[8:39:00 AM]

>> Coordinating pop-up food and water distribution sites and giving out diapers to families in need. It was the phone calls that we had early in the morning and late at night of neighbors offering their trucks to go deliver water. And it was worried neighbors also messaging me over Twitter to alert me of apartment complexes that were without water. I witnessed individuals show up and bring bags of food to donate or cook hot meals for neighbors in need. I saw organizations also step up, our community partners stepped up to host food pantries and food distribution. In fact, we saw cars lined up for miles just families waiting for that box of food. And I know that time was really tough for us. So I think it's important that we come here today and show up to recognize our community heroes and to watch -- to remember the time that our community came together and saw how we united to uplift each other despite the hardships that people were living in in realtime. So that's what today's about. It's about recognizing our community heroes, the members who stepped up alongside our first responders who worked around the clock to keep our city safe. And we thank those on the frontline adjusting to the winter storm, unlike anything we've ever experienced, and we send our gratitude to the hard working city of Austin staff who kept things in motion despite also being under the same circumstances, in some cases also without power and without water access. And although my staff and I, and I do want to thank my district 2 team for their incredible work, Jessica, Jesse, Alicia, we worked tirelessly. We could have done what we were able to do without the community and without the help of the volunteers, of community organizations, of local partners, of regional agencies and of course the city of Austin staff who worked selflessly to serve our neighbors and beyond. So today it's about highlighting that kindness, that compassion that we saw in our community and I've never been prouder
to represent this community than I was during those few weeks when we saw our community come
together. So today thank you from the bottom of my heart. I'm joined today by my colleagues on Austin
city council so you will hear from us, but first I want to turn it over to one of those community heroes
that we had in district 2 and that is Nathan Ryan. >> Thank you very much. Good morning, y'all. How is
everybody doing? The weather is much better today than it was a year ago. And it's an honor to be with
y'all this morning. My name is Nathan Ryan. I'm a small business owner and a commissioner here in
Austin. Today we're gathering as a city to remember and reflect

on winter storm urı, a storm that brought days of freezing temperature and snow, causing the Texas
energy grid to fail. A storm that tragically took the lives of hundreds of Texans, including more than 30
austinites. When the freeze thawed I was one of thousands of members of our community that joined
together to help one another delivering groceries with Austin mutual aid and potable water with the
help of Austin firefighters association and local breweries that purified water so it was safe to drink.
Those days after the thaw were still a blur to me, but I remember two moments that I remember clearly
and show the spirit of the people who live here. The first was an apartment in north Austin where we
dropped off groceries. We knocked on the door and a woman came O we were all masked up. We
handed her a few bags of groceries and she handed us a bag back. When we asked what was in it, she
said it was full of feminine care and other toiletry products. She was in need of groceries, but had those in

excess. She asked us if we would make sure that those products got to people who needed them. Even
though she had no water, no electricity and no food, she wanted to give back too. That stuck with me.
The second moment I remember clearly was the last full day I had the water cube from Austin
firefighters on my truck. Martine was with me for most of the week and we coordinated with most every
city council office and this particular memory is something that we coordinated with newly inaugurated,
just weeks ago, newly inaugurated city councilmember for district 2 Vanessa Fuentes's office. People
could pick up a hot meal, water, masks, ppe and other essentials. This was a hard day. It was probably
five or six days after the freeze had

thawed and people had been working nonstop around the clock for well over a week. We set up at Jane
Langford elementary, Austin ISD police were there to help direct traffic, delivers were coming and cars
were lined up for at least a mile around the block. As is normal in these kinds of emergency situations, it
wasn't always clear who was in charge and people had very different opinions about how to handle this
process. We would stock a few cars, change our approach and we recented that for a couple of hours,
but then at some point we found our groove and have y'all ever been with a group of strangers, group of
volunteers that finds their groove? It is a beautiful thing. Suddenly songs from Selena and Willie Nell
southern were blasting from the speakers. People in their cars were crying, telling us their stories of
trauma and resilience from that week,
telling us how thankful they were for whatever we gave them until their water and power turned back on. Thanks on a few brave skilled organizers and one highly skilled brand new elected official, we were getting people things they need and having a midday dance party in the middle of a freeze in the middle of a global pandemic. I know we all hate this word by now, but the human spirit is incredibly resilient. None of this is easy, but what we do matters oh, we show up for one another matters. The fact that people are resilient is no excuse for systemic or other failures. What happened in February 2021 should never happen again, but Austin chose to respond to winter storm uri not by showing up our hands in despair, but by coming together with compassion to do the work necessary to serve and take care of one another. And that’s what that little spontaneous dance party in the aftermath of a freeze and in the middle of a pandemic taught me, that work is hard work, but it is worth it because the people are worth it. Thank you for letting me be here today. I love you Austin, Texas. [Applause].

are worth it. Thank you for letting me be here today. I love you Austin, Texas. [Applause]. >> Fuentes: Next we’ll have council Kathie tovo join us. >> Tovo: Thank you. Good morning. Thank you all so much for being here. This is such an important day for so many in our community both to remember and to reflect on those who passed away during last year's storm, but also to honor the great work of so many people. We are so blessed to live in a community where people do, as Ryan -- as Nathan said, show up for one another and care for one another. As I reflected on just the tremendous acts of kindness and compassion and care that I saw that week it was really challenging to think about all of the many individuals I was aware of who stepped up for their neighbors during that week.

You here today are people who, like so many of other austinites, are ordinary people who just did extraordinary things. I see so many folks here, I won't name you all, but I see people who worked tirelessly to make sure that the impromptu shelter that commissioner Howard stood up had cots for those who were experiencing homelessness, who needed a safe place to be. You organized food drives, you provided information about schools that were able to serve as warming centers. And I'm just going to highlight one the city of mine who showed up for her neighbors. After returning home to find that her electricity had been off and had created a pipe situation and flooding, when she got my call she immediately turned around and provided resources to a mom who was really in need, who was concerned that if she lost electric her child who was on medical life supporting equipment wouldn't have that. And she didn't have enough power in her car to power that equipment. And she the city stopped what she was doing and immediately provided resources to that mom who she had never met and also was willing to be that person's contact if she needed help and any kind of resources at any point during the night or in the day's ahead. Saying thank you to those of you who are assembled here and the many others like you throughout the city seems
really an understatement. You know, that was the worst week in Austin and having been here 30 years I can say it was certainly one of the worst weeks I've experienced in Austin. You represent the very best.

[8:49:15 AM]

You represent what is really the spirit of Austin. That we care, we work with compassion, and we're going to stand up for one another regardless of the circumstances. So thank you all for the tremendous work that you provided. And many of you turned immediately around and provided us with feedback about the ways we can improve our city processes, how we can better work with the community and how we can together and collaboratively work to make Austin the most resilient city in the nation so that the next time we face an emergency and we know we will, we will do so better prepared. Thank you all. [Applause]. >> Kitchen: Good morning, everyone. I'm Ann kitchen and I'm the city councilmember for district 5, which is south central Austin. I too want to thank everyone and recognize everyone who

[8:50:16 AM]

is here. Our community pulled together and took care of each other, and that is one of the -- I'm very proud of that and I want to recognize the work that everybody did, everybody here, those folks who are watching and those who could not participate with us today. I am -- there are so many things that happened in district 5, so many things that happened throughout the city in terms of people pulling together. I'm going to highlight just two examples for you from district 5. And also citywide. First I want to thank the mayor for his work. He and I worked together as well as with our colleagues to create a phone bank to call seniors throughout the city to check on them to see if they needed water or food. And thank you, mayor, for initiating that. We had thousands and

[8:51:20 AM]

thousands of seniors that we called. We had hundreds of volunteers that worked through our local democratic party to get that organized. We were able to identify folks who needed help. We then had volunteers who followed up and went to people's homes and made sure they were okay. We also realized through that process that our city needed to do a better job, to have in place a system so that we can be sure that we received out to vulnerable individuals and seniors whenever there was an emergency. I want to thank tab that tailor our city's age friendly program coordinator, for her work helping us with what we should be saying and how we should be reaching out to folks and also the work she's doing with the senior commission to make sure that we have a system in place. This system we pulled together really at the last minute with the works of many, many people.

[8:52:21 AM]

So tab that is working with her team and the senior commission to make this a standard operation that we do. I'm going to very quickly just say -- to recognize a number of folks in district 5 who made countless phone calls and helped reach out to our seniors. Janie brismister who is also on the commission for seniors. John Owens, David ring, nellie-free, Nellie Ramirez, Mina localson, Megan hicks.
Greg, Wanda Redman, Sara Faust, Kelly little, Aletha Houston. Karen Wolfe, Rob Schneider, Melissa Hawthorne, Nancy Mcclain, Carol, Debbie, Kate Dennis, Mandy Wilson, Jennifer may Barry, Kathie, palmer and Maria. We owe them thanks for all the phone calls they did to

[8:53:22 AM]

reach out to seniors. The second and last example that I want to give is the work that happened in our neighborhoods. I am very proud of district 5. District 5 has a network of neighborhood leaders who come together not only to address issues, but who come together in times of crisis. So our neighborhood leaders throughout district 5 worked with their neighbors and their community to in some cases go door to door to deliver water, deliver food, check on people. Some of those were Janie, Christina, Nellie, Sara, Alison, Meghan, Sean and Ken. I want to also particularly call out Mina and Andrea. They very quickly called together their neighborhoods

[8:54:23 AM]

to help one of our senior living centers in the western trails neighborhood. Those folks needed water and food, so they pulled together the neighborhood and ended up with so much help that the folks at western trails said hey, we're good. Thank you. You've given us enough food. You can now save that for other folks. And they did this on the dime. They pulled together their networks and did it very quickly. We must thank Bob nix for working with the Austin firefighters association. They did a lot of work to help people with water and of course Richard suttle who I think is here made multiple trips to drop off water that he purchased to help us have the water that we needed to go help make deliveries. And last but of course not least my staff, my d5 staff came together very quickly to work with our network of neighborhoods so I want to thank Ken, Jason, Donna and Dora for the work that they did to make sure that we

[8:55:24 AM]

very quickly were able to reach out to our network of neighborhood leaders to get people help. So again, we should not -- I think it's really important that we recognize folks, and one of the reasons I wanted to read out people's names is because it's very important for us to remember that part of what happened, to remember the work that we all did, the caring that we all exhibited as a community because it's that community spirit and that community coming together that gets us through things like this. So thank you to my colleagues and communes for organizing this for us -- and council member Fuentes for organizing this for us today. Thank you. [Applause]. >> Alter: Good morning and welcome to city hall. My name is Alison alter and I'm mayor pro tem and I represent district 10 on Austin city council. Thank you for being here

[8:56:26 AM]

today as we mark February 15th and remember what we went through as a community during winter storm both individually and collectively. And we think of the folks who stepped up in ways that Austin does every time but most needed at that time. We also remember those we lost. For over a week
austinites and Texans across the state dealt with below freezing temperatures, power outages, dangerous roads and limited access to food and water. While at this point two years into the pandemic and after so many things, we’re a little bit numb and we expect the next shoe to drop, it’s important for us to sit back and remember. Today we mark February 15th, which is the beginning of the ercot directed outages, but for my district the freezing began on February 11th and we had folks whose power was out from that period all the way through to when power was restored. The impacts starting February 11th were immense. At one point 40% of my district was out of power and that was before February 15th. I will not forget those days and what happened and everything we experienced after the 15th we were already experiencing in my district starting about the 12th. There are a lot of people who are here who we could thank, drive a senior, adrn, the churches, the synagogues that happened their places for shelter, aisd that opened up warming sisters and shelters. Our city staff, we had linemen and we had folks at Austin water, firefighters, our ems, our city staff, my city staff, Nina who is here who was I think the only one who had power. One -- Nina and Kirk were the only ones who had power among my staff. People stepped up,

[8:58:28 AM]

communities stepped up, each of you did. Thank you. That is what makes Austin geat and it’s in moments of crisis that we see the measure of who we are, how we respond, how we lift each other up. I’m really proud of out Austin stepped up during the storm and I’m really proud to all you all my neighbors. We were joined also by folks from out of state. We worked with water mission and plumbers without borders to help folks who didn't have water in the aftermath. The process lasted weeks if not more than a month and people showed up from all over the country in different ways to help us. It is now my honor to invite you to stand in remembrance, to join me in a moment of silence as we remember winter storm uri, the hardships brought to us by the storm and the resilience of our community.

[8:59:28 AM]

Together we bow our heads in honor of the 246 who died across Texas with 20 of those souls in Travis county. >> Alter: Thank you. And I now turn the podium over to Paul Saldana. >> Thank you, council member. Good morning, my name is Paul Saldana. I am a proud member and leader with the Austin Latino coalition. Our annulate coalition includes approximately 20 civic and non-profit organizations and many dedicated individuals who have joined to advocate and take action on issues to improve the quality of life for our community and all of Austin. The covid pandemic and certainly the uri winter storm crisis was crisis after crisis, forced all of us as
individuals and as a community to do some self reflection. And I know we would all agree that the Austin tradition of neighbor helping neighbor has always been one of our greatest strengths and most noble traditions. It’s simply the Austin way. And during the uri winter storm our Austin Latino coalition and our sister organization, its del valle community coalition, were happy to do our part, lifting up Austin for weeks, with numerous distribution sites on the eastern

[9:01:30 AM]

crescent. Providing support and resources, including personal hygiene, household cleaning supplies, ppe supplies, diapers, formula, food, water, financial support, mental health support to thousands of families in Austin, Travis county. In fact, in Roy woody, Matt Worthington, Robert Ledesma, Debbie Trejo, other members of our Austin team can stand up and join us, that would be great. Sadly the energy industry’s hunger profits left the state ill prepared to weather the winter storm and ultimately all of us paid the price and too many lost their lives in Texas. And as the council member mentioned, 20 fellow austinites lost their lives. As we discovered during the winter storm recovery was that what we have -- what we discovered during the Austin winter storm is that we have

[9:02:30 AM]
two hands. One for helping ourselves and of course the other for helping others in our community. Our Austin Latino coalition, our del valle community coalition remains proud of the work that we did then and that we continue to do even R even though we’re memorializing the uri winter storm we're still in a covid pandemic and these are just a handful of folks to this day who have been volunteering for over 100 weeks now in the community. Stand by, we have warehouses in the city where we have supplies ready to go for the next crisis. But again one of the things I love about Austin and I’m a native austinite. My family has been here for six generations. Is that we unequivocally will stand up to help each other and that’s what I love about our city and love about Austin. That is simply the Austin way. Thank you very much. [Applause]. >> Fuentes: Thank you.

[9:03:31 AM]

There are so many groups to highlight as part of our response we just picked a few community groups to feature today. Next we will have council member vela followed by councilmember Kelly and then the official proclamation by the mayor. >> Vela: Thank you so much. I have to start off by thanking so many. My predecessor included, who -- Greg Casar who jumped into action. Austin needs water. Timothy bray came together, organized, got people water, tried to help them as much as they possibly can. However I’m going to take a slightly different tack because I’m still upset about what happened last year. One year ago today we were in the middle of the deadliest winter storm Texas has ever seen. Hundreds of Texans lost their lives as our electrical grid failed and plunged us into darkness. We remember and mourn those who we lost but we must also

[9:04:32 AM]
insist on accountability and justice from those responsible for the blackouts. While millions of Texans suffered in the freeze and struggled to survive, a handful of companies were exploiting the tragedy to make billions in profits. Texas natural gas and pipeline companies who are practically unregulated, made record profits during the freeze selling natural gas for up to 100 times its normal price. Estimates are that natural gas companies sucked $11 billion out of the pockets of Texas families and is during the week long Texas freeze. This was as bad as any wall Street swindle. And what did they do after reaping these record profits? One of the gas company owners donated one million dollars to governor Greg Abbott. We cannot leave our residents open to what happened after last year’s storm. Utilities should not be allowed to profit from their own failure and negligence. Our government must not allow it. Thankfully ordinary Texans came together and helped each other through the

[9:05:33 AM]

tragedy. Last year’s storm was a tragedy, but it was also a crime. Our people deserve better than to freeze in the dark, to fear for their lives and lose friends and loved ones. We must change our system so this never happens again and companies cannot profit off of disaster. Thank you very much. [Applause].

>> Hello, I am council member Mackenzie Kelly. I serve district 6, which is far northwest Austin. And like Haney of you during the winter storm I was without power and water for several days. I experienced a lot of greatness in our community and among them working alongside our statewide elected leaders, I was told about a community in my district, the claremont, which is a living home for senior citizens that didn’t have any water and they just needed to flush their toilets. And with everything going on

[9:06:33 AM]

I was able to reach out to the jollyville fire department, which is just outside of my district, and actually we were able to go there with state representative John Bussey and together we gave water to the community so they could flush their toilets. It makes my heart big because it shows that despite the disaster and despite political affiliations of any sort we were able to help one another in a time of need. I also want to say thank you to council member Fuentes who probably doesn’t know I’m going to say this, but she offered many times for me to go to her house instead of being alone in the dark with my family. I’m thankful for that. But I also want everyone to know that we don’t run from a time of crisis in Austin, we been together, we are resilient and we come out the other side stronger. And for that I am thankful to live in this city, to represent people from this city and it to continue to work hard on behalf of everyone in this city. Thank you.

[9:07:44 AM]

>> Mayor Adler: I want to thank everybody for being here today. Mostly I want to thank everybody here for what they did here a year ago. The people in this room, the volunteer organizations, the community organizations both here and not here and in large measure are the reasons why our city did as well as it did do during that period of time. I want to also mention there were so many people that were thanked. I had the opportunity to travel during that period of time in all the districts all over the city, seeing the organizations and the others working. But also to see my colleagues on the council responding. I’m not
sure any of my colleagues actually had time to sleep during that time as of course was so many that were volunteering. A special mention to the council staff, mine included, who really

[9:08:44 AM]

extended that effort during that period of time. One year before we had this winter storm there was the meeting of the emergency operation command in this area at a tabletop exercise in western Maryland, one of the many kinds of training programs and systems that are set up to respond to this. It’s interesting that that exercise, that test of capability, was built around a winter storm scenario. And the way that they do those things is they start a scenario with fairly mild conditions, talking about what to anticipate, and every couple of hours it advances in severity, the challenge grows greater. And the assembled group of 100 people planning and emergency operation command going through this exercise have to meet that challenge. And then a couple of hours later it gets layered on

[9:09:45 AM]

again and it gets more serious and more challenging. It was good we went through that exercise, but what I will tell you is an exercise that is designed to reach a challenging situation beyond what can be anticipated, this is a theoretical exercise, the extent of that challenge did not reach what we were sustaining a year later. It was that extreme what we went through. Having watched the worries work and watched the volunteers work in that moment and I had the first kind of quiet times to think about what it was that had transpired, my thought at that time was thank goodness for a community that reached out to help one another because absent that we would not have weathered this storm the way that we did. And I began to think in

[9:10:45 AM]

terms of whether or not it was a failure or a fault on behalf of local government unable to do all of that work. And the real epiphany that I had or change in perspective that I had was the realization that no local government can ever, ever bring what is necessary for a community to survive at the level that we saw. It will always involve the community stepping forward, neighbors helping neighbors, communities helping others. That level of catastrophe happening to a community, and god forbid we won’t see one here any time soon, but we know that we will at some point. Those in the community coming together and the real challenge I saw for us and for local government was to do a much better job of

[9:11:47 AM]

recognizing that so we can institutionalize the community response, so that we can do a better job of elevating and extending the reach of neighbors helping neighbors. That was really the lesson. So when we gather here today it was with thanks for the work that was done, but also that change in perspective and we now are responding to that and building resilience and building in neighborhoods, doing a better job of trying to formalize how we communicate in more languages sooner to the people that are in our community that will actually deliver what takes. I want to thank everybody for that. I want to thank
council member Fuentes for bringing us all here today. It's an honor to stand up with the council and these particular community advocates who did such a phenomenal job together with the entire city.

[9:12:49 AM]

But on behalf of the council we have a proclamation that we're able to do today. Be it known that whereas residents of the state of Texas faced widespread impacts from winter storm uri, one of the deadliest natural disasters in the state beginning on February 13th of 2021. And whereas the winter storm left billions without power and water requiring support from community volunteers and led to at least and more than 200 lives lost. And whereas the communities continue to recover from the impacts of the state's crippled power grid, record level energy costs and the fatalities from hypothermia, vehicle crashes, carbon monoxide poisoning and other complications by the storm. And whereas in recognition

[9:13:49 AM]

of the heroic efforts provided by community volunteers, first responders and non-profit organizations who stepped up and providing mutual aid in a critical time of need. Now therefore I, Steve Adler, mayor of the city of Austin, Texas, together with my colleagues on the Austin city council do hereby proclaim the month much February as winter storm uri remembrance month. Again, thank you for everything that you did. [Applause]. >> Fuentes: Thanks again for attending. I want to recognize some of the groups we have in attendance. Austin disaster relief network. Austin trustee zapata, Austin Latino coalition, volunteer martin Martinez, do good atx. Our homeland security and emergency management department. Volunteer Stephanie basan. Our pard and Austin transportation department, volunteer Matt Worthington, Armbrust and brown, drive a senior, Basta, watershed protection department and countless other volunteers. Reinvite you all to join us for a quick group photo and then we'll have tacos and coffee out in the atrium for those who would like. Thank you so much. And the community resilience trust.