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RESOLUTION NO.

WHEREAS, since March 2020 the Austin City Council and City Boards and Commissions have been unable to meet in person due to the stay-home work order resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, and it is unknown at this time how long these conditions will last, and

WHEREAS, City of Austin uses Cisco WebEx along with analog phone calls to enable virtual meetings of the Austin City Council and City Boards and Commissions; and

WHEREAS, the Texas Legislature enacted H.B. 2840 in order to ensure that members of the public have the right to address governmental bodies prior to their decisions on items under consideration; and

WHEREAS, call-in public participation allows for members of the public to provide testimony from home as opposed to traveling to City Hall; and

WHEREAS, members of the public have reported difficulties including lack of awareness of registration deadlines, shortened speaker times, extended time on hold, incomplete speaker queues, call disconnections, and feedback during calls; and

WHEREAS, the City’s technology choices and procedural rules have unintentionally limited public participation and even denied members of the public

20 the right to address the Austin City Council and/or City Boards and Commissions;

21 **NOW, THEREFORE,**

22 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:**

23 The Ethics Review Commission makes the following recommendations to
24 improve equitable access to and opportunities for public participation in Austin
25 City Council and City Boards and Commission virtual meetings.

- 26 • Rules and instructions for public participation in virtual meetings should
27 be publicized on Council, Commission, and Board websites and included
28 at the top of all meeting notices and posted agendas.
- 29 • Any changes to rules and instructions for public participation in virtual
30 meetings should be timely and openly discussed by the Austin City
31 Council and City Boards or Commissions.
- 32 • Adhere to normal public speaking time limits and rules for time donation.
- 33 • Either eliminate preregistration requirements for public participation or
34 reduce the advance time required.
- 35 • During meetings, make the queue of speakers and who is next in line
36 visible to the public. The complete ordered list of speakers should be
37 posted as part of the permanent public meeting record.
- 38 • Allow for written testimony to be read and pre-recorded testimony to be
39 played during virtual meetings.

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- Allow for speakers to easily re-establish connections if their call is disconnected.

ADOPTED: _____, 2020 **ATTEST:** _____

Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk

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