

# DRAFT

## Resolution of the Austin Neighborhoods Council Regarding the 2012 Charter Revision Recommendations

In January 2008 and again in June 2009, ANC approved resolutions recommending geographic representation on the Austin City Council, with the understanding that any at-large seats remaining on the City Council would not outweigh the representation from geographic districts. On August 25, 2011, the Austin City Council appointed a charter revision committee to recommend plans for the addition of geographic representation to the council election system and other charter amendments described in Resolutions 20110428-048 and 20110623-094. As the 2012 Charter Revision Committee (CRC) begins its deliberations, the ANC executive committee presents the following resolutions to the ANC membership in an effort to clarify our positions on the election system for the City Council and on the various other charter amendments before the charter committee.

### **1. Resolution regarding the number of geographic election districts:**

*Whereas* the election models currently before the CRC for six geographic districts and three at-large seats do not appear to meet the criteria of previous ANC resolutions or to provide fair and balanced representation for the protected minority populations of East Austin, as required by the Voting Rights Act,

*Therefore, be it resolved,* that ANC recommends that the CRC and Austin City Council place a charter amendment before the voters in 2012 establishing a minimum of eight (8) geographic districts for the election of City Council members.

*Be it further resolved,* that ANC will submit 8-4-1 and 10-district proposals to the CRC in compliance with the districting criteria and guidelines in City Council resolutions 20110526-024 and -025.

### **2. Regarding the timing of City Council elections and term limits:**

*Whereas* Austin's citizens have long valued the nonpartisan nature of city council and school board elections, and

*Whereas* the May election date allows citizens and candidates to focus on local issues, without competition from statewide and national campaigns,

**A. *Therefore, be it resolved,*** that ANC does not support changing the City Council election date from May to November.

*And whereas* terms of less than 3 years are likely to place the City Council in a state of perpetual campaigning and to reduce the ability of council members to represent their districts effectively,

**B. *Therefore, be it resolved,*** that ANC does not support changing the length of City Council terms from 3 years to 2 years.

*And whereas* Austin's citizens have long valued the continuity provided by staggered terms for local elected bodies, and

*Whereas* 60% of Austin voters rejected a proposal for concurrent City Council terms in a 1994 charter amendment election,

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**C. Therefore, be it resolved,** that ANC does not support changing from staggered to concurrent City Council terms.

*And whereas* a primary benefit of geographic representation is to increase the accountability of elected officials to their constituents, and

*Whereas* reducing the number of terms that a council member may serve from 3 to 2 would appear to reduce that accountability and deprive citizens of experienced representation,

**D. Therefore, be it resolved,** that ANC does not support changing City Council term limits in conjunction with the addition of geographic representation.

**E. Be it further resolved,** that if the CRC recommends changes to the timing of elections or to term limits, ANC requests that they be treated separately from any charter amendment establishing geographic districts.

### **3. Regarding campaign contribution limits:**

ANC supports indexing of council campaign contribution limits as presented to the CRC.

### **4. Regarding fundraising and officeholder accounts:**

*Whereas* a primary benefit of geographic representation is to reduce the cost of campaigning and to reduce the influence of money in council elections,

*Therefore, be it resolved,* that ANC does not support the creation of an additional 30-day campaign fundraising period after city council elections as presented to the CRC, and

*Be it further resolved,* that ANC does not support the increase in council officeholder accounts from \$20,000 to \$40,000 as presented to the CRC.

### **5. Regarding the city attorney, city clerk, city auditor, and Planning Commission:**

*Whereas* ANC has previously supported similar charter amendment proposals,

*Therefore, be it resolved,* that ANC recommends that the Austin City Council place charter amendments before the voters in 2012 allowing the city attorney to report directly to council, allowing council members to appoint their own staff directly, allowing the city attorney to appoint deputy city attorneys directly, allowing the city clerk to appoint deputy clerks directly, allowing the city auditor to appoint deputy auditors directly, allowing the AISD board to appoint an ex officio representative to the Planning Commission, and aligning Planning Commission terms with City Council terms, as presented to the CRC.

### **6. Regarding the number of petition signatures:**

ANC supports the charter amendment matching the number of signatures required for an initiative and referendum petition with the number required for a charter amendment under state law, as presented to the CRC. (This would reduce the requirement from 44,414 to 20,000 signatures.)

### **7. Regarding the deadline for submission of petition signatures:**

ANC does not support changing the deadline for submission of petition signatures from 30 days to 60 days before the date that an election must be set by the City Council.

**Presented to ANC Membership: 28 September 2011**

**Scheduled for Adoption Vote: 26 October 2011**

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