

Comments of Carol Biedrzycki  
Executive Director  
Texas ROSE (Ratepayers' Organization to Save Energy)  
Austin City Council Meeting  
August 7, 2014

- 166.** Conduct a public hearing to receive citizen feedback on the Boards and Commissions Transition Task Force report regarding the recommendations on changes to membership, purpose, and processes referenced in the report.

The Boards and Commissions Task Force undertook a complicated task and managed to produce a very complete and workable plan for boards and commissions to operate within the structure of the new 10/1 city council. The comments I provide today are based on my perspective as a citizen often involved in public processes related to utilities and my perspective as a member of the Resource Management Commission.

### **Joint Committees**

The task force recommends the creation of four joint committees for Sustainability, Cultural, and Inclusion. I support the concept of the joint committee because I believe that many projects and issues involve more than one commission. The Joint Committee brings members of different commissions together as a regular part of the process. I believe this will improve the quality of the recommendations forwarded to the council.

While I support the formation of the Joint Committees, I need more information to be sure of my conviction. I cannot find an explanation of the relationship between the joint committee and its member commissions.

As a citizen I would like to see Joint Committees be responsible for reviewing proposed actions that are within the purview of one or more of the boards represented. Today a proposal is often presented to more than board. This is time consuming for citizens and resource intensive for the city staff. The joint committee could improve and streamline the process for citizens and the city staff by allowing the proposed action to be reviewed by a joint committee rather than multiple boards. The boards would be responsible for reviewing proposed actions with a more limited scope. This could save time for members of the public and the city staff.

### **Austin Energy Low Income Customer Advocates**

The report recommends that the Austin Energy Low Income Advocates created for the purpose of developing recommendations on arrearage management programs be continued. I also support this recommendation. Utilities profoundly affect everyone and the affordability of housing in the city.

## Timing

As a member of the public and as a member of a commission I often find myself receiving information intended for action at the meeting. While the composition of the boards is being considered it would also be useful to look at the procedural rules and the timing for posting agendas and submitting documents. Agendas should continue to be posted at least one-week in advance of the meeting. Any information that is to be considered by a board or council should be available at least 48 hours before the scheduled starting time of the meeting.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Boards and Commissions Transition recommendations and hope that you will look favorably on my suggestions for improving them.

Respectfully submitted by:

Carol Biedrzycki  
Texas ROSE (Ratepayers' Organization to Save Energy)  
Executive Director  
815 Brazos St., Suite 1100  
Austin, Texas 78701-2509  
(512) 472-5233