

RESOLUTION NO. 20220217-060

WHEREAS, Austin Water ratepayers expect and deserve access to safe and reliable drinking water; and,

WHEREAS, Austin Water has experienced five significant negative water quality events and water supply service interruptions in fewer than five years, including: three that required boil water notices, one that involved zebra mussels and one that involved fire retardant impacting customers in the Tanglewood Forest Limited District; and,

WHEREAS, Austin's continued economic success is dependent upon a consistently reliable public source of drinking water; and,

WHEREAS, concrete action is required to restore public trust in Austin Water; and,

WHEREAS, the public interest will be most effectively served if accurate and complete information is provided, considered, and acted upon expeditiously;
NOW, THEREFORE,

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

The City Manager is directed to procure, as quickly as possible, an external audit to review the five most recent significant negative water quality events and water supply service interruptions, to identify what went wrong and how to prevent future failure, and to evaluate technology, operations and related issues that could improve the overall resilience and functioning of our water system.

At a minimum, the evaluation shall include an investigation into the following data and dimensions:

1. A review of Austin Water's overall management of these events, including emergency response and after-action assessments;
2. A review of policies and practices with respect to how Austin Water prepares for water supply crises;
3. A review of whether and how Austin Water is following national best practices for source water quality protection and for the operation of drinking water treatment systems;
4. A review of the timeline for each event, detailing management's response and communication to the public and whether that response endangered the public or impacted public confidence in Austin Water;
5. A review of whether and how these situations impacted health and safety risks of Austin Water customers;
6. Description of how knowledge gained from responses to these significant events affected future water supply planning strategies within Water Forward, Austin's integrated water management plan; and,
7. A review of whether Austin Water's facilities and operations are adaptive to seasonal and long-term water quality variability including extreme events.

Austin Water and other relevant City of Austin departments shall cooperate with the audit. City staff and plant operators shall be available for interviews. Austin Water and other City of Austin staff shall furnish internal communications and operational information related to these specific episodes, and all other

relevant policy and procedural documents relating to emergency preparedness of Austin's water supply;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

This audit shall be conducted by an independent third-party non-governmental entity or multidisciplinary team with expertise in the operation and management of large-scale water utilities. Allowable exceptions include universities who may be a governmental entity. While the chosen entity, individual or multidisciplinary team, regardless of type, may include individuals with existing knowledge of Austin Water history, processes, and systems, they shall not have a conflict of interest.

The selected independent third-party entity must have demonstrated previous successful expertise and experience managing or evaluating similarly sized organizations and or competency with public utilities.

The City Auditor shall develop this contract with input from external sources with appropriate expertise as allowable by the City's purchasing rules. The department under evaluation shall not select its own evaluator for this contract.

The City Auditor shall select the independent third-party entity best qualified and suited to conduct the independent audit and the associated report mandated by this resolution and bring the resulting contract forward for approval. The City Manager is directed to determine appropriate funding sources, with the understanding that Council's preference is for the cost to come from Austin Water's budget.

If after completing market research for a prospective solicitation, it is determined any specification within this resolution cannot be met as stated, the City Auditor shall return to Council with a recommendation for changes to the

contract specifications that are consistent with the direction established by this resolution;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

A written audit report shall be completed by the selected independent third-party entity. Should the independent third-party entity, in advance of the audit completion date, determine actionable recommendations, the entity shall report those recommendations to the City Manager for consideration. The City Manager may implement these recommendations on an ongoing basis. The City Manager shall provide updates to Council, as soon as possible, on whether and how recommendations from the independent third-party entity will be implemented;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

To the extent legally permissible, the written audit report shall be posted in a prominent place on the City's website at least one week in advance of presentation to Council. The audit report shall be delivered and presented by the independent third-party entity conducting the evaluation to the Water and Wastewater Commission and shall be presented to Council during a meeting which allows for public testimony. Any other City of Austin commission or task force may receive a formal presentation by the City Auditor as mutually scheduled;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The audit report shall include:

- How the City of Austin and Austin Water have made progress on recommendations identified in past relevant audits and after-action reports:

- Possible changes to internal policies;
- Possible changes to current practices, including treatment processes and management of the distribution system;
- Possible changes to how the City of Austin and Austin Water communicate information to the public during significant events such as these;
- An action plan for how the City of Austin and Austin Water should implement recommended changes, including a prioritization of the recommendations;
- Possible change or enhancements to organizational staffing, staffing practices and policy;
- Opportunities for better working conditions, facilities, tools, technology, and resources;
- The necessary frequency of reviews, assessments, and audits including recommended content of reviews, assessments, and audits and the sharing of data and findings from these reviews and audits to the Council and the public;
- Any further comprehensive assessments to be taken on by Austin Water or the City Council;
- How to improve transparency and the ongoing sharing of data and findings to the Council and the public; and
- Affirmation of what is going well and should be continued;

If a response is not provided to any of the above, the third-party entity conducting the audit should clearly state why in the report;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The report shall not preclude any additional actions the City Manager or Austin Water shall deem appropriate including but not limited to an internal after-action report.

ADOPTED: February 17, 2022

ATTEST:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Myrta Rios', written over a horizontal line.

Myrta Rios
City Clerk