

City Council Special Called Citizen Forum Transcript – 05/31/2014

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>> Cole: A quorum is present, so I will call to order the special called meeting of the austin city council on saturday, may 31st, 2014. We are meeting in council city chambers, 301 west second street at austin city hall. The time is 9:05. I will be chairing the meeting today because the mayor is away on business, honoring the world war ii veterans by flying with them to washington dc as part of an honored flight austin trip. Our agenda here is general citizens communication which consists of 20 speakers so far which have requested in advance of the meeting. Each speaker will have a total of 3 minutes to speak on the topic. The first speaker is david king, affordability. >> Good morning, mayor pro tem and council members. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this citizens forum. Austin is a tale of two cities, on the one hand, austin is the third fastest growing city in the u.s., has the number one economy of the metropolitan areas in the u.s., Has the hottest housing and job markets in the u.s. On the other hand, austin ranks 33rd highest in income and equity of the major u.s. Markets. The top 20% of households in austin earns 49.9% of all household income in austin. Austin ranks 176 out of the 224 largest metropolitan areas in affordability. Incomes for low and middle income families are stagnant or falling. The extreme poverty rate for children in austin grows by 50%. Families are moving out of austin's urban core because they cannot afford property taxes. This tale of two cities has been facilitated by the policies of this couple that favor corporations and developers over families. This council has granted over \$42 million in tax incentives to large corporations, while some of the same corporations sue

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the travis central appraisal district to unfairly lower the taxable value of their property. Samsung received \$20 million in tax incentives for their plan and equipment and then sued to greatly reduce the taxable value of those investments. As a result of the unfair property tax system, the city, county and school districts have lost billions of dollars in tax revenue and the property tax burden has shifted to residential property tax owners. This james paul is granted millions of dollars in density bonus programs by investors and waived millions of fees for the rentals and also with public parks and properties. These tickle down and float all policies have not helped low and middle income families who have been hit hard by falling incomes and escalating property taxes. These families need your help now. Please, focus economic development policies on jobs and job training programs for low and middle income families.

Stop giving tax incentives to corporations that sue to unfairly reduce their property taxes. Freeze and reduce water utility electric rates for low and middle income families. Set fee and services based on the ability of families to pay so high income families pay more for the services than low and middle income and use excess money from austin energy to provide housing subsidies for low middle income families and use the density bonus program so taxpayers receive 40% of the market value to the increased entitlements granted to developers, increased maintenance fees to the park land to prevailing market rates. Stop waiving fees for for profit special events and use car rental taxes to fund and maintain parks instead of paying bonuses to convention center employees. Thank you. >> Thank you, david. [Applause] >> the next speaker is schlosser development. Is adam.

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>> The next speaker is adam slosberg. >> Good morning, mayor pro tem, council members, my name is adam slosberg and I am a mental health advocate in the state of texas and I am here to play a part of mental health issues as we make up the largest presence of discrimination in the united states. Before going much further we want to thank y'all for the deliberate work you have done for the city. I also want to thank those of you who have been involved with me and beyond today and are meant to help the endeavors in the city. The support I have received has had a multiplying effect on those persons with mental health issues. That said, I left my career in corporate senior management in 2011. Looking for something new and different. When I found a passion in the public sector within mental health. I had a 1995 given a diagnosis of bipolar, spent 15 years in therapy and stumbled across something called mental health peer support. I believe men tell health peer support is the greaterrest growing support and you will see a new therapy called mental health peer support and usa today quoted the national institute of men tell health director saying \$444 billion was spent in mental health. That does not account for building jails, private funding, administrative costs, opportunity costs due to loss of work, nor, of course, the damage done to people's psyche. To put a local perspective on that, that's one in \$44 billion for \$1,400 per woman, child and man living in the city of austin.

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For the total of the city, that's an estimated \$1.2 billion. I hope none of this is news to you and in light of the facts I have two requests: First please ensure that the behavior health dollars that you spend, which I believe is close to 2-point -- well, about \$2 million, are tied to outcomes. We have heard of disastrous accounts this past week of the va, former vets have been speaking about at years but have not been heard at the top level of government. Honorable outcomes are immensely important in this industry. Second, please familiarize yourself with mental health peer support to make it considered an integral part of the behavior health continuum of service. Barring any questions, I thank you very much. >> Cole: Thank you, adam. [Applause] >> Cole: Next is carlos leon. >> Thank you, mayor pro tem cole. My name is carlos leon and I am here in austin, texas, may 31, 2014, to speak what is right. First and foremost I again thank god for letting me speak up. Second, let's keep austin's air free of alien substances by keeping austin skies clear of chem trails each and every day and night. Third, this week, barry barack obama satiro said he is not weak and tried to strengthen the image by having the wall street journal and new

york times showing front pages of him being saluted by military cadets. When path logical liar acting president obama tells you he is not weak, that means he is really weak and using the same military he

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spent 5 plus years gutting up, game down, and murdering domestically in va hospitals across the country, by not attending to our brave warriors, who have already served our country is sick, vile, and wrong. Yet, his newest attack on god's word, our declaration of independence and institution and all that is good, healthy, normal and masculine about american strength and exceptionalism is more damning evidence of his brainwashed, backwards, inside out alien minuted seat which consistently spewed out words directly contradicting his actions throughout his fraudulent presidency. From the very beginning, this continuous, cognitive dissonance bombardment was launched by the enemy against us, to confuse us, wear us down, divide us, and turn us against one another, so we destroy ourselves from within, by becoming what we are supposed to be fighting against together. Enough. It's time to start launching our freedom counter offensive against the networks of evil, psychopath, control freaked, parasitic oppressors who mean to feed us and cradle us from grave to grave forever. Target number one obama's constitutional eligibility for the office of in the president. Obama the path logical liar and fraud wants you to take his word he is a natural born citizen when the evidence shows he is born in kenya making him ineligible to be president according to section 2, article one. He wants us to force us to disprove his claim, though he legally locked and hidden critical information. Instead, he should be considered ineligible until he unlocks and opens and publically disemanates those documents to prove without a shadow of a doubt that he is eligible. That ineligible until proven eligible mindset should be the legal standard now and

[07:10:16]

for moving forward under 2016 and beyond. Let's stop being line losers like obama and return to being wins again in true american tradition. Many jesus name I pray, amen. Thank you, mayor pro tem cole. [Buzzer alarming] >> Cole: Thank you, mr. Leon. Next, we have barry lewis. >> Mayor pro tem, members of the council, I am reminded of an old cliché timing is everything. I am here to talk to you about what seems like a very broad subject, but to ask you to do some very narrow things. Several years ago austin adopted the imagine austin plan. It also has adopted the downtown austin plan. Those are coordinate documents and they advocate compact and connected. We see that in our city. We've seen it for the last ten years, with the redevelopment of downtown with the increased residential occupancy of downtown. I ask you to do a couple of things. Number one: Direct the city manager to look at the city code, because the code really does not agree the existence of residences downtown. It does not address it in several ways. Number one, limiting the hours that construction can take place in downtown. Number two, putting restrictions on construction lighting. There are acceptable ways to do both things. I was in the construction business for 25 years and know that it can be done without any significant

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additional costs to the constructors or the developers. But, there are holes in the code, and unless and until those holes are addressed, we are going to have the same problems, not only downtown but throughout the city as compact and connect connected has more dense development around the transportation corridors. We already see that on south lamar. We've seen it on burnet. We will see it in other areas of the city. It is not just a downtown issue. The second thing that I would ask you to do is to exercise your supervisory capability over austin energy. Austin energy provides valuable services to the city and its residents but it is a kingdom that has its own rules, answerable, as ostensibly to no one. They pick the areas of the code that they want to conform to, whether those areas of the code apply to their situation or not. I am thinking specifically about the crescent energy tract and their absolute refusal to incorporate any kind of noise mitigation procedures into their planning. They are absolutely opaque and noncommunicative. As a public body, that should not be so. Thank you very much for your time and attention. [Buzzer alarming] >> thank you, mr. Lewis. [Applause] >> mayor pro tem. >> Cole: Council member spelman. >> Spelman: Mr. Lewis, a quick follow up question, you said you want to put limits on the lighting downtown with construction. What kind of limits do you have in mind? >> Well, typically when they are doing construction work, either early in the morning or late in the evening, they use light sets.

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They also use the light that are on the bottom of the tower complains. The lights on the bottom of the tower cranes shine down to the construction site and the light set, however, is a completely different issue. The light sets are sets of four or six output lamps that have shades and if they direct it horizontally. I can see the light sets from seaholm from my window. >> Spelman: Okay. >> And I am far enough away so that it's not a problem. That's not the case with some folks who live closer to that site. If they would simply direct the light sets downward on to the construction site, as is required in the residential code for residential lighting, exterior residential lighting, the problem would go away. >> Spelman: So the lights need to be focused on the construction site, not outside the site? >> Yes, sir. >> Spelman: Thank you, I appreciate it, sir. >> Thank you. >> Cole: Thank you, mr. Lewis. Sally sekac. >> (Indiscernible). >> Cole: Doesn't matter. >> Good morning. For ten years we have been paying our water bill on time faithfully as a good citizen should do, with many complaints we called the water company and asked for them to come out and check. We felt we were paying too much. This april and -- march and april, we went on vacation. We were gone for ten days. We received a bill for -- that reduced 10,000-gallons of water. We decided there was something wrong. Call the water company. They actually sent another -- a man out as they have done in the past ten years. They said everything was fine. We decided to hire a

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plumber. The plumber came out and he said the water meter on the right side -- it goes to your house. The water meter on the left side goes to that house. Plumbers don't cross lines and send me this way and send pipes this way. He said, your meter is here on the right. So we then called the water company. Again, they sent out a man, the gentleman said, yes, that's right. Your meter is here on the right.

However, the water company will only pay us for four years instead of the ten years that we have overpaid and we are trying to ask your help. We believe we have done our civic duty, paid our bills on time, and we should be reimbursed for the rest of the time that we overpaid. The difference is 400,000-gallons over ten years that we have paid extra. Thank you. [Applause] >> Cole: Council member martinez has a question for you. Ms. Sekac, council member martinez has a question for you. >> Sorry. >> Martinez: It's okay. So can you -- so you were being billed for your neighbor's water consumption? >> Sorry. >> Martinez: Were you being billed for your neighbor's water consumption? >> Yes. >> Martinez: And the water utility agreed there is an error and have they corrected that? >> Yes, they agreed, the gentleman came out and he relabeled the meters and it is commonsense as plumbers don't cross lines, and so it was done ten years ago t. They tried to tell us it was the person that built the subdivision's fault, but there was no -- the meters were installed correctly. >> Martinez: Okay. I am going to have a staff member come out and get your contact info. >> Sorry. >> Martinez: I will have someone come and talk to you and get your info and follow up with you. >> No, somebody has --

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>> Martinez: I am going to send someone out right now to talk to you so we can get your information and follow up on getting the remaining six years as well reimbursed. >> Thank you very much. >> Cole: Albert sekac. >> This is the same topic and I don't have much to add but I want to start by thanking the mayor and the council for conducting this forum. We are not here to bad mouth the water service. I think the error was unintentional and the oversight, also, unfortunately continued for ten year, so we are only seeking what we consider the equity in this situation. >> Cole: It makes perfect sense, mr. Sekac. Next we have martha schumacher. >> Thank you for allowing me to speak. My problem is the way we do taxes here in this state and in the city. The homeowner -- the average homeowner is paying more of the tab than commercial properties. You bring these huge corporations in and then you give them these incentives for -- for ten years or more. You don't need to do that. People are coming here -- companies are coming here, anyway. It is a beautiful city. It has a lot of offer -- a lot to offer, so don't give any more incentives to these companies, but certainly not for ten years. The other thing that we need is sales price disclosure. There is only one other state, besides texas, that does not have such a disclosure, which means when you buy your house, that information, what you paid, goes straight to the appraisal district. I have an article here that says, even rick perry thanks

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that we need mandatory sales disclosure for real property. It would be so easy to do it. It could only be a two liner, really. It doesn't have to be a complicated, 1,000 word document. So bottom line -- my bottom line here is that homeowners are paying more of the tab than commercial properties. Some pay little or no taxes. So I think we need to come up to speed with proper taxation. In fact, let me give you this article. I have made a lot of copies. Let me give you this one article. Thank you. >> Cole: Thank you. [Applause]. Council member martinez has a question for you. Council member martinez. >> (Indiscernible). >> Cole: Oh. Council member spelman, did you have a question? >> Spelman: Just a comment,, the texas municipal league had on its legislative agenda the last ten years a request to the

legislature that they pass the law which would allow travis central appraisal district to require sales price disclosures, and this has been on the city of austin's legislative agenda for the last ten years as well, so we are working on it. Unfortunately we don't have control over it. It's a state law that has to be passed. Cities all over texas and this city are very much in favor of that law. >> I don't understand what is taking so long. In fact, I have a letter from chief appraiser art cory that said we need disclosure. He went to the legislature. Which is this so difficult? It's only a two liner. Sales price disclosure is required to go straight to the appraisal district. What is complicated about that? >> Spelman: I do not fully understand, ma'am. I just understand it has been blocked the past ten

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years in the legislature for real estate interests. I don't know what is going on there. Thank you, ma'am. >> Thank you. >> Cole: Rose marie schwarzer. Next, we have alan roddy. >> Good morning, I am alan roddy. I would like to thank the city council for holding the citizens forum. I have a lot of pride in this city in being an austinite for over 50 years. I have three issues I want to talk about. Over the past four years I have contacted the parks department about the ongoing trespassing problems at emma long park. I understand that the department is underfunded and understaffed and it is no excuse for her to allow the trespassing and vandalism to go on for four years. The illegal water pump and water pipe should have been confiscated since she learned of the problem. Since she refused to take action to protect the park, this continues. I talked about how people dump their old pvc pipes and other items into the creek dead below the waterfall, why hasn't the city required them to remove their illegal water pump and pipes. Why haven't the city forced them to remove the garbage from the creek bed? Once or twice a year, I used to clean up the trash of the water fall area but if director hensley doesn't square about the illegal dumping of our park land why should i. The second is a recommendation of the city council to create a 50-foot wake zone along the shoreline. This is an issue that is created for Icra created for highland lakes. I am a part of the 50 wake

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zone because there is an ordinance of swimmers staying 50 within the wake of the shoreline because I saw a boat hit a person a while ago and the law department stated that the couple didn't have the authority to create this no wake zone because of environmental protection. I don't know where legal staff came up with the environmental protection reason to reject the ordinance. I reread 201-3082-078 and it clearly states the 50-foot no wake zone is need for the potential public safety -- the public health and safety concerns. I request that the city council revisit this issue and reinstate the 50-foot no wake zone requirements in order to protect the swimmers, kayakers and paddle boards using lake austin. I was a city employee over 13 years and I know the vast of the employees are honest hardworking people. City tell us if we find someone defrauding our city, we must inform someone, tell the supervisor, apd, tell the city council. Couple of years ago as a private citizen, I told a city attorney that I had evidence that I had proof that somebody stolen city property and defrauded the city. His response was, I don't care, I don't want to hear about it and he turned and walked away. This is one reason I don't have much faith or trust of legal opinions coming from the legal department. This is one reason I don't

believe in the administrative variance process for the planning -- [buzzer alarming] -- and development review department. Now, can you please tell me why, for the past four years that illegal water pump and pipes have been allowed to remain at Emma Long Park? It has been 85 days since I informed the city about the last encroachment. >> Tovo: Mayor pro tem. >> Cole: Council member Tovo. >> Tovo: Did you -- >> Cole: Go ahead. >> Tovo: Mr. Roddy, thank you for being here and being a steward of Lake Austin. It is my understanding that our legal department does

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have an update for you and I understand your frustration, it has taken a long time and taken a lot of work on your part on bringing this to the attention of the city but I ask our legal city representative to indicate what actions they are taking right now. >> The current status is -- the current status is that a letter has been issued to the landowner giving him until June 6, which will be next Friday, to get the pump removed. If not, a lawsuit will be filed for trespass to remove the pump. >> Is this the same letter y'all sent last year when the deputy moved the pipes they moved it to a different place? >> It's my experience where we have issued letters in the past and then the landowner has responded and then later basically been back, but this time it will be a firm philosophy if we don't get a result. >> Tovo: Mr. Prenny. >> Cole: Council member Tovo. >> Tovo: This is one of those areas where the city council can't direct staff to take further enforcement actions, but I guess I would -- I would just ask our city legal to consider the possibility of applying fines and I would ask you if that's an option, based on the fact that in the past there has been a letter issued; there has been compliance and then it goes back to noncompliance. Do we have an option of a city of fining those property owners for trespassing on public land? >> I would have to -- I would have to go look at that but I can certainly look at that issue and get back to you with a report. >> Tovo: I think it will be useful to see what means the city has but it is requiring a lot of -- a lot of staff time over the last several years dealing with this issue on and on and off basis and the property owner continues to -- it sounds like, has continued to take those actions. >> I know the city send park rangers and APD to the

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Greenbelt to break up the homeless camps and you confiscate their tents and personal items but when I suggested that years ago, I was told by city staff, we can't do that. Well, it is on park property, y'all can go take that water pump today. >> Cole: Let's let legal council continue to deal with that, Mr. Roddy, and I certainly understand your frustration and we will get back with you. >> All right. >> Cole: Thank you. >> Thank you. >> Cole: Mr. Bill Oakey. There you are. >> I would like to especially thank council member Kathie Tovo for sponsoring this special meeting this morning. It is a very helpful thing for the community and a great precedent. I am the writer of the blog, austinaffordability.com, and I am here this morning with some very specific proposals. The first one is, that the \$14.2 million budget surplus that was spared from being spent, I believe that you should transfer that money to -- most of that money to the water utility to help mitigate a potential 30% rate increase, plus a drought charge on top of that 30% rate increase. I took this proposal to the joint committee on water finance recently and -- and proposed it to them. The Fitch bond rating service has highlighted declining rate of affordability in Austin and they've

also placed some of our bonds -- they've reclassified some of our bonds from stable to negative. I think that much of a rate increase will send the wrong signals from Austin to New York. I am willing to ask that you direct the city staff to provide you with a full breakdown at the department level of how much money is

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left over from those 900 vacant positions that were funded in the budget at the beginning of this fiscal year. Either the money has been spent on something else, or the money -- or some of that money is still there. But we need a full accounting of that money. You need to see the full accounting and the citizens need to see the full accounting. And then, if there is additional money that can be identified there, some of it could be perhaps transferred to the water utility. But the most significant -- the other really significant issue that I want to talk about this morning has to do with the 9-1-1 call center, the official name being the communications -- the emergency communications center within the police department. I have a news article from June 27th of 2011, from the Austin American-Statesman saying an emergency at the 9-1-1 call center, more than 6 callers last year were placed on hold -- more than 6,000 -- and this shows there was no staff increases for the period of 2011. Just this week, report, crisis on horizon at 9-1-1 call center by Robert Maxwell, KXAN did a 7 month investigative report and we have so many burned out employees, we have a lot of overtime, people using all of their sick leave because they are, you know, they are so stressed. And so it's now been 1,070 days since that 2011 American Statesman report. I have heard that another report is coming. Well, that may be, but before the next budget even begins, I would ask you to please transfer at least \$1 million -- [buzzer alarming] -- in surplus funds to get some more staff on there to protect the public safety and help those frontline workers. It's not cost effective to the taxpayers to a department to be run that way and 1,070 days is long

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enough. >> Cole: Thank you. >> Thank you very much. >> Cole: Thank you. [Applause] >> Tovo: Mayor pro tem. >> Cole: Council member Tovo has a question for you. >> Tovo: I just want to thank you for the ideas, they are worth considering. And also, thank you for talking about the Saturday forum. I will use that as an opportunity to also acknowledge the cosponsors on this resolution which were Council member Martinez and Mayor pro tem Cole. And they were the sponsors of this one but also the previous one but I am really glad to see so many people who have turned out on a Saturday morning to come talk to the city council and also to pack knowledge, really, the rest of the council for supporting the idea. It was an idea that was raised by a community member, and I believe it passed council both times unanimously, so that shows a lot of support for this. >> Well, a lot of it -- >> Tovo: And having a meeting with the full council. >> Thank you. A lot of us do a lot of hard volunteer work on our own time and if we identified serious critical issues I think it would be helpful if you can look into those and consider in this case, for example, a budget amendment to help out that call center. Thank you very much. >> Cole: Thank you, Mr. Oakley. Ms. Latreese Cook. Ms. Latreese Cook. >> Good morning, as a struggle not to fall down on these stilts I have on. Good morning, Mayor pro tem Cole and city councils, I am Latreese Cook founder of

a nonprofit called melg, this is my first opportunity to address the council and I would like to say right now I appreciate the opportunity to address this body this morning regarding a populous that we represent and are proud to do so but we are concerned that there is minimal emphasis put on the well-being of this population and their families by virtue of lack of funding for those of us that have committed to be a beacon of hope and result driven assistance to this sector of our community. What people dub as

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exoffenders and felons. You are here in order to enable the world to live more actually with greater vision, with a finer spirit of hope and achievement. You are here to enrich the world. That is a quote by woodrow wilson. I personally never spent a night in jail in my life, much less in prison. Contrary to popular belief, all nonprofits are not born out of personal pain on or experience. Some are born because you have a love for people, places, or things. We are in the fifth year of business and we provide a myriad of services for the family and children who have been previously incarcerated and released back into the city of county or soon to be released from custody, which includes outpatient substance abuse services, court mandated educational classes, parol assistance, family support support services which include referrals, employment, education completion or continuance, enhanced by various long-standing relationships and partnerships that we have with colleges and universities here in austin. And residential inpatient treatment for those persons that need it most. I have had the pleasure of visiting with each and every one of you council members on the dais individually, except for council member riley and the mayor. Although I remember that during one of the public health and human services committees we were presenting, council member riley, when you left. I started coming out to meet with individuals in 2010, and individually in 2011 and '12, and even reached out when we initially were sought. In these meetings there was an e pression by each of you in some capacity that you had an interest in seeing an entity like this for the residents of city of austin and would support an effort. We were steered many different places. The police department, health and human services, and eventually we went to the african-american advisory commission, who made a previous recommendation for funding in 2011, and then in

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august 2013, we wept again to them for the requesting budget and it was signed and approved in august 2013. What is the point of the commission's work if you don't honor or seriously consider their recommendations based on the needs and wants of the minority community. Although I believe that prison is not specific to african-americans or minorities. [Buzzer alarming] my appearance before you is simple. I am requesting that this council direct staff or direct management to find some funds for this budget -- for this budget year to help fund an entity like us that are solely focused on the work in the redemption for this population. And I just have one final thing. Truman said, "a society will be judged by how it treats its weakest members." Thank you so much. >> Cole: Thank you, ms. Cook. I appreciate that. [Applause]. Carol ann rose kennedy, it's your turn. >> (Indiscernible). >> Cole: Next we have akwasi evans. >> I quit smoking. >> (Indiscernible). >> Huh? >> I quit smoking. You were inspiring me. Yes. And

after I am done here, do you want to take a smoke break? [Laughter] >> Cole: You know you are on the record, ms. Kennedy? >> Huh? >> Cole: The whole city can hear you. I want to make sure you are aware of that. >> Your point? >> Cole: It sounded like a private conversation between you two. >> I am sorry. My speech that I have -- what do you have me down

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for? >> Cole: The grad you ate. >> I wrote this in 2008, and I almost can't read it because I can't stop crying. So can you add a little bit of time if -- so I can decompose myself? >> Cole: I have been very generous this morning because that's the whole point but I would really appreciate it if people would stick at 3 minutes. >> I will do my best. That's why I will start at the end. All right. No. I am going to start with a song.

♪♪ And here is to you, mr. Robinson, heaven holds a place for those who play. Hey, hey, hey. God bless you, please robinson, I heard what you said and did today. Hey, hey, hey, hey, hey, ay. this message is addressed to all of you who have ever dropped out of anything any time anywhere for any reason anyhow. The grad you ate. Frankly, my dearies, I don't give a damn if you have a diploma to install my ceiling fans, if you have a sheep skin to treat my heart disease, if you have a degree to manage my nursery, if you have a pedigree to baby sit my sick dogs, if you have a permit to rewire my house, and I don't care if you have a lick of sense or license to take care of my child or if you have a

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dropping dime of skin to school my child or if you have a blessing to leave your parents' home. The grad you ate. Oh, I guess I will come back to that. Dropping out of school is sorrowful for the two of us. Dropping out of marriage is tragic. Dropping out of a child's life is criminal. Dropping out of life is ungodly. Okay. I have got to go to the end. Okay. This is the end, and I will go backwards if I have time. To all of the 2014 graduates, congratulations. In my eyes you graduated when you were 16. Today is simply ceremonial but I will not let y go without a lecture. You can't have the famous last words until you are gone. The last apron string is hanging by a thread. I know you will snatch it when you are ready and I know you will use it to build bridges across oceans [crying] and skyscrapers beyond the highest clouds. The grad you ate. Don't forget to do right. Don't forget to vote. Don't forget to speak english in my presence and in the universal languages. I love you always. [Buzzer alarming] ps, don't forget to write. Play ball. >> Cole: Thank you, ms. Kennedy. Next, we have mr. Akwasi evans. [Applause]. >> Oh, lord. >> (Indiscernible). >> Cole: Let's not throw it. You can hand ie to her if you'd want. >> Now? >> Cole: Yes. >> Thank you.

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(Indiscernible). >> Cole: I thought you did. >> (Indiscernible). >> Cole: Thank you. >> I picked it out of my front yard. >> Cole: Thank you, rose ann. Mr. Evans you may proceed. >> Thank you. First of all -- first of all, good morning council members and thank you all very much for getting up this morning and providing this opportunity for us to come and speak before you. My name is akwasi evans. I am the

publicker and owner of nicoa, the observer newspaper, a political aggressive multicultural weekly newspaper that has sought to serve the entire city for the past 27 years. I am also an african-american, just in case my voice didn't give it away. My concerns for you are many, but the one that I want to put before you today is the punishment of the poor and the plunder of the pigmented. Racism is not only real, it as rampant in austin, texas today as it was yesterday and in yesterday year. The mass exodus of african-americans is unprecedented. A community leader once told me recently that african-americans are leaving austin because they can't afford the cost of living. They can't afford the cost of living, they are not receiving a living wage. I don't believe that's the reason why they are leaving. I believe that they are leaving because of racism, the way they are treated on the job if they have a job. I have friends who work for the city who suffer harassment discrimination for decades and still perform noble, loyal service. They have documentation but

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they have no one to turn to. They continue come to you. And they can't go to the manager and get relief. So they just rat it out. Some get tired and move away. A lot of them get tired. Lawyers, doctors, writers, educators are leaving in droves because you put out the unwelcome mat. Austin is one of the most beautiful cities in the country. It is a magnet, attracting people from every demographic except one, and that's the one that's being pushed out, because their culture has been singled out. Since you became a city to be mistreated, ripped off, isolated, didn't add services until recently, very recently. It did not access to government facilities until very recently. I grew up in the jim crow era and I grew up in segregated society and I was one of those that crossed the fence, every teenager, we integrated in the '60s. 64 a I was at south moore high school after going to segregated school for ten years after we were told we couldn't look at a white man or white woman or we would be hung. That is real. You saw in austin, they didn't allow the african-americans to go to school until 1971. [Buzzer alarming] we have a problem -- I will close, I have a problem -- I have been in business 27 years and I do business -- I provide a valuable service and I suffer in sovereignty because government entities will withhold my payments for months on end. I have been waiting for over three months to be paid by the city for ads I run every week, the same thing for the state, with the lottery. You are starving us out. You are running us out and

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making us feel unwelcomed in this city. I love this city and I don't want to be run out. If I do go, I will go kicking and screaming. >> Cole: Mr. Evans, I will have someone son my staff, greg an der -- well, actually nancy cardanas to talk about the three month old check from the city. >> More than three months. >> Cole: More than three month check from the city. We will see if we can look into that. >> Thank you. [Applause] >> Cole: Norman jacobson. >> Good morning, my name is norman jacobson. I am a candidate for city council, and the question is should four days (indiscernible) be banned in austin, texas. 12,000 people died in five days in london englander area from air pollution and then enroy cowas in charge of the secret manhattan project that was the atomic bomb and then recently fluorided water to secretly extract waste from the uranium. In 1955, enriquo ferma died of stomach cancer and crest toothpaste was introduced. Call poise control every time you brush your teeth with water. Today's colgate

medicated toothpaste is 2.6-milligrams of application and medicated is .7 fluoridated. These versions are considered poison, colgate. The mucous membranes are 90% in absorbing fluoride. Regular fluoride represents 1.3 milligrams absorbed into your system and

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4.7-milligrams of prescription brand toothpaste. In february 2011, cdc established the optimum of .7-milligrams based on nationwide survey of nonscientists, at pittsburgh 1979, scientist led by dr. Burke, a u.S. Institute founder and chief examiner five years proved fluoridation kills 10,000 people daily. And harvard studies prove that fluoridated water causes mental retardation. Cancer, 2001, harvard dissertation shows cancer in boys in fluoridated areas are five times higher than nonfluoridated area. Applications of solely fluoride approval, a study of 7.5-milligrams per kilogram per day absorbed bone degeneration, also known as osteoporosis and bones of animals tested. In 2013 secretary state john kerry revealed the active ingredient in toothpaste, sodium fluoride is a chemical warfare weapon of mass destruction. This is from natural news.Com. Fluoride tooth use sodium fluoride and failed safety limits from 100 to 400%. Therefore, all toothpastes are too dangerous to use. Small children have died in fluoride treatment provided by dentists, in conclusion, the ada and water -- is it right to bottle fluoride, air pollution has so many (indiscernible) to enforcably medicate 3 million people? Toothpaste should be banned for no useful purpose, a waste of money, cause of -- [buzzer alarming] --

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>> Cole: Your time is up. Are r you coming to a conclusion. >> Is (indiscernible) and chemical of mass destruction, it is colgate launching war against the people of the united states. >> Cole: Thank you. >> Cole: Thank you. [Applause] >> Cole: I un ms. Ms. Rose marie schwarzer is here. >> Ms. Schwarzer, would you like to sit or stand during your testimony? You would like to stand. Okay. >> Yes. By the way, this is a footnote to what I am here for, but I called your address for this meeting. I was given 301 west second street, second floor. All right. Metro access let me out at 301. Then I come around the corner, and those doors are blocked, and then I have to come around all the way this way. So either get this address correctly, or allow people to come in the other doors. I am here about two subjects that are not only personal but I have something -- but have something to do with austin, and the first one is the cemeteries. And ken herman has given many, many articles about it, and the austin municipal cemetery, it's like a three ring circus. You go to the old sections

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and you have nice rows of grave sites, a four-foot walking path, and that's it. On the new sections, you have gongs, I have 7 of them around my deal and they are the big long boom boom ones, okay. I came there -- I went there one -- in the summer at 7:30. On the other side of the roadway, which is very narrow, they were having a party with drinking and music and dancing and walking all over the graves. There was nobody there to -- to do anything about it. They put toys in the 4-foot walkway. There are bushes, there are plantares, there are toys, there are benches. There is no room anywhere. Around the

most insulting thing that I ever saw was you have a small mount that -- monument is put on. It's about that wide on the bottom of each side. And my -- I lost my son and husband in 11 months, so they are buried together. All right. And then over here was a mr. Perez. I went out there one time, and a small monument was laying on the edge of my monument and on the edge of this monument and it was an individual named williams, and they had put somebody 12-inches between us. Yet, when I paid for the cemetery plot shows there is walkway and space and behind it on the sides and a four-foot walkway in the front. And I am sorry, but, ms. Tovo, and mr. Martinez, made comments in the newspaper that they thought that people should be allowed to do what they want in cemeteries. Well, I am sorry, but a

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cemetery should be a quiet, peaceful place that you can go and contemplate your life without your family and to mourn them and to come out on their special occasions, and christmas and occasions like that, and it should be peaceful. It should be quiet. And I hope that they will start doing something about it. [Buzzer alarming] thank you, ms. Schwarzer, council member tovo has a request for you. >> Yes. >> Tovo: I want to thank you for being here. >> Sorry, I only hear in one ear and I am losing that hearing. >> Tovo: Sorry, I will speak louder. I want to thank you for being here to express the issues on cemetery and that issues that need addressing, mayor and I want to clarify that we set up the stakeholder process to try to address the many perspectives and grave ornamentation, because as you know, there are members of our community who want the ability to put things on the grave site, but I completely understand your point that those should not impede other people's mourning and appreciation for their own family members. >> Well, thank you, but gongs and parties and tossing stuff all over the place, you know, you have to side step some of the stuff to get to where you are going. [One moment, please, for change in captioners]

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>> my other question was I handed out papers in case you didn't see it in the newspaper, and that is the compliance department of austin is ignoring all the building codes, especially in west austin where I have been living since 1960. >> Cole: This is not a forum where we answer questions and your time has been completed. Can you just finish up your thoughts? >> I told you I had two subjects to discuss. >> Cole: But you only have -- you still only have three minutes and your three minutes has expired. But go ahead and finish up your thought, but you won't have another -- you don't have very much longer to do that. >> In other words, I need to sign up at the next meeting? >> Cole: Yes, you can sign up at the next city council meeting, but for this meeting you only have three minutes. >> All right. Then I guess I connell discuss the one item. I was hoping I'd spend a minute and a half on each one, but I don't have a watch on. >> Cole: I believe your time has expired. >> Is it? >> Cole: Yes. I just looked at the time keeper. Yes. >> All right. Then I'll be back next time. >> Cole: Okay. Thank you. >> On the papers that I handed out. >> Cole: Okay. Thank you. [Applause]. >> Cole: Ms. Krista clarke? >> I'm krista clarke and the medication of austinites by water fluoridation. Mr. Spelman, I have -- I went back and following up from three months ago when we came out for and tried to contest you all

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voting for the two-million-dollar purchase of more fluoride to our water for the next couple of years. The us treians did a study in the 70's that showed about fluoride interfering with dna enzymes and their ability to basically reproduce. And once you had warped enzymes that causes a trickle effect break down of pretty much all the systems in the body. So when I said one parts per million fluoride causes calcium break down, that's an example. And from there you have wrinkles, you have people basically aging faster than we should. And, you know, that's -- there's also a study been done by the newpon dental college in japan and she show that the cells can become cancerous. And that's big too coming from a dental college from japan. I think it was last year. So there are a bunch of speakers that came out and two were proponents of fluoride. You had a dentist and I believe a dr. Wang. These people were really basically bringing opinions and claims. They were not putting out data, actual evidence. This book right here which you can buy at [indiscernible], many purchases available for anybody in the brick, this book has the scientific evidence, has the data. You all be putting fluoride in our water. Do you know how teeth are mineralized? Do any of you? These doctors, they couldn't even offer that to the public. We do not have a fluoride deficiency. What we do have is an iodine deficiency. I went to a seminar on thyroid this week and even people in the audience expressed that yes, there's a fluoride issue because it interferes with our thyroid. And it also helps cause our massive iodine

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deficiencies that our whole country is experiencing. I have hypothyroidism. I'm not going to get into all that. Why don't we add iodine to the water instead of fluoride. Iodine kills bacteria. Fluoride kills bacteria too and also kills everything else, good and bad bacteria. Why don't we just put iodine in and ironically it detoxes the body of fluoride so where are we putting fluoride in the water when those of us who are in the know and taking iodine supplements, it's just flushing out what you say is good for us? So it's a waste of two million dollars. And informed consent. Big pharma would get in big trouble if they didn't follow certain codes. Patients have the right to be able to decide if they take certain drugs. [Buzzer sounds] they're also informed of the side effects. That right to choose we shouldn't have the government entity telling us what to do. Abortion, anti-abortion, that is -- I'm seeing a trend here. The government isn't allowed to get involved in that, but when we speak out against fluoride you say so and so suggests that we do it. No. That's not right. >> Cole: Thank you, ms. Clarke. >> Thanks. >> Cole: Thank you. Scott unzicker. Scott, are you here? Next we'll have zenobia joseph? Are you present? Next we'll have paul robbins. >> Good morning. I'm paul robbins.

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I'm an environmental activist, consumer advocate and have worked in the fields of clean energy and demand side management for 37 years. A low income advocate -- well, one time told me that if all of austin's energy programs were put in to low income programs, that would be fine with them. The problem with that idea is that it would reduce pollution savings by about 96%. Affordability in austin has become a joke. On the other hand, it is a myth that austin energy is not diverting very much of its

resources to help low income people. When you add all the money from low income weatherization to funding from the customer assistance program low income customers are getting 46% of the discretionary community benefits funds allotted to the residential rate class. This is at a time when customer assistance at the state level is being phased out. This is just what we can easily measure. If you look at other efficiency programs at austin energy runs for the residential sector, most have some greater or lesser percentage of low and moderate income participants. Here's just one example. This is a list of green building apartments that was issued in the last environmental directory. There is 65 apartment complexes listed here and 28 of them, that's 43%, are -- have

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affordable housing units in them. Many of the rest have moderate income people living in them. This is again just something that we have available that can be easily quantified. Shortly the generation taskforce will report its recommendations to you. I'm other to criticize my understanding of an idea suggested by some people to increase free weatherization. And the problem is it just doesn't save a lot of energy. As I understand it, it throws money at a problem without take advantage of strategic ways to lower cost, serve more people, save more energy and prevent more pollution. There are most likely more things that we can do to assist the poor, but I can't support the current proposal at the generation taskforce. As dr. Spelman can tell you, I'm almost always right. [Laughter] >> Cole: Thank you, mr. Robbins. Emilio chronis? >> Good morning, city council. We've already established that water fluoridation is an ineffective medical practice for the following reasons which must be heard again and again. Doze, known as concentration levels, cannot be controlled. Dosage can certainly not be controlled and the method of delivery is highly effective and cost effective when considering more responsible options. I look through the austin water quality reports from 2010 to

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2013 and created this graph as you see. We'll just concentrate on the dark blue line representing davis water treatment plant. As you see from 2010 to 2013 the range of fluoride in parts per million fluctuates between .86 and .84, indicating that the concentration levels cannot be controlled. This shows as flawed this practice really is. What's more outrageous is that the dosage cannot be controlled effectively in any way. If the dose can be maintained at .7 Parts per million, the recommended level, and I consume three liters of fluoridated water a day, one milligram is retained in my body. Over a year I am over # hundred grams of fluoride and I retain 300 milligrams. This is an estimate not taken into consideration other sources. Influencing the fluoride we absorb through our skin. And by assuming processed food, tea, beer, use fluoridated toothpaste and mouth wash that is absorbed and sometimes accidentally swallowed and many other sources. The delivery of this unapproved drug is highly ineffective and costly. Most of the nor row sill list sick acid added to water supplies is not ingested, inside this so-called beneficial nutrient goes to industrial uses, watering lawns, washing cars, maintaining pools and flushing toilets. Which means the so-called medicine is being wasted. Let's get real. The tax dollars are being spent to dispose of highly toxic chemical and our health is being impacted in a negative manner all while water treatment plants spend more money to replace pumps and pipes from the corrosive effects of

flower row sill list sick acid.

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If we are truly concerned about tooth decay we can use the millions of dollars that we use to buy it and the costly water treatment plant costs to buy toothbrushes, iodine supplements which kills the bacteria which causes tooth decay. And is safe to swallow. You can't don't have to add it to water. You can give us a supplement. So don't force nor row silicic acid to us by adding it to the municipal water. It's ineffective. Are you ready to make history? Are you ready to make history? I believe we can do this. >> Cole: Thank you. Next we have cynthia valdez? >> Angela atwood? >> Good morning, council. Thank you very much for having this extra forum for citizens to come and speak to you. I'm angela atwood, executive director of college houses and a member of one voice central texas. And one voice central texas is a group of about 80 executive directors of local health and human services organizations that are focused on many issues in our community, primarily poverty and the affordability gap. We have a new campaign called put people first. And the leaders in our organization have been meeting individually with councilmembers or will be completing some of those meetings in the next week, and we also have the opportunity to present to the public health and human services committee.

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We realize that council is looking up some very hard decisions around the upcoming budget, but we feel strongly that you need to make the most vulnerable people in our community first, first priority. As the executive director of meld said, quoting our great leaders, a society or community is judged by how well it takes care of the people who are the weakest. In austin because of our different layers of segregation it's very easy to not have to pay attention to these issues, but let me give you some quick statistics that I know you have, but I would like to share in this forum. The c.A.N. Dashboard, the community action network dashboard indicators for the number of low income individuals in our community for food and security and for the cost of housing or the housing cost burden, have all worsened. Those indicators are moving in the wrong direction despite the growth and prosperity for many in austin. We have developed an info graphic page about the tales of two austins that many of you have seen already. And I think it's a powerful story and it's the one that needs to be shared. It's the drum in a needs to be everyday? Although we're the fastest growing city in america a third of our individuals of our citizens in austin-travis county struggle to make ends meet. It's the eighth best place to raise a family in the country, but a fourth of our children living in poverty. Actually, the number of people in poverty have grown by 77% over the last decade, the fastest subgroup of those living in poverty, growing, children under six. We have the second best performing real estate market in the country and yet a quarter of residents spent more than half of their income on rent.

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38% of our community is housing cost burden, meaning they spent more than a third of their income on housing. And we're considered the 10th fittest city in the country, 35% of our low income children are

overweight and suffering from obesity. [Buzzer sounds] please consider increasing social service dollars. We realize that there's a surplus, that there's public safety, transportation priorities. Make investment in the human service infrastructure as important, as increasing public safety infrastructure and lowering our property taxes. A difficult set of decisions, but we don't want to be a community that keeps leaving lower income and more vulnerable residents behind. Thank you. >> Cole: Thank you. We appreciate your testimony. Adelea mattis? Val antonio? >> Good morning, mayor pro tem and councilmembers, thank you for being here on a saturday morning in this beautiful city. I'd like to share an anecdote to you. I ride the bus to work, I catch it in front of my apartment and it drops me in front of the courthouse and I spend about three hours in the courthouse in the morning and then I get to go back home. Recently the busing service seems to be less frequent and farther apart. The bus stops seem to have moved forward apart and they're less frequent. I used to be able to take the number one bus round trip for a total of two dollars for a day pass. If I'm going to spend three hours at work, the bus beats the cost of taking my car becauseville to spend three dollars' worth of parking down at the courthouse. But now with less

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frequent service on that number one route, because the 801 has taken its place, I now have to spend three dollars to ride the bus round trip. And so now my calculation is, well, I can spend three dollars on the bus or I can spend three dollars to take my car. So this creates a perverse incentive for one rider to introduce a car into the downtown area whereas before he only took the bus. So I would ask you to consider when we're changing routes from congress over to lavaca as has been proposed and when we are shifting from the number 3 bus to the 803 bus, making it more expensive to ride these and making trips less frequent on the affordable routes that that has an impact on ridership and perhaps inversely to what you might consider. That's all I have. Thank you. >> Cole: Thank you, mr. Mattis. Antonio. Karla wilkinsfield? Pick your mic. >>> First I want to say good morning and thank you very much for this opportunity. What I'd like to address is the unintended consequences of the great street programs here in austin. I am concerned with all the five brand new hotels that are coming and all the visitors that are going to come to austin that there is a lack of tax planning. And what I mean by tax planning I mean is there a committee, is there a program for all those visitors that are coming to get that money in to coffers of austin,

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texas. And why I come up with this idea is that of all the results of this program, even though the streets are beautiful and I have to say it's lovely, the trees and the landscaping, it's also very sterile, the lack of complexity especially with the stores, and it does not invite the visitor to come in. It's a lot of the same kind of stores, same kind of sterile signage. So the visitors all go to south congress. And just this last memorial you couldn't walk on the streets of south congress, but there was nobody on second street. And there's so many empty storefronts on congress, north congress by the capitol, up that way, that it really concerns me that there's not any planning to get those things for the visitors other than honky-tonking on fifth street or south congress. And there's many that come that would love to spend their

money. And many people do spend their money when they leave town. So my recommendation is or what I would like to do is look at the city codes again and see what we could do to bring more maybe moms and pops to make it more complex with some signage -- with some things that -- constraints. I'd also like to consider, to consider doing this. I have walked up and down with some people from the daa to see what can be done about addressing this problem. And they all tell me that so many of the places are downtown are inherited. And they don't really have any motivation to open their storefront unless they get the money that they really want to get, which is very high. What I propose is that

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we put an empty storefront tax for a limited time until they're all full on downtown area. Which would motivate these people that own the stores or the developers to get somebody in there. And if they get somebody in there, having been in retail myself at one point years ago, I know that if they're making money, they're going to-- they will stay and pay the higher prices as they come up. And I thank you for this opportunity. And if you do form a committee, I would be most interested in helping with the community that would make downtown austin more charming and complex for the out of towners. >> Cole: Monica guzman? >> For you this opportunity. I'm glad to have a citizens forum. Full disclosure I am a city council candidate, district 4. First of all, I hope there's going to be more opportunities like this and not something that makes this once a year. I know there are plenty in my district who probably have something to say. I had hoped to see them here. They are probably the ones who work on the weekends. They have child care issues, they're transportation challenged and I know that's not going to be resolved with the first time around. Hopefully in the future there can be planning for that, whether it's just neighbors pulling together to help them out or maybe hopefully the city can put something in place with capital metro helping do a shuttle. There's also an issue with language. I found out about this online and in english. There's over 50 different languages spoken just in one part

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of district 4. I don't know how this was disseminated, so someone will have to tell me that, but in the future when it goes out the next time around it will be in multiple languages, that it will be offline as well as online. That aside, other issues, you're working on the budget, I see online as well as here in conversations since I'm involved in the restore rundberg initiative as a community member there needs to be more money regarding code compliance, more money for inspectors, money for the enforcement. There needs to be city attorneys so they can enforce the issue where the -- so they can take them to court and deal with the repeat offenders. I know I hear a lot of complaints from people they think the city is not doing their job, but I also know that it's an issue of overload and understaffed. I don't know if they realize that. I guess I keep up with enough stuff that I can see both sides of that. I don't know if all the people in the area are aware of that. They think that the city is going to do it all. They may not be aware that the city depends on the citizenry to help them out, but if the city does not step up more they're going to lose out on the steps helping out. That won't happen until more money is put in place for those inspectors, for the enforcement. I was here just two nights ago to support the low income weatherization that paul robbins was talking about. We need that. We need the slum lords brought in to

deal with the unsafe housing that speaks to the public safety issues. There are tons of issues that need to be addressed. We have infrastructure issues like sidewalks,

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transportation issues. I'm not going to go on and on since my time is out, but you are aware of that. Thank you. [Applause]. >> Cole: Thank you. Are there any other registered speakers who have not had an opportunity to speak? Any other registered speakers? Councilmember tovo? >> Tovo: I don't have an answer to that question, I wanted to respond to ms. Guzman's -- one of the points she raised and just say that thank you for your comments about the need for strong city action about substandard housing. We did have an opportunity to talk a little bit with the code compliance department on tuesday at our work session about some of the actions they're taking and some of the ways that they're responding differently. After our meeting I was able to talk with our city attorney about some of the changes that have happened in the past few months within our city legal departments in part because of some of the city resolutions we've passed. I believe we'll get an update a little later in the summer about some of those changes, but I think they're making very good strides both in shifting the way code compliance responds to those cases as well as how our legal department is responding in a more assertive way when there are conditions that need to be addressed right away and potentially enforcement actions that need to be taken. So I really look forward to that presentation. And I think it would address some of the issues if that you talked about. >> Cole: Thank you. If there's no other registered speakers that concludes our agenda for today. Without objection, we are adjourned.

[10:00:26]