

RESOLUTION NO. 20230420-026

WHEREAS, the Save Our Springs Initiative regulations (City Code Chapter 25-8, Subchapter A, Article 13, or "SOS") are vital to protecting the Hill Country's rich network of water resources and to Austin's long-term water management plan; and

WHEREAS, alongside the City's vitally important commitment to SOS and longstanding tradition of environmental stewardship, there is also a need for consideration of the unique challenges that development of particular tracts can present; and

WHEREAS, the Barton Springs Segment of the Edwards Aquifer (the "Aquifer") is a unique underground system of water-bearing formations in Central Texas, wherein water enters the Aquifer ("recharge") through the ground as surface stream inflow and rainfall infiltration, which is rapidly transported into the subsurface via solution conduits, fractures, faults and the intrinsic permeability of the rock, and leaves the Aquifer through well withdrawals and spring flows; and

WHEREAS, the springs complex known as Barton Springs is located inside the municipal boundaries of the City and is the primary, natural outlet for water flowing through the Aquifer and the only known habitat for the Barton Springs Salamander, *Eurycea sosorum*, and the Austin Blind Salamander, *Eurycea waterlooensis*, which are species listed under the federal Endangered Species Act; and

WHEREAS, Barton Springs is an important recreational, cultural, historical, and ecological resource for Austin and Central Texas; and

WHEREAS, the Aquifer is a federally-designated, sole-source aquifer, which serves as a primary source of drinking water for tens of thousands of people and is a vital resource to the general economy and welfare of the City and the State of Texas; and

WHEREAS, increasing the amount of clean water entering the Aquifer will benefit the Aquifer, Barton Springs, the Colorado River, and aquatic and terrestrial species dependent on this water; and

WHEREAS, the City has substantially invested in preserving water quality and quantity in the Barton Springs zone; and

WHEREAS, the City, through land purchases and conservation easements, now protects over 33,000 acres of land in the Barton Springs recharge and contributing zones to benefit water quality and quantity, including over 47 percent of the land draining to Stoneledge Quarry; and

WHEREAS, the City purchased an 86.4-acre tract (the “Wenzel Tract”) in northern Hays County that includes an 18-acre quarry (the “Stoneledge Quarry”) within the aquifer recharge zone using open space bond funds in 2002; and

WHEREAS, the Hill Country Conservancy assisted in both the purchase of the land and ideation of a project to enhance the recharge of the Aquifer; and

WHEREAS, the City proposes to construct, operate, and maintain an Aquifer recharge project at Stoneledge Quarry (the “Project”) that will divert flood flows above 50 cubic feet per second from Little Bear Creek through a diversion channel into Stoneledge Quarry, where the water will slowly recharge the Aquifer thereby increasing Aquifer storage and enhancing flows at Barton Springs; and

WHEREAS, the City has obtained from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality a water use permit, for the off-channel impoundment of 383 acre-feet of water for storage in Stoneledge Quarry; and

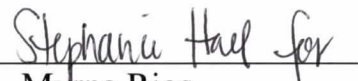
WHEREAS, the Project is a cooperative effort by the City, Lower Colorado River Authority, and the Barton Springs/Edwards Aquifer Conservation District;
NOW, THEREFORE,

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

Council initiates site-specific variances and amendments to the Land Development Code, including site-specific amendments to City Code Chapter 25-8, Subchapter A, Article 13 (*Save Our Springs Initiative*), as are necessary to allow for the completion of the Little Bear Aquifer Recharge Enhancement Project and directs the City Manager to return to Council with the necessary variances and amendments as soon as possible.

ADOPTED: _____ April 20 _____, 2023

ATTEST:


Myrna Rios
City Clerk