



**Electric Board  
APPROVED MINUTES**

**REGULAR CALLED MEETING  
March 16, 2022**

The Electric Board convened in a Regular Called Board Meeting on February 16, 2022 at the Permitting Development Center at 10:05 am.

**Board Members in Attendance:** Rogelio Wallace, David Johnson, Michael King, Delwin Goss, Gabe Flores, Victoria Shope and Randy Pomikahl

**Members Not in Attendance:** Ben Brenneman, Christian Spies and David Deshaine

**Staff in Attendance:** Rick Arzola (DSD), Jordan Word (DSD), Eric Zimmerman (DSD), Joshua Davis (DSD), Joey Hernandez (AE) and Joan Wilhite (AE)

1. **CITIZEN COMMUNICATION:** There was no registration of citizens to speak at this Electrical Board.
2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** The minutes from the February 16, 2022 regular called meeting was approved. Vice Chair member Johnson made a motion to approve the minutes as written, Board member King second the motion, and the motion passed 6-0. Board member Shope arrived after the approval minutes was voted on.
3. **DISCUSSION**
  - A. **Austin Energy Criteria Manual-** Austin Energy Manager of Field Operations Joan Wilhite addressed the board indicating that they are really no big changes to Criteria Manual but they are trying to clean up some items in the Manual that are causing some confusion by misinterpretations especially on disconnect locations. She also updated that they are creating new process information that will benefit contractors. Other than those small issues, she also provided information that in conjunction with Development Service Department (DSD), AE will be creating a new Contractor Disconnect Program. This program will allow contractors to visit the problem site, disconnect the services, go thru the inspection process and then will be allowed to make the permanent connection before Austin Energy comes back to energize the location. Currently this program is being model by the special inspection program that DSD is operating under and there will be some guidelines to this model once the development of the website is established. Austin Energy will provide training to contractors on this scenario on how this will program will operate.  
Other changes coming is an online scheduling tool where contractors will be able to schedule outages based on availability on the schedule but still will need to schedule with inspections for approval on the date you are requesting for services. There will a 30 day registration period for contractors to sign up. They will sign up with AE intake services headed by Marvin Pace which will review the registration and signing up the contractor. The registration criteria list will be stringent as AE wants to make sure that the contractor are following the guidelines.  
Also added in her update was an AE Fee schedule. A \$260.00 trip fee will be added to the permit when an AE truck rolls up as well as a re-inspection fee of \$165.00-primarily for the trip fees. Consulting fees will be added too. It is not a new fee but will be implemented. AE representatives will meet you out in field for consultation and the fee \$165.00 will be assessed.

DSD Residential inspection supervisor Jordan Word added that 4 additional outages a day from 8 to 12 would now be inspected on top of the normal day to day inspections and are looking at Wednesday's as the day for those outage inspections but will monitor the request for outages that are being received from Austin Energy before making an adjustments.

With this scenario is the after hour fee of \$800.00. AE wants to make sure that contractors are told to schedule an 8:00 am disconnect time. The fee will be added if the contractor request after the 1:00 pm time frame.

**B. Disconnect Locations-** Joey Hernandez with Austin Energy provided some information that has created some misinterpretation with the Criteria manual. One of those issues is the metering at the transformer, where Austin Energy is requiring an exterior disconnect on the outside. That exterior disconnect is a Meter room, a separate structure with meter and CT connections where emergency services could provide power shut off to the structure if an emergency was imminent. Currently shunt trips are not allowed in full purpose area of Austin due to AFD ordinance. Shunt trips are allowed in the ETJ and AE is ok with that.

Joan Wilhite added that a formal meter review process will be added to review your riser design diagrams. An engineer group separate from design group have been hired that will specifically be reviewing for metering. This process is expected to roll out soon and all will be notified on the specifics on this new process. This new process is to assist with all error submitted designs.

**C. Residential and Commercial Inspection Update-** Jordan Word updated the board he **Commercial** electrical inspections are currently running about a day an half. Also updated that there are no vacancies on the commercial side. Currently commercial electrical inspections are averaging about 35 process a day. On the **Residential** side, staff are running about a half day behind with an average of 20-25 processes a day. Jordan did confirm two new hiring's for the combination inspection team and there are 5 additional openings for new residential inspectors.

**D. DSD Permit Process-** Service Center Supervisor Josh Davis addressed the board with updated information that the service center has re-staffed all of their employees and that he is the only staff member with only plus 6 months of experience. Part of the reasoning of the re-staffing that has been causing the backlog was newly hired staff leaving to other vacant positions, staff out due to the omicron virus, winter freeze where the department was closed for two days, MLK day and the Mayor orders of permit extension from December 31 to March 1 due to Covid-19. The mayor's order created roughly 5K permit request for extension as there are more than 35K expired permits. These factors have created a severe backlog of service on top of new employees being trained on service center procedures. Currently in trying to resolve this backlog issue, service center staff are working with Austin Energy in finding solutions to make electrical forms less confusing for the contractors and are currently working with DSD IT in making edits to those forms, closing service center offices on Wednesday for catching up and offering overtime pay.

Board member Pomikahl did express his concern that addressing was not available as it has been before and it has caused an issue with his permits being issued. Staff is seeking solutions with management on how to re-instate that addressing phone feature. Also Vice Chair Johnson expressed his concern on what can the electrical board can do to assist the service center on hiring new employees as Austin and surrounding communities are growing expeditiously and the fear of a severe backlog by the service center will create problems with contractors and homeowners of doing work without permits.

**E. Update on Plan Review-** No update on Plan Review. Staff Mitchell Tolbert was out and will address the board on this item at the next scheduled board meeting.

**4. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

- a. Austin Energy Criteria Manual
- b. Contractor Program
- c. Residential and Commercial Electrical Inspection update
- d. DSD Permit Process with the Service Center
- e. Update on Plan Review

- 5. ADJOURN:** Board member Goss made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Board member Pomikahl seconded the motion. Motion passed 7-0. Meeting was adjourned at 12:23 pm.