mandatory conservation, water use soared. It had the opposite effect. That was during to 2018 boil water notice. When we started to issue conservation messages, it had the opposite effect that it went really high. The mayor might remember that when we were appealing to him to get on the media and please encourage no "-to truly take conservation seriously. We were anxious about issuing some conservation and creating a panic on water. And I mean I think you could look back and say that was the wrong move or the right move, I don't know. It's one of the things we'll want to talk through some more. I mean, I think even from conservation in the early part of the event and though the first few days, we were encouraging people to drip their faucets. That's a traditional technique the utility has

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encouraged to keep from having private pipe burst. One of the lessons from extending a five-plus "Day cold period is we can't do that or we're going to have to do it differently. One of the other data points is how much water flood on the our wastewater plants and the indication there was a lot of water flowing into our wastewater plants which shows that I think the dripping was creating a lot of water demand. And you know, we are in a tough spot. Did I want to issue a conservation call and say don't drip your water knowing that that might lead to all kinds of burst pipes. It was -- there was just not a lot of good choices. And -- that was some of the dynamic that was going on. >> Kitchen: Thank you. Councilmember alter, do you have one more short question? >> Alter: Yeah, I would

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like -- I would like director Meszaros to answer my question about how we got into a crisis in the blink of an eye and his explanation for that. >> I think hit on. If you go back to the graphs, with the start of the event and the freezing on Friday and into Saturday, Sunday, Monday, even the day Tuesday, we did not see a sign that the water demand or storage was going to deplete the way it did. Really from the evening of Saturday night, roughly at 10:00, I may not have the exact time right, into Wednesday morning and Wednesday day is when the storage totally depleted. I mean, it was roughly a 12-hour period that we went from storage being mostly okay to empty. And I mean, Rick could probably elaborate more specifically on that, he's more familiar with some of the graphs, but it happened

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very, very rapidly. I don't know, that's one of the things we'll want to understand is why the system ultimately deteriorated so rapidly in roughly a 12 to 4-hour period. -- 24 hour period. >> Kitchen: Thank you. Mayor, did you want to go next? >> Mayor, you are muted. >> Kitchen: You are muted, mayor. >> Mayor Adler: I remember, recall that at the time the water depleted so quickly you didn't believe it was necessarily true. And had to physically check because it was being depleted to rapidly. The question I would like to ask there were many reports about Ulrich and ready to turn it on, but we didn't have people at the plant that knew how to do that. Can you speak to those media reports and is that true and

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tell us about that. >> Yeah, I'll start and have Rick add in. But we did issue a more detailed summary of our response to the loss of power at Ulrich. So each councilmember would have gotten a more detailed summary of some of the steps that occurred with the loss of power and then the response. So a couple things. We did have our electricians were in the field responding to lift stations. And so there was some need to call them back and bring them to Ulrich to check the internal electrical systems and manipulate the switchgear and do the other kind of checks when we lose power. So that was a delay. Not having

electricians at the plant out in the field attend to go the power losses at the lift stations. And as I indicated in my introduction, when we experience a total power loss at a large plant, we have to go through a series

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of startup again with the plant, and Rick, I think you are probably better to articulate what that requires on a startup of a plant after a power loss. >> Sure, I'll add to just as you described as our lift station activities rerouted our electricians. We had sheltered in place all our mechanics and operators and we may have had even instrumentation staff on site working through operating the plant. But as a significant power outage like this, everything kind of goes dark and you have not only just minimal flood lighting but also you start looking to see if there's any equipment that has failed because it's a surge on the system. So it's a surge in the plant that you have to make sure that things don't rupture, that once they get

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reenergized they go through a systematic checks that not only are you looking at pumping systems but chemical systems. You have a lot of safety chemical feed systems that you have to ensure are adequately operating. So it's a joint effort between the electricians, staff, maintenance, instrumentation, mechanics, and so we had just about all the disciplines there except the electricians, which were enroute and took about an hour and 15 to get there. And then have to go through and suit up with their protective gear to turn on -- or switch the power controls to the available power. And so at the time that they were doing that, the second feed also came up from Austin energy, so simultaneously we were able to produce somewhere around

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5:30 our first production of water that safely will go into the public. So we had staff, but not the right discipline on site. >> Kitchen: Thank you, mayor. Did you have a follow-up? >> Mayor Adler: No. >> Kitchen: We're going to move on to our next area and I know people have a lot more questions and I appreciate that, but we need to move on at this point. To the financial relief plan for customers. So if you all want to move to that. Councilmember tovo, if we have time, we will return to you. We need to move on to the bill relief right now. >> Tovo: I do have an opportunity to talk about that on council's agenda tomorrow. So that would be another opportunity to talk about the bill relief. >> Kitchen: I'm sorry, I couldn't hear you.

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>> Tovo: That's fine. I was suggesting the bill relief for Austin energy and for Austin water is also on council's agenda tomorrow so that would be another opportunity to talk about it. >> Kitchen: Right, but we have quite a bit of information to be shared. We'll come back if we have time. If you all want to turn to that and make your presentations there. >> Joseph Gonzalez, chief financial officer, will provide the overview. >> Good afternoon council. Joseph Gonzalez, Austin water extent director over financial services, I'll be providing a brief overview in response to the storm. We recognize the hardships and stress that our customers and community experienced as a result of the storms and our goal is to avoid adding any additional stress for our customers who are worried about potential lie bills,

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dripping faucets and burst pipes. We'll be seeking council approval tomorrow for various bill relief measures to help mitigate high bills resulting from the winter storm event. First we are recommending temporary residential rate relief that would reduce volumetric rates for tiers 3 through 5 to one cent per thousand gallons and [inaudible] For these same tiers 3 through 5, \$3.55. The proposed rate reductions would essentially cap residential bills at 6,000 gallons of consumption. In addition we're proposing Austin water be granted authority to apply bill adjustment credits to retail customers whose water consumption was affected. While currently allows Austin water to allow leak adjustments to residential customers, it does not provide for similar

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adjustments for multi-family or commercial customers. Those adjustment policies require customers to formally submit requests with supporting documentation. Even with a normal volume of say 200 leak adjustment requests per month, it can take up to two billing cycles to process those adjustments. And fully credit back customer accounts. Consequently we're recommending that the bill adjustments be expanded to include multi-family and commercial customers and also that the documentation requirements be waived for customers impacted by the February winter storms. We're also proposing that Austin water be granted authority to modify the wastewater averaging methodology to use estimated consumption for the third month of the winter averaging period to ensure customers are not unfairly penalized for high

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consumption. And waiver of late fees that council approved last week, Austin water is proposing all emergency cut-off and cut-on fees be waived. Next slide, please. Now, we normally work hard to avoid the use of estimated read. Particularly with months with higher levels of consumption because you risk pushing residential customers into the higher tiers of the our rate structure which you ultimately get. Because we were unable to get reads from February 15 through February 19th due to the dangerous road conditions and frozen meter boxes, we began using estimated reads for those customers that are based on each customer's historic uses patterns for those bill cycles. We were able to resume

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reading meters last week on February 22nd, however, we are continuing to bill based on estimated reads to ensure that our customers receive bills based on normal expected consumption levels while we work to implementor high bill mitigation measures. We're proposing a temporary rate reduction effective from March 19 to April 26 to reduce volume volume volume volumetric rates. That coincides with the next scheduled read date for bill cycle is 13, this was the first cycle billed using estimated read and temporary rates in effect until we get all the way back around to bill cycle 12, which was the last bill cycle billed with actually reads. Consequently the catch-up consumption that's based on actual meter reads will be pushed into that next

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billing cycle in March and April whether the temporary rates are in effect. So any high residential consumption above 6,000 gallons would end up being billed at one cent per thousand gallons. The hope is these adjustments would virtually eliminate residential high bill requests that would likely have been submitted by customers had they received bills for actual consumption during that period. And since almost 90% of our 247,000 customers are residential, anything that we can do to reduce the volume of residential leak adjustment requests would allow to shift resources to review multi-family and commercial accounts to identify any usually high consumption levels among those customers, and proactively apply leak adjustments to their accounts when we resume billing based on actual consumption. As I mentioned earlier, the

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use of estimated reads for the current billing cycle will also allow us to replace potentially high consumption levels with normal expected levels for the final month of the wastewater averaging period to mitigate the impact of high consumption on the winter storm on the wastewater averaging calculations due to take effect April 1st. While we will be reviewing actual read data to identify again potential leak adjustments, we'll also be reviewing wastewater averaging calculations to identify

customer accounts whose calculation might be negatively impacted and adjust accordingly. Next slide, please. So this chart shows what we're trying to do from a residential rate perspective

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in terms of dropping the -- the tiered fixed fee and the volumetric rates for tiers 3 through 5 to essentially cap, you know, a residential customer's bill at 6,000 gallons. And you can see that under our normal rate structure, customers with leaks that push them into into tiers 4 and 5 would be billed at higher rates than our conservation based rate structure without the proposed rate changes. Lowering these rates will allow us to avoid high bills for residential customers and again in hopes as almost entirely eliminating the need for any kind of leak or high bill adjustment amongst our residential customers. And the next slide will show the bill impacts. If we can move on to the next slide. The bill impact for a sample

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customer. Because the proposed rate changes beginning block 3, you can see the bill for a customer using 6,000 gallons or less would be unchanged at 37-02 for non-customer assistant or cap customer, customer assistance program. And would be unchanged at \$17.36 for customers enrolled in the customer assistance program. But customers with high consumption caused by the storm would be seeing reduction under temporary rates as compared to our current conservation based rate structure. For example, a non-capped customer with a leak that pushes consumption to 40,000 gallons, they would normally receive a bill for \$510.22, while a capped customer would see a corresponding bill of \$436.85. Under the proposed rates, those build would be reduced

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by over 90% to \$44.16 and \$19.40 respectively. So you can see the impact of the proposed temporary rate structure as we try and push all of our residential consumption and potential high bills into those lower tiered structures. And then next slide, please. I'll conclude with quickly highlighting two other relief efforts that are being funded in part by Austin water. Austin water has committed a million dollars in funding to support the housing and planning department's emergency home repair initiative to help customers who -- in need of plumbing repairs caused by the winter storm. In addition in a separate agenda item on tomorrow's council agenda we'll bring an additional 5 million each from Austin water and Austin energy for residential

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utility bill payment assistance through the plus one program. Now, while demand for the plus one payment assistance funding has increased dramatically during the pandemic, this assistance isn't limited to customers impacted by the pandemic. And that concludes, you know, my overview of the bill relief efforts and I would be happy to answer any questions. >> Kitchen: Okay, so let's -- if we could take the slides down and then let's see, vice chair Fuentes, if you want to go first. >> Fuentes: Thank you. So I guess my question is -- well, two things. I just want to make clear I understand we're asking -- Austin water is asking for council to waive the authority or to include in the authority individuals who live in apartments. We've had several apartment complexes who have been without water and still today some are without water, have very little

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water dripping from their faucets. The individuals who live in apartments would be eligible for these programs that you listed out here. Is that right? >> That's correct. Multi-family customers and remember multi-family customers are master metered so they were not individually metered. So the bill would go to the complex or management company, but our plan is to expand the leak adjustment program to include those multi-family accounts and commercial accounts who would have experienced significant leaks or usage as a result of the winter storm event. >> Fuentes: Is there any consideration, has Austin water considered additional relief programs or assistance for individuals who live in multi-family units? You know, just looking at how the situation has rolled out and the disproportionate impact many have received, have you considered adding a

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fund specifically for individuals that reside? >> Well, we recently, you know, back in December got council approval for a program to actually provide credits to -- to customers of Austin energy who reside in multi-family units. Because again, as I mentioned earlier, because they are master metered, they are not an individual customer and so historically we haven't had the ability to provide -- we don't bill those customers directly so we haven't had the ability to provide any kind of customer assistance program support for those customers because technically they weren't a direct Austin water customer. But we're working to roll out a program that is scheduled to take effect next month that would provide customer assistance

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program customers in multi-family dwellings \$17 a month credit on their electrical bill, their overall utility bill because that was a segment of our customers we couldn't reach through the customer assistance program. >> Fuentes: It might be worth considering something additional. Especially given the fact that many of us have now acquired our own list of apartment complexes that have been without water so we have a really good sense of individuals who have been affected. Perhaps there's an opportunity there to collaborate and figure out a way we can bring more immediate relief, you know, to our neighbors in need. >> Certainly, we can brainstorm and look at other potential opportunities to provide relief to those customers. >> Fuentes: Thank you. >> Kitchen: Thank you. Other questions? Anybody that hasn't asked a question? Okay. Councilmember Casar and then we'll go to councilmember

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Ellis. >> Casar: Just a clarifying question to make sure I understand the earlier slide. When you say you are going to use estimated reads for that month, does that mean -- I'm trying to understand your slide that has the dollar figures and the previous slide that you had mentioned. So when we're saying we're going to use estimated reads -- >> The bill system has an estimated, you know, consumption algorithm that looks at historic consumption, prior month consumption. The default is February of last year and generate an estimate on February of last year or customers who

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haven't had that long of October history T prior month is generally the best estimate of currently month consumption. And we're actually working to modify the billing system I think to use the preference of the prior month, but that's correct, that until the proposed rates are implemented, we would be sending bills based on shipment consumption -- estimated consumption until we had customers are unusual activity. >> Casar: Generally folks should expect for the time of the disaster they are going to be build more or less the same amount as the prior month before the disaster. >> Right. I -- correct. Either prior year consumption from last February or prior month January consumption.

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>> Casar: The leak issue is more on a move forward basis that if that leaks persists into the next bill, that's what we're voting on the addressing the rates for the potential leak. >> Right. Because it will take us a couple weeks to implement a rate change, we needed a little time to ramp that up and so the estimated -- use of estimated reads look buy us that time to avoid high bills going on. But it also will allow us to push that consumption into that billing period, which is something generally we avoid trying to do, but because we would be dropping the rates, it would be to their benefit to do that. It will also

allow us -- buy us a little time to do some more expansive, you know, account review to proactively identify accounts that had

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significant impacts in terms of consumption and proactive make those adjustments. >> Casar: I appreciate that. And just want to before passing the baton here just thank you all for the work that I think has really accelerated lately to create that website and lists of multi-family without water, got confirmation we'll be at a place between the roll tear efforts and city efforts get water to all those apartments that don't have water and I appreciate that between the city's effort and volunteer effort making sure there is water delivery or hydrant or tote at each of those properties. And so I just wanted to acknowledge and appreciate that as we still deal with the ones that are persistent. >> Kitchen: Thank you, councilmember Casar. We have one last item where we'll be talking about the recovery. >> Casar: Sorry.

[3:45:09 PM]

>> Kitchen: That's fine. It's a good precursor to that. Before we turn to that, I think, councilmember Ellis, did you have a question and then councilmember alter about the bills? Right? Go ahead. >> Ellis: I'm not trying to go back to the other one. So did I see that the estimate right now was that the new rate structure would end on April 26th? Is that a hard date or is that something we can reassess since we know so many of the apartments are having a lard time -- a hard time working through that. >> That's another -- I guess that's another benefit of trying to push the high level of consumption into the next billing period. You know, because we do recognize that finding a plumber right now is very, very difficult. And generally speaking the -- you know, the leak adjustment policy and the high bill adjustment policy

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that's currently written into city code allows for, you know, making adjustments for two billing cycles. We could expand, Bute also recognize that we are heading into the irrigation season so we wanted to try and push all of the consumption to one billing cycle. But we feel like the discretion that director Meszaros and Austin water would be given in terms of applying -- applying bill adjustments for customers impacted by the storm event would actually extend beyond the dates those rates from in effect. And so then we could maybe return to a more normal, you know, if -- because I wasn't able to get it fixed immediately, my high levels of consumption went into April, we could still address that with the authority that would be granted to apply leak adjustments even beyond the dates that the temporary

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rate reduction would be in effect. >> Ellis: That's helpful background. Thank you. >> Kitchen: Councilmember alter. >> Alter: So in your example you gave us billing for somebody who had a leak versus a normal customer. How does this impact people who had no water supply for a week? Because if they have to pay the same water supply as they did last month, but they didn't use a month, does that have a material impact on their bill? >> So two things. That might be captured in the true-up when we get the normal read, and if for example they were billed, say, for 5,000 gallons, but because of plumbing issues they were out of water for an extended period of time and the actual read is less than that, then it would trigger -- I believe it would trigger a rebill that would true up and

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essentially credit for any consumption that was billed in excess of the actual read. >> Alter: So that comment just to help me understand something, I just want to repeat it to make sure I'm understanding it. Essentially we're saying for this period we're doing estimates but we're going to read it next month and the reason for the billing next month is that your leak may show up next month because you are being read then but we're going to forgive that is we understand many of our customers are going to be impacted by higher levels of consumption so we're trying to push all of that where a bill would be capped at 6,000-gallon level. And so that's the hope -- >> Alter: But in terms of logistics, is there basically saying we're using a estimate for this month's bill, by next month we'll be able to have reads and we're

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going to true them up across your estimate and what we read at that point, and the value of the reduction at that point is because that's when we're going to be able to true it up for each of the customers but not make you pay for more than 6,000 gallons if you had a leak. >> You are correct. Councilmember, we're only going to charge a penny per thousand gallons once you get above block 2 or block 3, 4 and 5. >> Alter: I think it would be helpful to have additional messaging as we roll this out that we can explain the our constituents because it's not immediately obvious why in the next period the reduction in how that helps them this their leak is resolved, but it has to do with when you are reading the meters and using those meters over time. I'm not sure what the most appropriate messaging is, but it wasn't completely clear. To me beyond how that was

[3:50:12 PM]

doing. If we're trying to explain to our constituents that would be helpful if you had clear messaging and some examples I think are really helpful to have. >> That's a good recommendation and we are talking about that messaging, working, you know, also with Austin energy and trying to get information into bill inserts and looking to provide that messaging, but you are right, the next billing cycle would be based on an actual read that is spend to true up -- intended to true up consumption. But it also will provide us I think the additional benefit of giving people time to -- to have, you know, leaks repaired, but also gives us time to have some detailed review. We're still getting the meter reads, we're just not billing based on it. So in the interim we'll be reviewing those reads as

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they come in and to try to proactively identify customers who were impacted and make any other adjustments that would be necessary based on individual customers' actual levels of consumption. >> Kitchen: Thank you. >> Alter: When you explain it, can you make sure you have examples if you didn't have water, if you were a normal customer and if you had a leak, please, thank you. >> Kitchen: Thank you. So what I would like to do now is just take -- ask director Meszaros if you can take five minutes for the last piece. I want people to understand what's happening with the recovery efforts. But then I would like to leave another five minutes for additional questions. I know councilmember Tovo had a question and others may have a question. So do you think you could do that, could you take about five minutes and give us that last item? >>. >> You better. Randy is going to do it. Do it in five minutes.

[3:52:14 PM]

>> I can do that. Absolutely. To that note there's only one slide so you should be able to fly through that to give you example time to ask questions. As soon as Austin water's system began to rebound from the event, you rerouted our incident command focus to turn to those suffering from private side failures throughout our community. As our mission describes, we provide water services so all community needs for water are met and Austin water and its employees are passionate about making sure there is water flowing from every tap at every resident in our community. That said this community recovery required us to shift what is our traditional focus and our traditional boundaries around providing water service that stops explicitly at the meter, but knowing that so many Austinites in our community members and neighbors and friends and family were suffering, we deployed resources and put items in place to render aid.

[3:53:14 PM]

So one of the most dire things that I'll start out with and prevailing issues we continue to struggle with throughout standing up this community effort was the lack of plumbing materials available. As the

entire state of Texas flooded the market with needed parts and repair pieces, that became a dire need of our utility to be able to have the components to repair. As I mentioned, we were assisting in areas and standing up items on hydrants that we've never had to deploy at that level before. And so that became a sticking point, but we worked through that and I'm happy to report where we are today. We developed a five-prong approach. To this community recovery effort. And so that consisted -- consists of plumbing repair coordination and I'll speak a little to each of these items. Public water stations, bulk water hauling distribution, a fixed location tank in the center of town, and also

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water totes, which in essence at 275-gallon water tank and setting those out in distribution points throughout our community. To give more insight he with pulled Austin water staff that have license and experts dealing with private side infrastructure and how they connect to our meters, we pulled them from the field and asked them to make outbound calls to community apartment complexes maintenance staff so we could have a robust and detailed understanding what exactly was failing on the private side, internal, piping underneath parking spaces, et cetera. And so we stood that up and as we continued to learn more, we deployed those same staff to meet with those apartment complexes and community to make sure, an

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example I would provide is there was one apartment complex out of water. They had a plumber on site that was struggling to make those connections and was trying to work through the wee hours the night and into the dark. We routed Austin water staff who had construction lights that we usually use when we're doing overnight construction on waterlines, so that way the plumber could continue to work through the nighttime hours. We also had Austin water staff and Austin water staff family members providing bottled water on top of what was being provided through the community. I want to elevate what a significant lift and effort this took from Austin water staff. The other item, making these outbound calls, what started out with into five individuals with that first on set of 20 apartment complexes, significantly grew as we continued to get and hear from your offices and your constituents that were reported outages as

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well as other avenues and survey points throughout the city. And so we have stood up additional Austin water volunteers as well as other city staff that are making these outbound calls to help us validate these water outage concerns. And so to date I want to report out on our public water stations. We have 51 public water stations in place throughout the city today. With that number rising to probably 55 by

the end of the afternoon, maybe right now. And just an update there, that is the actual connections to the hydrants. So these are hydrant assemblies with a spigot that allow someone to place a bucket or bottle whatever they might have to fill up to supply water needs. And bulk water hauling distribution, we have 14 sites that are growing that are on a route that are receiving bulk water distribution throughout the city. These are large trucks delivering potable water

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throughout those apartment complexes. We have a fixed location tank pictured on this slide that is at ACC northridge campus, and so that is supplying water that anyone throughout the community whether residential or in an apartment complex, multi-family setup can utilize and receive that water that is needed for their homes. And then water totes, as I mentioned, the 275-gallon tanks, those are situated throughout our service areas at different apartment complexes and communities so that they can -- and those are also on routes to be refilled by our bulk water tanker trucks as though go empty. We partnered with Austin needs water and other non-profits throughout the -- throughout the city to get those totes distributed. What I can provide the right now what I can provide the update on and I will end

[3:58:22 PM]

the update now and get to your questions, is 350 complexes are now confirmed to have water restored which we are happy to report that number. There are 83 fill verifications going on throughout today, this afternoon, that will be verified by close of business and early morning tomorrow. That have been listed as non-validated on our map that's outward facing to the public. And by unvalidated, I really want to clarify and indicate that that doesn't mean that we have not contacted. A lot of these complexes we've contacted them by phone and the phone numbers that have been provided, but we have not had a return phone call. So those are the ways in which we're deploying Austin code and morning staff as well as -- public works staff as well as Austin water staff to visit those sites in person to either affirm that they are back in water service or are still without so that we can immediately deploy a water resource to them. So the situation continues to change rapidly. We're happy to we had several decline our hydrant

[3:59:23 PM]

use across the city because they were already restored. So that's a great moving forward to report out on. And with that I'll just say that the system overall seems to be stabilizing and we'll turn it over for any questions that you may have. >> Kitchen: Okay. We started about 10 minutes late so if director Meszaros and his folks can stay another five or 10 minutes, I appreciate that. We won't go any longer than that. Maybe we can do it in five if we don't have questions. First I want to say thank you for your efforts working with the apartments. I want to second what councilmember Casar had said. I think many

of us here have been working very closely with you guys and with the community on the apartment complexes and other facilities, like senior facilities and facilities for low income folks to try to help that effort.

[4:00:29 PM]

>> Councilmember, I would note, I do want to mention Austin needs water and other volunteer groups that have been working tirelessly and I just acknowledge their passion for community service. >>

Kitchen: Yes, thank you. Okay. I'm going to turn to councilmember tovo. Did you have a question?

Maybe take a short question? I was sorry to have to cut you off earlier, but we're wrapping up now so if you have a question and then we'll turn to a couple of other wrap-up things. >> Yes. Several -- >>

Kitchen: Can't quite hear you, councilmember tovo. >> Tovo: I said yes I have several but I'll try to

summarize them. Let me start where you ended. Thank you. I want to add my thanks. And also I want to acknowledge the Austin firefighters association and the upo who I think together have grown into Austin needs water and the other community efforts but they were out there the day after the boil water notice with buckets that they got from

[4:01:31 PM]

council offices and from their own efforts and really started this model of getting water on-site at the time where we couldn't access bottled water even for some of our most vulnerable -- some of our most vulnerable residents in every council. So thank you very much for working with them and kind of absorbing and making this an Austin water utility effort as well. I think this is really a good thing. Can you verify how many apartment complexes are still out of order? Is it a match with the number of hydrants? My colleague had shady in every case that there's an equivalency there between the duplexes that are still without water and the number that now have on-site water options for household use. [Background noise].

[4:02:32 PM]

>> Yes, it is a match on that. When you kind of add up the number of hydrants that we have deployed and then the apartment complexes that are on the bulk water distribution routing, and then lastly the one item that Austin needs water has performed a heavy lift on and I don't have an exact count for that, but they have taken totes and gotten those out to those apartment complexes. So I would say the outage is kind of dynamic and changing around the hour as people come on and out. But I would say around 80. >> Tovo: Okay, thank you for that update. And the breweries, I know they were also thanked in several of our communities, but the breweries really came in early and consistently to help out.

Director Meszaros back to the earlier presentation. I want to be clear, I think I am from your presentation, but it's come up a couple of times in public questioning

[4:03:33 PM]

about whether the outages at longhorn dam and others were all storm related as I understand. They are absolutely on the high priority circuit. So those were not part of any planned outages. Those were -- to the extent that Ullrich and longhorn dam had power outages, those as a result of storm damages. Is that an accurate understanding? >> I know the Ullrich outreach was from storm damage. I don't know the other facilities. Longhorn dam we'd have to check with Austin energy. I think some of the smaller lift stations that are in neighborhoods were probably part of the blackout process. >> Tovo: Okay. Maybe we can flag that for conversation. >> Okay. Rick may know. Rick, do you know? >> Typically those, even the lift stations are on the critical load list and so they may also have been related to storm-related

[4:04:34 PM]

outages, but we'll confirm that. >> Tovo: Thank you very much. >> Kitchen: Okay. I want to wrap up now because -- do you have a short question? Because I also want to give a few minutes to -- one or two minutes to city manager cronk before we close in six minutes. So do you have a short question, councilmember alter? >> Alter: I think so. It's on the emergency preparedness. I really appreciate all the work that was done. I am -- I thought that there were lessons that were learned from the prior water boil notice about having water available in those distributions. Can you tell us what you were supposed to have done after the -- in the after action report from the prior water boil notice? That helped in this situation? >> I'm not sure if -- you mean with bottled water? Is that what you're asking? >> Alter: Yes. >> I don't think we identified creating a bottled water warehouse if

[4:05:36 PM]

that's what is I had indicated in my introduction. >> Alter: I'm saying that we -- in the prior boiled water from the purred bit event, -- turbidity event, I thought there was an after action report that included some recommendations with how we improve water distribution in the event of a water boil notice. >> I'll have to refamiliarize myself with some of that. Some of that there was an after hour report for engineering for a chemical overall turbidity and one from the eeoc. I'll have to review that with them. I don't recall the recommendations on bottled water distribution. >> Alter: Okay. We can follow up with that later then. >> Kitchen: Okay. Thank you very much. So just in closing, I want to thank you director and your team for providing this information today. And we all have more questions which we will have opportunities ask.

[4:06:37 PM]

I appreciate you flagged -- flagged close to 10 areas for us to be talking about in the future that you are already thinking of in terms of next steps. And all the way from storing water to the water forward kinds of recommendations to what is occurring in Ullrich with the new construction, the smart meters, examining the potential code changes or other things related to private failures of pipe structures. Leak detection, measure management. The fact that the cast iron pipes were causing breakage. Text message delays. Lessons about dripping differently, all those kinds of things. I know there will be other issues as you go through an after action report. So I appreciate your efforts to start to identify issues

[4:07:38 PM]

that can be examined and ways in which we may do things better so that we're more resilient in the future. So as we close I want to ask city manager if he has something he would like to report to us. >> Cronk: Sure. First of all, thank you, chair kitchen and all councilmembers for having such an engaged discussion this afternoon. This is, as you've noted, at least one of many that we'll be having over the next several weeks and months ahead looking at this event and how we can make sure that we're prepared in different ways in the future. I want to thank our city staff. You know, they worked -- have been working tirelessly throughout this event and continue to do so as we make sure that we're not only still in the response mode, but then shifting into recovery and then finally looking back at what we can do better in the future. I'll just note that we took the resolution that you passed last Thursday very seriously and I know there were some immediate things that were asked of staff so we are prepared to do it. If it's not in your inbox

[4:08:40 PM]

already it will be arriving shortly. We do have an initial response to that. So hopefully that will start again framing our conversation going forward, but I wanted to give you a head's up to look for that. I know that we were asked to come up with a response before tomorrow's council meeting and we're fulfilling that promise and there's at least an executive summary of some of the things that we've been working on in realtime. I will note, though, that some of the numbers -- owe they've been updated in the day that we've been crafting this memo and some of the things that you heard from Ms. Jenkins are updated that you got today that maybe have changed since we put the memo together. So I just wanted to give you a head's up on that and look forward to our discussion tomorrow at council as well. >> Kitchen: Thank you. Councilmember Renteria? >> Renteria: Yeah. I just have a quick request, that we also look at -- into a small minorities and other businesses that are -- that

[4:09:40 PM]

have been struggling with the covid and now they have busted pipes and now they will have to be facing all kinds of regulations with the health department and code. And I just want to make sure that we do them right also. >> Kitchen: Thank you. Good issue to point out. Okay, guys. I want to thank everybody for participating. I know it can be -- it can be frustrating not to be able to get into all the detail they want to. I think we covered quite a bit in the last two hours and we'll have more opportunities. As I said before, we'll be meeting jointly with Austin energy at the end of the month. We have a water committee meeting we'd be adding in April and then of course we appreciate efforts of councilmember tovo's bringing forward with the committee that she signal and the resolution that she's working on. So thank you all. I really appreciate your time. And thank you, director mess czar Ross and your --

[4:10:41 PM]

Meszaros and your team. With that I guess I need to adjourn the meeting. We are adjourning the -- we are adjourning the water oversight committee meeting. Thank you.