



BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Joint Sustainability Committee

Recommendation Number: (20230726-XXX): Regarding Proposal to Eliminate the Independence of the Offices of Sustainability, Resilience, Equity, and Civil Rights

WHEREAS, the purpose of the Joint Sustainability Committee is “to advise the council on matters related to conservation and sustainability; and review City policies and procedures relevant to the Austin Community Climate Plan and the Austin Climate Equity Plan, including planning, implementation, community engagement, goal setting, and progress monitoring”; and

WHEREAS, it is the duty of the Joint Sustainability Committee to “promote close cooperation between the council, City management, City boards, commissions, committees, and taskforces, and individuals, institutions, and agencies concerned with the politics, procedures, and implementation of the Austin Community Climate Plan and the Austin Climate Equity Plan with the goal of coordinating all similar activities within the City and the community in order to secure the greatest public benefit”; and

WHEREAS, the Office of Sustainability is central and essential to the implementation of the Austin Climate Equity Plan and the Equity Office and Office of Resilience have important supporting roles to play in the implementation of the plan; and

WHEREAS, direct access to the Office of the City Manager and at least being on equal status with other city departments is essential to promoting cooperation between all departments in achieving full and timely implementation of the Austin Climate Equity Plan; and

WHEREAS, each of the offices of Sustainability, Equity, Resilience and Civil Rights were intentionally created as independent offices as a result of extensive community input with the intention of ensuring that the principles that guide the work of these offices are established as core priorities for the city; and

WHEREAS, the scope of the work the offices of Sustainability and Resilience engage in goes well beyond that of the Planning Department; and

WHEREAS, the Chief Sustainability Officer should be able to advocate for sustainability initiatives directly to the Office of the City Manager and city council, without going through another department head; and

WHEREAS, promoting equity improvements in the Austin community is a priority within the Austin Climate Equity plan; and

WHEREAS, merging the Equity Office, Office of Civil Rights, and Minority Business Resources Department reduces the influence that these priorities will have with the Office of the City Manager and likely with City Council because only one person will be responsible for advocating for the priorities of the combined department;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Joint Sustainability Committee recommends that the offices of Sustainability, Resilience, Equity, and Civil Rights remain independent and autonomous offices that report directly to the Office of the City Manager.