

Austin Neighborhoods Council
Minutes of General Membership Meeting
Austin Energy Building
January 27, 2010- 7:00 PM to 9:20 PM

7:00pm Call to Order and Introductions

7:10 pm Travis County Chief Appraiser Patrick Brown & Commissioner Sarah Eckhardt on commercial & residential appraisal process and changes in 2009

Eckhardt- Vast majority of county budget comes from property taxes. (Some money from fines and fees.) Need to increase sophistication of property tax assessment. Brian Rodgers has report with interesting suggestions for increasing interaction between TCAD and the taxing entities it works with while maintaining necessary separation between appraisers and local governments. Stark difference between appraised value and what commercial property sells for. There are senior and disabled discounts for those property owners as well as homestead exemption. Also discounts for historic properties. Appraising property in categories. Blunt instruments, not progressive. Difference between highest and best use and the resident's use.

Brown- Appraisal districts were established in state law in 1979. Before that the taxing entities each did their own appraisals. To protest you had to do a separate protest for each. Most appraisal districts were established between 1982 and 1984. Appraisal board for TCAD has 9 voting members and one nonvoting member, Tax Assessor Nelda Wells Spears. TCAD's budget is made up from jurisdictions it serves. Tax calendar starts in late fall- fieldwork, look at new building permits and new subdivisions. Create new accounts for new lots and new subdivisions. Inspect new lots for improvements. Also look at digital images. Look for permits for additions, substantial remodels. That period ends Mar. 1. Mar.-Apr. TCAD does valuations. Protests need to be filed by June 1st. Valuations for personal property normally go out late May/early June. Protest period from Apr.-Oct. usually (this year ran until Dec. and still have a handful to do in Feb.) Protest process- owner meets with appraiser and learn how they valued the property. Property owners provide info specific to the property like cracked foundation, no carpets, in floodplain TCAD doesn't know about. If don't come to agreement with an appraiser about the value then about two weeks later there is a formal hearing before a 3 person panel of the appraisal board. The appraisal board comes from wide variety of backgrounds. Appraisal review board order will be the basis of your new valuation, which you get in the mail. If owner not pleased with board order owner can litigate in District Court (most settle; about two cases a year end up going to trial) or owner can go to arbitration. Arbitration can be by mail, by telephone or in person. Appraise residences through market approach. Appraise commercial through what seems most appropriate for property. May use cost approach, sales comparison or income approach to appraise. Income approach is used for higher-value commercial properties when TCAD can get enough info. Sales comparisons are hard to get for many kinds of commercial property. Cost approach is used when TCAD can't get the info needed to do it one of the other ways. Zoning limits what the upper end of the appraisal range can be. TCAD has a staff of 6 people- very hard to keep up with all the zoning for the properties appraised.

New legislation in 2009- Arbitration now can be used for contesting valuation of residents' homesteads valued at \$1 million or less. Arbitration filing fee is now \$250 instead of \$500. Established fines for ex-parte communication between appraisal review board and appraisal district outside of appraisal review board hearings. Comparable

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sales need to be within 2 years of the appraisal. Residential homesteads now may be appraised only as residences and not for commercial value.

8:10 pm Councilmembers Bill Spelman & Sheryl Cole and City of Austin Public Works Director Howard Lazarus on neighborhood cost-sharing, matching grants program

Cole- Katherine Gregor at Austin Chronicle brought the idea to her a couple years ago, sending her the link for the program in Seattle. Spelman and his staff were important helping bring it to fruition. Rolled the program out in northeast Austin.

Spelman- had floated the idea for this type of program the first time that he served on Council but was the public works director at the time was not supportive of the idea- did not see a way to use volunteer labor or donated materials as part of the match. The current director is much more flexible.

Lazarus- any sort of group can apply. The burden is on applicant to build consensus in their neighborhood about the project. Cost share 40% for small project costs, 25% for medium. Cost share may include cash, fair market value of donated goods/services, cost of donated materials, estimated value of volunteer labor. Will take applications quarterly, but will work with applicants that have grant application deadlines to take into account. Evaluation board consists of director of public works, neighborhood housing and community development and planning and development review.

Timeline:

Gathering input through end of Feb. Develop program by 2/28/10

Advertise and have town hall meetings through 3/31/10

Application deadline 5/31/10

Review/select projects 6/30/10

Everything will be on website as it is approved by Council and Manager. If there are projects that neighborhood wants to start before program starts neighborhoods are encouraged to approach public works sooner.

Neighborhood matching fund will come from public works dept. budget (for the part the department does) and allocated in the budget.

8:35 pm Joan Bartz (North University Hills) on Texas HB 216 (by Rep. Jose Menendez) protecting elderly & disabled residents in group homes. Task force's goal is to improve health and safety conditions for elderly and disabled residents. University Hills, Coronado Hills, Windsor Park and Pecan Springs are the neighborhoods that have been dealing with rogue group homes. Excessive number of emergency calls at rogue group homes. Rogue homes have operated under city radar for 14 years. (Since a 1996 letter from city about Supreme Court case). The proliferation is mostly in those four neighborhoods. There was no recourse at the city level. So task force went to the legislature. City of Austin did not participate in development HB 216, which was to prevent discrimination against disabled (mentally, physical or age disability) in matters of health and safety. Bill took effect 9/1/09. State has come up with initial draft model standards. There will be a hearing on the draft standards before HHSC in Feb. City of Austin passed a resolution this fall directing staff to work with HHSC as it developed

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model regulations, but when she asked HHSC, Bartz was told no city of Austin staff have started to work with HHSC on this.

Brief discussion of ANC developing a resolution about this.

8:55 ANC Resolutions & announcements

8:55 Annual Membership Dues due NOW. Cory Walton

8:56 Resolution on use of remaining housing GO-Bond Funds (rollout) Bo McCarver

9:00 801 Barton Springs Rd. PUD *Cory Walton. Waterfront Advisory Board hearing Feb. 8th and Planning Commission Feb. 9th.*

9:01 Waterfront Overlay and Density Bonuses- Cory Walton

9:02 Neighborhood Plan amendment process & PUDs- Cory Walton

9:03 Comprehensive Plan, Meetings in a Box- Jeff Jack

9:15 Heritage Tree Ordinance- Cory Walton. Goes before Council Feb. 4th. (What's going to Council is the original staff recommendation from September; board and commission changes have not been incorporated.)

9:19 Problems with outdoor music permitting process. Daniel Llanes

9:20 PM Adjourn