

RESOLUTION NO. 20221208-066

WHEREAS, the Austin Energy Regional Science Festival (AE Science Festival) is the largest city-sponsored science festival in the country; and

WHEREAS, more than 3,000 third through twelfth-grade students participate each year, hailing from 12 Central Texas counties and 23 area school districts; and

WHEREAS, Austin Energy has sponsored the AE Science Festival for the last 23 years; and

WHEREAS, the AE Science Festival encourages inquiry-based learning and recognizes and celebrates student achievements to keep them interested in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math; and

WHEREAS, in the words of Austin Energy, this project-based approach to science encourages students to “learn the foundations of experimentation, presentation and pursuing knowledge – valuable skills as students today, and as leaders of tomorrow”; and

WHEREAS, the AE Science Festival provides scientists, engineers, and other professionals the opportunity to interact with the next generation of young scientists; and

WHEREAS, the event benefits the City of Austin by helping students enter science-based fields of study and prepare for science-based positions in the workforce; and

WHEREAS, Austin Energy’s online information about the AE Science Festival expresses the hope that young people who participate might someday

return to assist the utility “in the effort to make electricity reliable, safe, affordable, and responsible to a sustainable environment”; and

WHEREAS, the Austin Science Education Foundation (ASEF) was established in 2013 to support the AE Science Festival; and

WHEREAS, ASEF is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that promotes student’s knowledge of and involvement in science, technology, engineering, and math by enabling participation in the AE Science Festival and supporting students selected to advance to the Texas Science and Engineering Fair and the Regeneron International Science and Engineering Fair; and

WHEREAS, ASEF assists with overall management of the AE Science Festival, annually raising approximately \$170,000 and recruiting more than 600 judges and 200 volunteers each year; and

WHEREAS, Austin Energy has been the “title sponsor,” of the AE Science Festival since 2005, providing up to \$80,000 annually in financial support, in-kind staff support totaling approximately \$150,000 annually, and assistance with event logistics and publicity; and

WHEREAS, Austin Energy highlights its role as title sponsor as “one way we stay customer driven and community focused”; and

WHEREAS, Austin Energy has announced its intention to relinquish the position of “title sponsor” as of August 21, 2023; and

WHEREAS, if this possibility comes to pass, the ASEF would need to find a replacement title sponsor, a process that likely will take longer than one year; and

WHEREAS, this situation could make it challenging for the AE Science Festival to continue; and

WHEREAS, the inability to hold a regional science festival would be a significant loss to our community: to the thousands of students who benefit from participating, to the scientific fields that may not then attract some of these brilliant young minds, and to the scientific workplaces that depend on an ongoing stream of educated professionals; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin and Austin Energy should evaluate its continued support of this event; and

WHEREAS, co-sponsoring the AE Science festival would serve a municipal purpose by helping to foster and promote a community and workforce in the City that is prepared to participate in scientific, technical, engineering, and math workplaces and can keep and attract employers in and to the City; and

WHEREAS, the City is dedicated to promoting equity and the AE Science Festival helps provide an equitable opportunity for people throughout the City to engage in the science, technology, engineering and math communities; **NOW, THEREFORE,**

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

The Council declares the AE Science Festival, including as subsequently renamed if applicable, to be a City co-sponsored event, starting fiscal year 2023-2024.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to include the AE Science Festival, or the appropriate name if the Festival is renamed, in the list of City co-sponsored events for which fees are waived annually as part of the fees, fines, and other charges to be set or charged by the City in the ordinance adopted with the budget starting with the fiscal year 2023-2024 budget and continuing thereafter.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

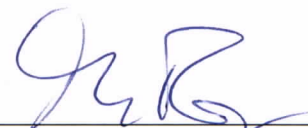
The City Manager is directed to engage the Austin Energy Utility Oversight Committee in a review of all Austin Energy sponsorships and to consider the merits of Austin Energy continuing to sponsor the AE Science Festival, including as subsequently renamed if applicable, beyond 2023 as part of its mission to be “Customer Driven. Community Focused.”

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to engage with area school districts, municipalities, and counties to encourage them to share in the financial costs associated with the regional science festival.

ADOPTED: December 8, 2022

ATTEST:



Myrna Rios
City Clerk