



**AUSTIN CITY COUNCIL  
MINUTES**

**SPECIAL CALLED MEETING  
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2021**

The City Council of Austin, Texas, convened in a special called meeting on Thursday, February 25, 2021 via Videoconference.

Mayor Adler called the Council Meeting to order at 10:08 a.m.

**BRIEFINGS**

2. Update on Covid-19 related matters.  
**Briefings delivered by Dr. Jason Pickett, MD, Alternate Health Authority and Stephanie Hayden-Howard, Director, Austin Public Health.**

**Direction was given to staff to provide information on the number of seniors in group 1b waiting for vaccines; information on the broken water pipe at the Fairfield isolation Center; and written instructions on how seniors can designate someone else as their point of contact to assist them in registering for the vaccine.**

1. Update on recent severe weather event and ongoing recovery and relief efforts.  
**Briefings delivered by Juan Ortiz, Director, Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management; Sidney Jackson, Deputy General Manager, Austin Energy; Greg Meszaros, Director, Austin Water.**

Mayor Adler recessed the meeting at 12:47 p.m. without objection.

Mayor Adler reconvened the Council Meeting at 1:31 p.m. Council Members Alter, Ellis, Fuentes, Kitchen, and Tovo were off the dais.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS**

3. Approve a resolution ratifying a declaration of local state of disaster in response to concerns related to imminent threat of widespread and severe property damage, injury, and loss of life due to prolonged freezing temperatures, heavy snow and freezing rain and consenting to continuation of the disaster declaration for a period of more than seven days.

**Resolution No. 20210225-003 was approved on Council Member Pool's motion, Council Member Ellis' second on an 11-0 vote.**

4. Approve an ordinance waiving residential permitting and development fees related to repairing or reconstructing structures and removing trees and tree limbs damaged as a result of winter weather events; waiving emergency medical services fees and costs for services provided during winter weather events; and declaring an emergency.

**Ordinance No. 20210225-004 was approved on Council Member Alter's motion, Council Member Tovo's second on an 11-0 vote.**

5. Approve an ordinance authorizing the building official to exempt certain plumbing activities from permit requirements, extending the deadline for certain permit applications, waiving registration requirement for plumbers, and declaring an emergency.

**Ordinance No. 20210225-005 was approved on Council Member Kelly's motion, Mayor Pro Tem Harper-Madison's second on an 11-0 vote.**

7. Approve an ordinance amending Ordinance No. 20210209-004 ordering a special municipal election regarding a criminal offense and a penalty for camping in public areas without a permit, certain types of solicitation, and sitting, lying, or sleeping outdoors in certain public areas; and declaring an emergency.

**This item was withdrawn.**

8. Approve an ordinance waiving city utility late fees and declaring an emergency.

**Ordinance No. 20210225-008 was approved on Council Member Pool's motion, Council Member Ellis' second on an 11-0 vote.**

6. Approve a resolution relating to evaluating and mitigating the effects of the recent weather emergency on city residents, including their city utility bills.

**A motion to approve the resolution, as amended below, was made on Mayor Adler's motion, Council Member Ellis' second.**

**The amendment was to amend the Be It Resolved clause to read:**

**"The City Manager is directed to report back his recommended actions and bring any necessary ordinance back to the Council beginning no later than its March 4, 2021, regular meeting."**

**And add a Be It Further Resolved clause to read:**

**"BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

**The City Manager report on recommended actions related to disaster relief should include, but not be limited to:**

- **Immediate resources and implementable plans that result in or lead to long term housing stability and resiliency for people experiencing homelessness that were**

impacted by the recent disaster, especially for those that left the streets and received shelter or hotel accommodations.

- Any modifications to the wastewater averaging period for 2021
- Plan for mitigating the spike in water bills residents may see due to water leaks
- Immediate resources and plans to coordinate response to apartment complexes with prolonged water outages, including how to support tenant resources.
- Consider creating a one stop shop for all recovery resources, including FEMA and development services related resources.
- Plan to address short term housing needs for those displaced due to repairs
- Home repair funding and resources
- Identify how to address any gaps in FEMA individual assistance resources
- Plan for a formal review of the disaster and the response with the goal of avoiding future disasters to the extent possible and making improvements to the response efforts”

A motion to amend the amendment was made on Council Member Alter’s motion, Council Member Kitchen’s second and accepted without objection. The amendment to the amendment was to add the following bullets to the Be It Further Resolved clause:

- “Plan for taking steps within the city’s regulatory authority to mitigate the bill impacts of non-city owned utilities (such as natural gas)
- Advocacy at the state and federal levels for disaster relief resources and steps to avoid future disaster events to the extent possible”

A motion to amend the amendment was made on Council Member Casar’s motion, Council Member Kelly’s second and accepted without objection. The amendment to the amendment was:

Add the following bullets to the Be It Further Resolved clause:

- “A centralized list of places without water in Austin & Travis County. One central help line should be established to address prolonged water outages, and this line should be publicized across languages to support tenants and homeowners alike. The City should publicly report on the number of outages remaining in our area, and how close we are to achieving our goal of zero outages.
- Immediate water resources targeted to those areas identified as having prolonged water outages, with a focus on places where those with least access to other options live. These water resources should account not only for drinking water, but for the water needed for cooking, cleaning, sanitation, etc.
- A coordinated city effort to ensure that low- and moderate-income homeowners have the support they need, that landlords diligently get running water at their properties, and that tenants know their legal rights and options. Resources should be provided to support tenants, including tenant-organizing resources.”

**Amend the sixth bullet of the Be It Further Resolved clause to read:**

- **“Address short term housing needs for those displaced due to housing damage and repairs process”**

**A motion to amend the amendment was made on Council Member Ellis’ motion, Council Member Kelly’s second. The amendment to the amendment was:**

**Amend the ninth bullet of the Be It Further Resolved clause to read:**

- **“Plan for a formal review of the disaster and the response with the goal of avoiding future disasters to the extent possible and making improvements to the response efforts, including, but not limited to,**
  - **Improved public communications from Austin Water, such as more timely warning notifications, more localized, real-time outage information, and estimates of when water service will be restored”**

**Council Member Casar offered the following friendly amendment to the amendment to the amendment. The amendment was to add:**

**“Including options for communicating with multi-family and master-metered residents.”**

**Council Member Kelly offered the following friendly amendment that was accepted without objection. The amendment was to have the friendly amendment read:**

**“Including options for communicating with multi-family and master-metered residents, including, without limitation, consideration of the reverse-911 system.”**

**The friendly amendment offered by Council Member Casar, as amended, was accepted without objection.**

**The motion to amend the amendment, as amended, was approved on Council Member Ellis’ motion, Council Member Kelly’s second without objection.**

**Council Member Alter offered the following direction that was accepted without objection. “The City Manager should provide information as to why the reverse-911 system was not utilized earlier during the blackout.”**

**A motion to amend the amendment was made on Council Member Kitchen’s motion, Council Member Renteria’s second. The amendment to the amendment was to add a new bullet to the Be It Further Resolved clause to read:**

- **“Recommendations for formalizing and improving the city's and the community's notification and disaster response systems for vulnerable seniors living in the community and for persons with disabilities, including systems for welfare checks,**

in consultation with the City of Austin Age Friendly Program Coordinator, the Commission on Seniors, and the Mayors Committee for People with Disabilities. The City Manager shall endeavor to report on recommended actions by September 1st.”

A motion to amend the amendment to the amendment was offered by Council Member Alter and accepted without objection. The amendment was to have the amendment read:

- “Recommendations for formalizing and improving the city's and the community's notification and disaster response systems for vulnerable seniors living in the community as well as in a facility setting and for persons with disabilities, including systems for welfare checks, in consultation with the City of Austin Age Friendly Program Coordinator, the Commission on Seniors, and the Mayors Committee for People with Disabilities. The City Manager shall endeavor to report on recommended actions by September 1st.”

The motion to amend the amendment was approved on Council Member Kitchen’s motion, Council Member Renteria’s second on a 10-0 vote. Council Member Pool was off the dais.

A motion to amend the amendment was made on Council Member Kelly’s motion, Council member Tovo’s second. The amendment to the amendment was to add the following bullets to the Be It Further Resolved clause:

- “Conduct a review of first responder response to the disaster including a review of how staffing levels were maintained and a comparison to other municipal equivalent responses in Texas to include staff on duty ratio to population throughout and overtime expenses.
- A plan and recommendation on how to best encourage Austinites to be aware of simple and cost effective ways to become better prepared for weather crises.
- A review of City mental health supports to determine how to best reposition and deploy such resources in a crisis. Conduct a survey of available resources at non-profits, private facilities and churches throughout the City to compile information for dissemination.”

Mayor Adler offered the following amendment to the amendment that was accepted without objection. The amendment was to preface Council Member Kelly’s additional bullets with:

“Including, but not limited to, as part of the review and forward look:”

The motion to amend the amendment, as amended, was approved on Council Member Kelly’s motion, Council Member Tovo’s second without objection.

A motion to amend the amendment was approved without objection on Council Member Kelly’s motion, Mayor Adler’s second. The amendment was to add a fourth bullet to Council Member Kelly’s prefaced sub-bullets to read:

- **“To include also a comparison with other Texas municipal equivalents to Austin Energy and Austin Water, and their associated communication efforts and expenses during the disaster with the goal of avoiding future disasters to the extent possible and making improvements to the response efforts”**

**A motion to amend the resolution was approved on Council Member Tovo’s motion, Council Member Alter’s second without objection. The amendment was to add an additional Be It Further Resolved clause to read:**

**“Be It Further Resolved,**

**Council will conduct a series of hearings with invited testimony to examine key facets of the City of Austin’s emergency preparedness and response. These hearings will be conducted in alignment with conversations taking place at other Council committees, including the Austin Energy Utility Oversight Committee and the Austin Water Oversight Committee. The City Council will also establish a community task force to solicit information and feedback from members of the public and to prepare a report to Council.**

**These initiatives will be undertaken to understand the circumstances leading to the crises caused by prolonged interruptions of energy and water, including critical needs related to shelter, food, water, and medical care, with the intent of developing recommendations and action plans for implementation.”**

**Resolution No. 20210225-006 was approved, as amended above, on Mayor Adler’s motion, Council Member Alter’s second on a 9-0 vote. Mayor Pro Tem Harper-Madison and Council Member Pool were off the dais.**

**Direction was given to staff to provide a report on why the reserve 911 system was not implemented sooner.**

**Council Member Pool was off the dais but requested to have the record reflect that, had she been present, she would have voted in favor of the resolution.**

**Mayor Adler adjourned the meeting at 3:40 p.m. without objection.**

**The minutes were approved on this the 4<sup>th</sup> day of March 2021 on Council Member Alter’s motion, Mayor Pro Tem Harper-Madison’s second on a 11-0 vote.**