



Austin Interfaith

1301 S. IH 35 Suite 315 Austin, Texas 78741
Telephone (512) 916 0116, Fax (512) 916 0251
E-Mail austininterfaith@austininterfaith.org

Item 1
Item C
Late Backup

Media Advisory
Contact: Bob Batlan (512) 796 1533
Jessica Posner (617) 435 2356

City Council Members Proposals Shows Move to Reinvest in Austin Families

This weekend city staff released a report summarizing proposed changes to the 2013-14 City Budget, which includes the addition of more than one million dollars for youth programming at schools, parks and libraries. Today, Austin City Council has the opportunity to support the long term success of Austin residents, by voting for investments in its young people. Austin Interfaith is working with Council members, as well as congregations and schools across the city, to ensure the budget reinvests in the people of Austin; over the weekend hundreds of e-mails and phone calls have been made, urging Council to reverse years of cuts to youth programs, libraries and parks.

"The people of Austin, who have made this city great, are tired of paying for fees and other costs of special events, not to mention millions in incentives to companies paying poverty wages, and then being told a fraction of those dollars can't be found to invest in things like youth programs that could serve tens of thousands of Austin children" said Bob Batlan of Temple Beth Shalom, a leader with Austin Interfaith. "Any neighbor can tell you, keeping teenagers busy during the summer, and children engaged in school, is the best way to achieve public safety. And all of the priorities we're talking about could be funded for less than the cost of a helicopter. Swimming at the pool, story time at the library, and playing at safe parks--this is what really affects our quality of life in Austin."

Austin Interfaith, a coalition of congregations, schools and labor groups representing over 60,000 families, held "Budget in a Box" sessions with hundreds of residents to discuss what areas should be prioritized for funding. The organization worked with council members and city staff to establish proposals to increase funding in 4 key areas: Health and Human Services (supporting Primetime afterschool and Summer Youth Employment), Parks and Recreation Department (increasing programming, as well as hours and equity of pools), Libraries (adding youth librarians) and Economic Development Department (moving and restoring funding for Capital IDEA job training). "We beseech the council members to respond to these concerning trends by taking a hard look at the budget, making sure it reflects constituent's values, and finding ways to reduce expenses and giveaways without adding burdens in fees or any other form. In this way the growth of Austin can really benefit its people," said Austin Interfaith leader Rev. Sandy Jones of Mt. Olive Baptist Church.