

City of Houston, Texas, Ordinance No. 2021-995

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 2 OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES, HOUSTON, TEXAS, RELATING TO THE CREATION OF THE FOOD INSECURITY BOARD; CONTAINING FINDINGS AND OTHER PROVISIONS RELATING TO THE FOREGOING SUBJECT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

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WHEREAS, food insecurity is a pressing, continuous, and growing problem in Houston; and

WHEREAS, over 738,000 Houstonians have little to no access to healthy food, and approximately 360,000 children in Harris County are experiencing food insecurity; and

WHEREAS, despite the tireless work of groups like the Houston Food Bank, many Houston residents continue to live without reliable, daily access to an adequate amount of affordable, nutritious food; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic, Winter Storm Uri, and other disasters have only exacerbated the problem of food insecurity; and

WHEREAS, development of a group to collaborate on ideas and solutions that address food insecurity problems and positively influence the policymaking and decision-making process for food, nutrition, and agriculture is imperative; and

WHEREAS, City Council finds that the Food Insecurity Board is necessary and beneficial and is in the public interest to protect the health and welfare of the people of the City; **NOW, THEREFORE**,

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF HOUSTON, TEXAS:

Section 1. That the findings contained in the preamble of this Ordinance are determined to be true and correct and are hereby adopted as part of this Ordinance.

Section 2. That Article XI of Chapter 2 of the Code of Ordinances, Houston, Texas, is hereby amended by adding a new Division 3 that reads as follows:

"DIVISION 3. HOUSTON FOOD INSECURITY BOARD

Sec. 2-346. Creation; purposes.

There is hereby created the Houston Food Insecurity Board ("board"). The board shall be responsible for advising and making recommendations to the mayor, city council, and department directors to address issues pertaining to food insecurity that exist in the City of Houston. Annually, the mayor shall assign to the board a topic of study and discussion on which the board shall report at least annually to the mayor and city council, and to council committees as requested. The subjects to be addressed by the board shall include, but not be limited to:

- (1) Reviewing and making recommendations regarding ways in which the resources and efforts currently devoted to address food insecurity can be best coordinated and implemented, and how those resources and efforts can be most effectively supplemented;
- (2) Identifying and developing policy suggestions, modeled after other municipalities, that have shown to decrease food insecurity;
- (3) Developing public and private partnerships to tackle aspects of food insecurity such as food deserts and food waste;
- (4) Identifying and developing policy suggestions to help tackle the social determinants of food insecurity, such as programs that help ensure affordable housing or transportation for people facing food insecurity;
- (5) Identifying federal, state, and local funding opportunities; and
- (6) Identifying areas in which gathering information through further study would decrease food insecurity in Houston.

Sec. 2-347. Appointment of members.

The board shall consist of 19 regular members, to be appointed by the mayor and subject to confirmation by the city council, as specified in this section. These positions shall be numbered 1 through 19. The mayor shall designate the board's chairperson from among the membership of the board. The city attorney shall designate a representative from the legal department to render legal advice and attend board meetings as requested by the board's chairperson, but such person shall not be a member of the board and shall not have a vote.

Sec. 2-348. Composition of board; positions; terms of members.

- (a) Ten of the regular members of the board shall be residents of the city. The remaining membership positions need not be occupied by the residents of the city, provided they reside in the greater Houston metropolitan area. The membership shall have an interest in issues affecting food insecurity and shall share a commitment to the goals of the board.
- (b) Members shall be broadly representative of the various sectors affected by, and/or working towards, a solution for food insecurity in Houston, such as the healthcare, agriculture, education, business, and nonprofit sectors.
- (c) Members shall serve a two-year term of office. The terms of members shall expire on January 2, 2023, and every two years thereafter.
- (d) Any member serving in a position for which the term has expired shall continue to serve until the member's successor in that position is appointed, confirmed, and qualified.

Sec. 2-349. Meetings.

Regular board meetings shall be held at least four times per year. The board may establish for itself rules of order that are consistent with the City of Houston Code of Ordinances and are not in conflict with state law. Special meetings may be held in accordance with board rules. The board shall elect a vice-chair at the first board meeting and thereafter at the first meeting of each calendar year. A quorum of the members of the board shall consist of not less than a majority of the members. Neither the board nor any member shall have power to take action except by authority of majority vote.

Sec. 2-350. Assistance by certain city departments.

The directors of the Mayor's Office of Boards and Commissions and the Houston Health Department and their staffs shall provide requested assistance to the board.

Sec. 2-351. Compensation.

The members of the committee, in the performance of their duties as such, shall serve without compensation, provided that any member who is a city employee shall continue to receive regular compensation while serving on the committee."

Section 3. That the City Attorney is hereby authorized to direct the publisher of the Code of Ordinances, Houston, Texas, (the “Code”) to make such nonsubstantive changes to the Code as are necessary to conform to the provisions adopted in this Ordinance, and also to make such changes to the provisions adopted in this Ordinance to conform them to the provisions and conventions of the published Code.

Section 4. That, if any provision, section, subsection, sentence, clause, or phrase of this Ordinance, or the application of same to any person or set of circumstances, is for any reason held to be unconstitutional, void or invalid, the validity of the remaining portions of this Ordinance or their application to other persons or sets of circumstances shall not be affected thereby, it being the intent of the City Council in adopting this ordinance that no portion hereof or provision or regulation contained herein shall become inoperative or fail by reason of any unconstitutionality, voidness or invalidity of any other portion hereof, and all provisions of this Ordinance are declared to be severable for that purpose.

Section 5. That there exists a public emergency requiring that this Ordinance be passed finally on the date of its introduction as requested in writing by the Mayor; therefore, this Ordinance shall be passed finally on such date and shall take effect immediately upon its passage and approval by the Mayor.

PASSED AND this 1st day of December, 2021.

Sylvester Turner

Mayor of the City of Houston

Prepared by Legal Dept. _____
TKL:jmb 1/13/2022 Senior Assistant City Attorney
Requested by Shannon Ramirez-Conklin, Director, Mayor’s Office of Boards and Commissions
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