



**Electric Board  
APPROVED MINUTES**

**REGULAR CALLED MEETING  
October 18, 2023**

The Electric Board convened in a Regular Called Board Meeting on October 18, 2023, at the Permitting Development Center at 10:15 am.

**Board Members in Attendance:** Victoria Shope, David Johnson, Gabe Flores, David Deshaine, Delwin Goss, Christian Spies, Michael Grant and Ben Brenneman

**Members Not in Attendance:** No Absences

**Staff in Attendance:** Rick Arzola (DSD), Josh Davis (DSD) Mark McClendon (DSD), Aaron Finney (DSD), Hyatt Dunn (DSD), Joan Wilhite (AE) David Tomczyszyn (AE) and Joey Hernandez (AE)

**PUBLIC CITIZEN COMMUNICATION:** Todd Purcell owner of Purcell electric addressed the board along with staff from Austin Energy on his concerns on policies and procedures that Austin Energy is enforcing on electrical contractors trying to follow the AE protocols but are unable to do so due to the cost of service that AE is charging and the limited staff that AE is providing due to the hours of operation. Board staff members are requesting AE to review the Contractor Disconnect Program (CDP) for a better solution, longer work hours and a program that is beneficiary to the contractor and customer and the cost of service to be more manageable to both parties.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

1. The minutes were approved for the September 20, 2023, regular called meeting on board member Johnson motion, board member Brenneman second the motion. Motion passed on a 8-0 vote.

**DISCUSSION**

**2. Austin Energy (AE)-Discussion of future infrastructure, winter preparation, transformers/meters and contractor disconnect program-** David Tomczyszyn of AE addressed questions from board member David Deschaine regarding current and future infrastructure that faces Austin with the growth, winter preparation, transformers and meter cans and the future of the disconnect program.

On future infrastructure, AE staff indicated that there is a 5-year Capital Improvement project (CIP) that focuses on future infrastructure anywhere from transmissions, substations and major feeders and are beginning to look at areas that are beginning to get overloaded by projected growth in the city as well as hotspots such corridors, that are being developed in the city for higher population density. Austin Energy has an entire group looking at this and did hire an outside consultant to look at future needs of Austin for the next 10 years and are trying to be more conservative and looking at solutions toward power plant, transmission and sub stations levels including data centers, hospitals and health care facilities which are on a uprise so that developers can look at load forecast of these facilities, from 1 to 10 years out to determine if additional substations will be needed to meet the demand from Ercot.

Infrastructure with car charging stations, there are several companies putting charges in around town, which are currently being handled by the AE design team. Currently in pilot program phase 2, which will allow customer designs. Phase 1 was for 3 external designers working with customers but obstacles such as material and equipment are different in what Encore or Centerpoint are using which is creating a learning curve with AE. Home charging systems, with the development of mixed-use subdivisions, are collectively larger loads which requires planning stages and can include new feeders and or substations. Fortunately, these are known in advance, so that long time power can be accounted for. On the distribution side, it has improved significantly but can get better. Transformers inventories are published on the AE website along with wire polls and are adequately stocked but there are quite a few on back ordered. Transmission substations will continue to be a problem for another 5 years. Equipment is about 4 years behind.

On winter preparedness, AE Joan Wilhite addressed that staff are checking substations to make sure they are up and running with gas supplies and sufficient batteries to keep it operational. Currently there are 81 substations in the city that are being monitored daily with a checklist of supplies needed to keep it going. AE has hired 4-5 companies to monitor vegetation around town, with trimming however are being careful with oak wilt and the gold cheek warbler which can cause delays in certain times of the year. One of biggest problems is homeowners not wanting their trees trimmed. Staff is looking for a better process for mutual aid from other jurisdictions for assistance as in the last ice storm there were limited plans in place for safety.

Joey Hernandez with AE metering confirmed that his team does not energize meters or do installs on residential with small loads, under 350 single phase and anything under 225 3-phase. In that his team is more CT instrumental rated meters, which are inspected and stalled. Also include maintenance and high build test. Does assist with the meter engineering team who owns the specification on meter sockets.

Electrical board inquired if AE has a committee/workgroup for discussion on the Austin Criteria manual that can meet and have discussions on metering and other issues. AE responded that the city has enacted a change for criteria manual going forward by creating the TARP committee, which any changes made to the Austin criteria manual around the city would need to come from this committee to view impacts and or any financial changes that may impact services.

Contractor disconnect program for commercial properties, there are no plans for this now. AE staff are quietly making some changes in process where Electrical Service Planning Application (ESPA) have created a meter review team for commercial properties to be responsible for review on ESPA applications and all other documents asked to be submitted. Dates have not been determined but the goal is Dec. 1. but more work is needed to notify the public for specific instructions. Master electrician and or engineer will be- required to fill out the application.

**3. Code Enforcement on the Electrical Ordinance-** No discussion took place as a representative from Austin Code was unable to attend. This item will be moved to the next meeting date.

**4. Commercial Plan Review Update-** Commercial Plan Review acting manager Mark McClendon provided that staff continue to be on time and that October has been a busy month with an uptick in submissions. Currently seeing many issues with addressing which is causing a high number of revisions taking place.

**5. 2023 Electrical Ordinance update-** Commercial Supervisor of Electrical Inspections Hyatt Dunn updated the board the NEC electrical ordinance will go into effect on Nov 1, meaning projects submitted on or after Nov 1 will abide by the new ordinance.

**6. Service Center Staff and workload update-** Service center manager Josh Davis updated that all work today has been distributed to service staff for processing and have been able to take advantage of extra time to focus on training for new staff members and get them up to speed on more difficult processes.

Have been working with Debra Fonseca and Rick Holloway on updating the commercial applications for stand alone permits as it is not necessarily clear in the verbiage of the application and are trying to focus on the terminology that contractors use in relation to verbiage on the application. Currently this has created unresolved service tickets of 200 or more and are trying to get under 100 so that staff can start returning their calls within a 24-hour period.

Staff did launch a new program where General Contractors can log in and assign themselves to Building permits, which have been done manually before, however the program has not launched as of today as staff is monitoring for any bugs in the system that will create potential issues. This program will hopefully cut down on additional service ticket requests for this type of service.

**7. Commercial and Residential Inspection update-** Commercial Electrical supervisor Hyatt Dunn indicated one new member has joined his team that came over from the Residential side with now a total of 6 inspectors in the field. Currently there are a few carryovers as the staff has been extremely busy with inspections with an increase of 80 inspections to well over 90-130.

Residential Supervisor Aaron Finny provided that staff is slowing returning to speed as 3 current inspectors have passed their electrical exams and attain their certification to comfortably now work in

the field handling residential electrical inspections giving residential staff a 94.5 percent next day inspection ratio. Currently 3 vacancies are with the residential team.

**8. DISCUSSION AND ACTION-** 2024 Electrical Board Schedule. Board member Johnson approved the calendar as submitted, board member Goss second the vote. Motion passed 7-0. Board member Shope was absent from this item.

#### **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

1. Electrical Ordinance 80.38 Suspension of registration-Discussion with Building Official
2. Code Enforcement on Stop Work orders related to Electrical Ordinance
3. Commercial Plan Review update
4. Service Center Update
5. Commercial and Residential inspection update

#### **ADJOURN:**

Board member Brenneman made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Board member Goss seconded the motion. Motion passed 7-0. Board member Shope left the meeting prior to adjourning. The meeting was adjourned at 11:43 am.

Minutes were approved at the March 20, 2024, meeting on board member Brenneman motion, board member Goss second the motion. Motion pass 6-0. Board member Flores, Deshaine and Cochren were absent from the meeting.