

CITY OF AUSTIN

Enhancing Public Participation at City Council – Transcript

Highlighted Citizen Comments

1/22/2015

[5:39:59 PM]

>> Mayor Adler: Good evening. We'll gear up this first meeting. So good evening. I am Austin mayor Steve Adler. If you would take a seat, there is a quorum present so I'm going to call this meeting of the Austin city council to order on Thursday, January 22, 2015, city council chambers, Austin city hall, 301 west second street, Austin, Texas, and the time is 5:40 P.M. We have one item on the agenda -- the first item on the agenda tonight is to approve a resolution which would direct the city manager to establish an administrative process allowing councilmembers to reduce their annual salaries, to reallocate the funds to other areas within their office budgets. In a second I'll ask if there's a second to that motion. I'll make that motion. Is there a second to that motion? It's been seconded by don, Mr. Zimmerman. Before we move to debate on this motion, I just want to talk real quickly about the schedule. This meeting on this item has been noticed for 5:30. The public discussion on the second item will begin at 6:00. So council, we're going to move through this item here and then we need to break and then reconvene at 6:00 because there are folks joining us from lots of different places. With respect to this item, I think we should discuss it ever so briefly because what we're going to do, I think, Ms. Houston, if it's okay with you, as we discussed, we're going to bring this up and then we're going to postpone it until next Friday on the 29th for action. And that will give the council some opportunity to be able to see if there's additional flexibility that they would like to build into this. There's been some

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conversation about other councilmembers and they want to talk to hr and I think will give people time. And then we have a work session next Tuesday we can talk about it and then act on it on the 29th. This is an item -- so we'll move in to debate and I want to talk about it for just a second or two before we'll entertain a motion to postpone until next week. I want to begin by saying that -- of the time that your council, the 10 people on this dais, are already spending doing their jobs. Lest there be any question in the community, everybody, the councilmembers from all 10 districts, are earning well beyond what they're paid for in salary in order to do this job. This is a job that people are doing by -- motivated by a desire to improve the community and to provide public service. I made this motion because Diane and I happen to be in a unique position. I grew up inner city DC, went to college and law school on scholarships. When I came to Austin in 1978 I had dreams, and Diane and I have been blessed or lucky or fortunate enough to achieve things that I didn't even know to dream about when I got to Texas in 1978. So we're in a unique position to be able to take our salary and to rededicate it to increase the capacity of the mayor's office by bringing in additional staff so that we can better handle the constituent concerns that

are coming in and to deal with the policy ideas of trying to help us move forward in a new way on things like affordability and transportation and

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supporting our schools and water and so many other things. But I think that puts us in a rather unique position, but it's something that Diane and I want -- but I want to again make real clear that this is in no way should be taken by anybody to suggest that the compensation that councilmembers are being made in any way truly compensates for the time that I see these folks spending. So that's what I wanted to say about it. Ms. Houston, do you want to say anything about it because you and I both co-sponsored this resolution. >> Houston: Thank you, mayor, I am representing Dunn and I am retired from the state and also being eligible for social security. And because of the promise of my people to the district is that I would be out in the community and have town hall meetings and have one Saturday early month where they could meet me in the place in the district, but in my community you can't ask people to come to something without offering them something. They have to have some food and something to drink. So I need to be able to redeploy that money to be able to do those kinds of things in the district. I also want to do some capacity buildings with interns at houston-tillotson university and being able to pay them is one of the reasons that I helped to co-sponsor this resolution. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you. Is there any further debate on that? Ms. Garza? >> Garza: I did want to add some to the discussion here. And because I understand the overall goal is to give councilmembers the latitude to adjust things in their

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office budget, the framing of it, and reallocating funds, I understand that, but the framing of it and the reducing individual salaries, I'm concerned because for me 10-1 was not only about the public having more accessibility to their council, it was about the public having accessibility to sit on this dais. And I'm concerned about the slippery slope of possibly prohibiting -- and the political pressures some may feel in prohibiting some working class families, working class people who don't have supplemental incomes and are not in other people's positions. And it might prohibit them from seeking a place on the dais. So I'm glad that this is being tabled because I was going to ask for that and I hope that we can maybe reframe this on so we don't set up a situation where we're in a position like legislators who earn next to nothing and then have to end up working for lobbying firms. And I think we can all agree there's a big conflict of interest when our legislators are also working for lobbying firms. So I hope we can maybe reframe this so we don't prevent any future people who specifically someone from my district wanting to run for council and not having that supplemental income and feeling some kind of political pressure and they have a family to support. Thank you, mayor. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you. And I certainly agree with that. Is there any other debate on the dais before we ask for the public input? And I think there's one, Jennifer Mcphail here? All right. >> [Inaudible]. >> Mayor Adler: Hold on one second, Ms. Mcphail. >> My name is Jennifer Mcphail. I'm with adapt of Texas.

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We wanted to come here tonight because we were very enthusiastically in favor of making city process more accessible and more usable by every citizen, but in particular the group that we represent, people with disabilities. The governmental process a lot of the time, the political process in general is not very physically or communitywise accessible to us because so many of us have barriers in terms of physical needs or time and space it takes to get here or different things like that. So when you're forced into situations where people have to come here at 10:00 A.M. On Thursday and stay until 4:00 A.M. On Friday, that can be very taxing no matter what your situation. And in particular about this item, the one thing that occurs to me is that there's this attitude that developed over the years at city hall that if you spent the most time here or you sacrificed more, then you've earned a badge of honor. And I hate to see people on the dais forced to give up money because they feel a pressure or asked to keep money or whatever, things going back and forth, because it becomes a macho contest about who sacrifices the most. I don't mind people taking more than what they need, but I also don't want anyone demanding more of the citizens either. Just make it fair for everybody. >> Mayor Adler: So let's work on it and thank you very much for the testimony. And I think that that's the intent. And let's work on it over the course of the week. We have a work session that's going to be coming up on Tuesday where we can address it further. >> Yes, sir. And if you could do something -- there used to be like a table that worked as an accessible dais for people that were mobility

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impaired. If you could bring that back, it would be good. >> Mayor Adler: We'll do that. >> And we'll talk more on the next item too. >> Mayor Adler: Great. Thank you. Thank you. I would entertain a motion to postpone this until next Thursday. Ms. Houston and Mr. Zimmerman seconded it. All those in favor say aye? Opposed nay? So it passes with a vote 11-0. With that then we have handled the first item. The next item we have has been set for a time certain at 6:00. We can't start that meeting any earlier, so we'll stand in recess here for the next 10 minutes or so. And then we'll reconvene at 6:00. Okay? Thank you.

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>> Mayor Adler: All right. Is everybody ready to reconvene? I want to welcome everybody to the Austin city council meeting being conducted in city council chambers downtown. We're now to the second item on the agenda, which is the opportunity for the council to receive suggestions and comments from the community with respect to a proposal that's been made. A lot of us ran in this election suggesting that we should change government, make it a little bit more thoughtful and deliberate if we could, to increase the meaningfulness of public engagement. And to that end right out of the box this council is trying to do that and to consider and set new rules for how we would deliberate and operate. It's the intent of this to increase the quality and the effectiveness of

public engagement. I think people who watched what happened earlier today in the debate have already seen that this council is determined to move in that direction. For today's hearing or today's session we have had the benefit of the public information office that has taken this charge and this responsibility very seriously. We have not only postings on speak up austin.org that have been available and many members of the community have already contributed, but people have been emailing --. We also have people in the community that were called over this last week alerting

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them to this hearing taking place today, and just a few minutes ago a call went out to 50,000 people in the community suggesting to them if they wanted to stay on the line that they could participate in this meeting either by talking or through their touch tone. If you do not get called and have the opportunity to join in either by telephone, you can always tweet or send a message or go online. If you don't get selected in this room to be able to have a chance to talk, know that this is just the beginning of the conversation. That everybody can go online. When this meeting ends at 9:00 tonight, I'll stay in this room taking suggestions from people until the last person leaves. And my understanding is that other members of the council are also going to stay in this room as well to receive comments from people that are here. We also have a Spanish interpreter. If anybody is present here and wants to give suggestions or -- accommodation. So that is also available. So we're going to go ahead and begin this process. And like many of the things we're going to try, we haven't done this before, we're going to see if it works. And if it works, then that's great and we'll incorporate it. And if we run into problems or situations that we could have done better or done differently, then we're going to learn by it and then the next time we'll change doing this. So let's begin. Larry, you have -- are here to help facilitate this evening. Would you tell everybody who you are and introduce yourself to everybody. >> Thank you, mayor. Good evening, everyone. Good evening, everyone. So welcome to those of you who have joined us in the chamber and those of you who are watching on television or listening on the

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telephone. I'm Larry schooler and I oversee public engagement for stint in a role created by the public information office about five and a half years ago. It's great to be with you tonight and you will have opportunities to participate, mayor, in a number of different ways as you indicated. Folks will be able to participate the old-fashioned way by raising their hand and asking to be recognized and being able to come up and speak. But if you're watching this at home and you would like to participate, we have other ways for you to do so. You can call in to a toll-free number that's both in English and in Spanish. In English it's 888-440-1932. In espanol, [speaking in Spanish]. I hope I did that right. Si. You will also be able to text in your comments. There will be some poll questions that will be going up on our television screen here in a moment that you will see at home and you will see in the chamber and whether you're sitting here physically in the chamber or watching at home you will be able to text in your response in both to multiple choice

questions and to open response questions. So whether it's via regular old-fashioned coming up to the mic and speaking, calling us up on the telephone and pressing zero to speak to a call screener to get on that way, texting or tweeting will hopefully accommodate every form of participation we can tonight, mayor Adler. >> Mayor Adler: Okay. And what about after this the meeting? We have probably at this point over a thousand people that are on telephone, more joining in. We have lots of speakers in the hall that want to speak. If people don't get a chance to participate actively tonight, how can they participate after this meeting is over? >> Well, mayor, some folks may be accustomed to thinking of our 311 hotline for strictly a customer service function, but in the last year or so we've really repurposed 311 to through a community engagement function if. For those who don't have the opportunity to participate tonight and would like to use their regular telephone to leave a message to make a comment on the phone you can call 311. We also have a new mobile

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app for 311 where you can leave your comments. As the mayor indicated before, we will keep speak up austin.org open through Monday, January 26th. So if you have comments you would like to make online, can you do that at speakupaustin.org. That's speakupaustin.org through Monday, January 26th. >> Mayor Adler: That sounds good. As we go through -- before we begin, is there a way for you to poll the participants that we can see who is on and who they are? >> There absolutely is, sir. We'll do that right now. I'm going to ask for first poll question to go up on the screen and for those who are listening on the telephone, the operator is about to give you our first poll question. So we want to find out what council district you live in. So if you're here with us in the chamber you can use a paper survey if you would like or you can use this electronic survey with your cell phone. So if you're using your cell phone what you're going to do is you're going to send a text message to the telephone number 22333. Again, that's 22333. That's the phone number you're texting to. And initially you will text the phrase Austin Texas gov all spelled out, no spaces. Again, that's austintexasgov. Once you text that message that's essentially going to plug you into our system and then you can just choose the letter choice that corresponds to your district. So if you live in Dunn you would choose a. If you difficult in drew, B and so on. Make sure you text the message Austin Texas gov to the number 22333. And pick the district by number and letter corresponding. District 1 is a, district 2 B, district 3 C, district 4 D, district 8 H, district 9 I and district 10 -- as I indicated on the telephone for our callers who can listen via phone and

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contribute via touch tone phone. So our results are populating in realtime. It looks as if mayor pro tem tovo's district has a decisive lead in the representation. And here comes district 3 on the March. [Laughter] >> Mayor Adler: I think did you this at a carnival once. >> And down the stretch they come! So as I indicated, we are conducting this poll also on the telephone. At the moment actually district 1 has the most number of callers participating for councilmember

Houston's district, but the other districts are also fairly well represented. So again, what district are you living in at the moment? You can do a paper survey, you can text in. Anyone who is watching on TV or the internet tonight can watch on this poll. It's not distance sensitive. It doesn't matter where you are in relation to the computer. It's all based in the cloud on the internet. So we'll give it just about five more seconds or on so to finish this poll and then we'll move on to our next poll. But this is a nice way to give us a snapshot of who is participating. Boy, that district 9, I tell Ya. All right. We'll go ahead and close this first poll and move on to the second one. I think mayor and council, this will help to give you all kind of a sense of some of the challenges that your constituents are facing or their habits I should say initially in terms of how they have typically tried to communicate with the city council. The question is when you've communicated with city council or other city officials what has been your favorite way to do so or your preferred way to do so? Is it a, calling a city council office, B, calling 311, C calling a member of our staff or the city manager's office, D, sending an email to council or city staff, E, using social media, F, posting to speak up austin.org or G, attending one of the many, many, many in-person

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meetings that the city of Austin conducts. So you can vote as you just have with just picking a letter. Once you've texted austintexas.gov you can also tweet it with your answer and there's also a web address if you would like to use a web browser to cast your vote. So if you're listening on the phone your operator should be advancing you to that next question. Interesting to see the number of folks who attend in person meetings as their preferred way to interact, but certainly email is very popular. I want to point out that speak-up austin.org in addition to having the 200 or so comments on this alone has about 3,800 registered users who have joined the site over the course of its three and a half or four year history to participate in a number of different forums on a number of different topics, but we've also used aggressively social media to solicit feedback from the community. To that end if you're listening tonight and want to make a comment via Twitter you can use the #myatxgov. So what's your favorite way to communicate with the city? Cast your vote for the next five seconds or so and then we will move on. >> Mayor Adler: Larry, the results that you're seeing from people who are on the -- do you have results that are coming in from other sources on this? >> At the moment -- all of the results that are coming in via Twitter and text and web are right there on the screen for you. The ones that are coming in by phone are available to me as well and they're trickling in as the operator -- >> Mayor Adler: Do you see a different pattern from the telephone different from the kind of pattern we're seeing on the screen? >> To a degree. I'm noticing that there are a healthy number of citizens who do prefer to make a telephone call ironically enough. They picked up the phone tonight. They prefer to make phone calls than anything else. So that's so far what I'm seeing on the telephone vote. But I'm going to have the operator continue to poll that question as the night goes on to see what we're hearing. But typically we do have a

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significant difference between what callers tell us and what our audience participating in this way tells us. All right. I think we're ready to move on to our third and final question here in the introductory section. And here what we're asking is what would you say is the biggest challenge or impediment around providing input to the city council? What is the biggest reason that it's difficult for you to provide input to the city council? Would you say a, it's not convenient to do so, B, there's not enough information about what they're considering, C, not enough time to give input before that decision is to be made, or D, you're not aware of opportunities to provide input. Again, a, it's not convenient, B, not enough information to know what's being considered to give input, C, not enough time to give -- give input before a decision is to be made. It seems like your council proposal tries to address all these challenges on one way or another. That's one reason we wanted to know what folks thought were the most pressing of the challenges. We did not provide an all of the above choice. I'm sure they're posing this question on the phone as well. It looks right now as if not enough information is the majority pick, but number of folks also expressed not enough time to give input is the most pressing reason. So quite a number of folks feel that they are unaware of opportunities to provide input. It is certainly difficult sometimes for us to effectively reach the broad Austin population giving the number of people who are trying to get the public's attention these days. So the that can be a real challenge. Mayor, before I hand things back over to you, I want to make sure that our callers are are aware that we will be taking comments from them that are germane per your preference, for the council's preference. If they press zero they will speak to a call screener and that will enable me to get the right caller on at the right point in time.

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But that is the conclusion of the polls that we're going to ask here in the open and we can turn things back over to you. >> Mayor Adler: Larry, thanks a lot. Very interesting. And welcome everybody here again and welcome everybody who is listening on the telephone or otherwise. Obviously this is going out on channel 6 and on the website. Councilmembers, there are a lot of people here who want to participate. We have a group of folks, almost 40 here that have signed up. There will be people on the telephone that want to be able to come in. Under the standard rules of the old council, the prior council, there would be three minutes allowed for people to talk. We could limit that if we wanted to, we could start at three minutes and just see how that goes. I guess I would ask people to recognize that there are a lot of people that want to talk that this is not the case where people give their testimony and then a vote is about to happen. We're going to be taking input throughout the evening and over the week. So if anybody who gets selected to speak is willing to donate their time back to the group, the group as a whole to keep that time in the pool before 9:00, that would certainly be appreciated. Maybe we start this way and see how people do in terms of sharing time with their neighbors and not cut that immediately at this point and see how that works for people to help accommodate. We're going to go ahead then and start and give people the opportunity to give us input. We have a councilmember from Round Rock, **John Moman**. Is he here? Thanks for traveling here to Austin. Why don't you start

us off. >> Thank you, mayor,

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councilmembers and city manager Marc Ott. This is amazing. This is exciting. I think what I'm seeing here tonight is really awesome. I think where you guys are headed and where you're going with us is going to make a big difference in Austin moving forward in a very positive way. Like I said, I'm a round Rock city councilmember. I was elected in may of '09, reelected in may of '12. And I chose not to run for reelection this year, so my term ends may 28th. So I've got some mixed emotions about that. It's been a real great experience for me. I've made some good strides. I think Round Rock has done really well. We've got a great council, we've got a great staff and a wonderful community. I love living there. Just to give you an example of something that we did in Round Rock that is an opportunity for the forum that you're establishing here I think to kind of give you an idea of where things could go in a positive way. We had a group of engineers, architects, contractors, real estate brokers, developers that came to a council meeting in December of '09 and were -- made a presentation, they had a spokesman, a guy by the name of Ron hey good, owner of wrath construction was with a group of about 30 people and just talking about the way we did business with regard to permitting, development, construction, inspections and on so on that wasn't going so well back at that point in time. And so we as a council took that seriously and there was a -- the mayor appointed me and Chris Whitfield as a small group to go study this. And we came back with a

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resolution that was passed in January of 2010. I got a copy of it. Can that be put on the screen? >> Mayor Adler: Is there a way to -- and you have 38 seconds left. >> How much? >> Mayor Adler: 38 seconds. >> It's a one-page resolution that is basically about customer service, not compromising code, life, safety or the environment, but just making things happen. And we've had a lot of success, a lot of compliments on the way things have been done since that point in time. And I think I'm out of time. So I appreciate you and what you're doing and I'm real proud of Austin and this city council and this community. >> Councilmember, thank you very much. Thanks for participating. >> Thank you. >> Mayor Adler: As kind of a brief overview of what we're doing here, mayor pro tem tovo, would you just generally explain what we're doing? >> Tovo: Sure thing. I'll be very brief. I know a lot of you have -- would like the opportunity to speak. We are, as you probably have heard, trying to improve the process through public input, early in the process, and a very significant element of that is looking at the way we structure and schedule our council meetings. So some of the issues with regard to scheduling council meetings that are on the table, some of the proposals we're considering would be to hold more frequent council meetings with the aim of helping make sure that those cou council meetings end at a reasonable hour. As I look around I see lots of you who have been here at 1:00, 2:00 in the morning, and we are very committed to trying to make sure that our council meetings end at an earlier time. We might also consider rotating council meeting agendas on a regular schedule both

to save the public time, but also to save staff time. And that might look like having particular council meetings that are devoted to zoning issues.

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So zoning issues might only be taken up, say, on the second or third week of the month. And then the third that falls into this category would be to move executive sessions to a day other than our council meetings, so they wouldn't fall in the middle of a council meeting, but they might be held instead during a council work session on a Tuesday before the Thursday meeting. So those are some of the ways in which we are looking more globally at the council meeting schedule to see if we can make some changes that would address some of the issues. >> Mayor Adler: Great. Let's have some public comment. Frances McIntyre? And then we'll call Paul Robbins. >> Good evening. I'm Frances McIntyre with the Austin league of women voters and I want to thank you for opportunity to talk to you tonight. You all look very comfortable in your chairs. [Laughter]. I have read the proposed -- that was the backup material for this meeting. The league of women voters believes that democratic government depends on informed and active participation at all levels of government. The league further believes that governmental boys must protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding public meetings and making public records accessible. The league is greatly concerned about transparency as well as the ability of the public to participate in decisions made by the city council. Transparency of public bodies means that everything you do should be available to the public. The best example of transparency of a public body, which comes to mind, was the independent citizens redistricting commission. From the application process to the drawing of the district maps, everything was either televised or on

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the website. All meetings and deliberations were televised, even the hiring of staff. And meeting minutes, as well as comments from the public and the commissioners, were available to the public through the website. Council can do that too. The following comments relate directly to the proposed city council deliberation process. Under your goal, we certainly approve of your attempt to make the system more friendly to citizen participation. On bullet number 2 we suggest that you not refer to the public as customers, but rather constituents. Under the proposed process changes, number 2, I've heard that some of the 13 committees will have to meet places where they cannot be televised. This definitely does not fall under being transparent. We are concerned that moving almost all public comment to committees rather than the full council would not only be confusing to the public, but might create a perception that they do not have access to the whole council. And number B also under the proposed changes it states that limits will be placed on public comment for council meetings. It says, quote, maintain the ability to receive public input at council meetings if, and it outlines two scenarios that would deny citizens from speaking to the full council. One, if they had already spoken to a committee. And two, that they would have to request to speak by four councilmembers. There really should be no rules that limit who

can speak at the full council. On number 3 we really appreciate -- [applause]. [Buzzer sounds] Is that my three minutes? May I finish my last paragraph? >> Mayor Adler: Yes. >> Thank you. We appreciate your effort, your continuing efforts to enhance access to the

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minutes and the backup materials, etcetera. The league understands that you're trying to improve the efficiency of the council structure and meetings, and we applaud you for that. We just want to make sure that you have the word transparency foremost in your deliberations. It is your job to protect the citizens' right to know and to facilitate participation in government decision making. Thank you so much. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you very much, Ms. Mcentire. [Applause]. >> Council, I am Paul Robbins. I am an environmental activist and consumer advocate. First, would you show the slide? I want to show you something that you might find interesting. This is a graph of the number of cou council meetings between 1978 and 2014. You probably knew the general trend, but these are the actual Numbers. As you can see, the number of meetings has decreased markedly over time from a high of 62 in 1981 to only 27 last year. The low point was 24 in 2013. I applaud your efforts to have more meetings and leave before 3:00 in the morning. I am, however, worried about some of the proposed changes that will deter public participation, not enhance it. I will speak to two of these. And they're very similar to what Ms. Mcentire spoke on. The first concern is a proposed limit for -- to limit time for public hearings at council meetings. This has been done on occasion in past councils. Typically by limiting hearings to an hour with each side getting 30 minutes each.

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This kind of approach short changes everyone. The council does not receive a lot of valuable information. People who have waited patiently for hours do not get a chance to speak, and in some cases it's impossible to pick a side. I mean, this is Austin, after all. How can you pick one of two sides when there might be five or 10 sides? The second concern is the committee structure. Expansion of committees does not bother me. What does is that public hearings that take place in committees with as few as three councilmembers, if one of the four leave, that that means that these same public hearings may eliminate or take over what a regular council meeting would hear. Instead of three or four councilmembers hearing it, the entire council should hear important issues. Those are my comments. I hope you will take them in regard. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you. [Applause]. Larry, do we have anybody on the telephone? >> Mayor, we do. Lori is calling from district 3 tonight and she had some comments about some of what she's read related to committee structure. So Lori should be with us now. Lori, if you can hear me, please go ahead. >> Yes. I just want to make sure that these committee hearings are going to be held at a time that working people can attend, after hours or on weekends. That's all I have to say. >> Thank you very much, Lori, for that comment. >> Mayor Adler: And I think we've heard from lots of people that have also expressed the desire and need to make sure that committee hearings are held

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at a time when people can participate, people who work. It's a good point and been made by many. >> Mayor, if you like, we can take another call if you would like to go to another speaker. James is joining us. We don't know which council district James lives in, but if possible I want to try to bring James on. He specifically mentions having difficulty getting to public meetings that are being held here at city hall. So James, if you can hear me, please go ahead. >> Yes. I'm just wondering why -- I live in district 1 with Ms. Houston. I don't know. I hear promises, I hear the whole city council from way baeucoup years, my father was there with Tom Miller and I came up in politics in this city. I know what it's like. I would like to have more of a district area -- if they're going to represent us in our local area, district 1, 2 and 3 lump together, have a big meeting once every month or so there. Go somewhere else and have the same meeting in another group during that time. If they're going to be paid to represent us at that city council, then do it in a true fashion and manner. Long time ago when Austin was small, yes, we could go down there, not get killed in traffic when you've got so many people here who do not have a driver's license. In my area, which is area 1, I'd like to see something done more forceful in bringing meetings to the group, not scattered here and there. I know it's hard getting downtown. I can't drive in that madhouse. So my question is I'd like to see it come to the area, even if Ms. Houston wants to, once a month. Go to these meetings with city council, bring it back.

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Then next month you can vote on what we've discussed. If she says no, our area says no, two or three other areas says no, then you know that the majority of the people of the Austin says no. And they're against what you're trying to do. But I don't think we the citizens get enough time to participate in this. There's not enough room in this city to go down there and participate in these meetings. There's nowhere to park. >> James, thank you very much for your comments, and I think that he said, councilmember Houston, he was living in district 1 and had jibed very nicely with what you were saying at the beginning of the night withholding regular meetings in the district. >> Mayor Adler: And we've also heard that comment from a lot of people who have not and aren't able to come and attend council meetings here because they maybe live too distant. And they were looking for an opportunity to be able to engage actively in the formation of resolutions and ordinances even if they're doing it by email or by phone, but in a way that's actually material where it actually gets incorporated and has the ability to incorporate into Evan actual ideas. So James, thank you for that. Next speaker that we have would be suntanal [indiscernible]. And then Joe bassy. Did I pronounce your name correctly or close? >> Close enough. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you. >> Good evening, mayor and councilmembers. My name is (saying name) And I'm president of the srcc, south river city citizens neighborhood association. On behalf of ssrcc I would like to first congratulate you all for being the first 10-1 Austin city council and a special congratulations to our district 9 council woman Kathie tovo.

[6:41:07 PM]

Today I bring to you four questions from ssr for you to consider as you work to refine the public process. The first one, and this may be more of a question of clarification, is if a council committee declines to take action or rejects a request, do citizens have the ability to garner support from at least four councilmembers to have their case heard before the full city council?

>> Mayor Adler: That's the proposal on the table, yes. >> Okay. And the second question is we're concerned about representation from our district council person on committees that are important to our neighborhood association, like the planning and neighborhoods committee. And so we ask how will councilmembers be assigned to these committees? And our third question is if our district's council person is not on a committee in which we have a case to be heard, would there be a way to request that our district council person be allowed to sit in on a specific case? And our last and fourth question is, it seems that one of the reasons why city council hearings often take so long is because interested parties often feel it's necessary to get as many people to speak as possible for certain issues. And people feel the need to speak. And even if they're repeating things that others have already said to drive the point home. We have felt this is necessary in order to overcome the disproportionate sway that agents, especially lawyers in contested land use cases, seem to have over some councilmembers. There seems to be a lack of trust on both sides. On the one hand we're not sure if our emails are being read and that we're truly being heard. And so we impress our point upon the council by packing the house as much as possible. And on the other hand, council doesn't seem to quite trust the neighborhood representatives who claim to speak for the entire neighborhood, like me. So how will this new city council address this issue?

[6:43:08 PM]

So with that, the new city council is to create a more efficient public process and to increase engagement with our citizens and we look forward to a new and better process. Thank you.

[Applause]. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you. She asked some questions about appointing and about council. I don't know if we want to go straight to -- whether we want to respond to things now or whether we want to use the time to get the answers. I think Ann is going to be -- in pieces we have -- >> Mayor, I would recommend that you or someone answer them so that others who may come and ask the same questions, so we can clarify them now. >> Mayor Adler: All right. I'll answer the first one of those and then we'll pass them around the table. The first one was who appoints? Under the proposal the council collectively have offered to give me the ability to do that so that I can talk to each member of the council and find out where they need to be. And to be able to make sure that we have representation among the council. That is a responsibility and honor that this council has -- has extended. I take it as a real good sign that a council that a lot of people were concerned about whether they could move together as a group at all could move forward on something like that. And I promise to do my best to respect and reward the trust that this council is offering to give to me. The next question was about what about if your council person is not on the council. Someone want to respond to that? >> With regard to the committees

and the way that we anticipate them operating, any councilmember can go to and participate in any committee, whether they're on it or not. And you know, we've talked amongst ourselves and in talking with folks in our district, we fully expect to

[6:45:10 PM]

participate in any committee where there are items that we've brought forward or where there are items of particular interest to our districts, and so yes, councilmembers can participate in committees whether they're on that committee or not. >> Mayor Adler: Okay. The next question went to dealing with the number of speakers or the perceived credentials of speakers. Someone want to respond to that? Okay. Ms. Troxclair. >> Troxclair: I'm hoping what we will find in this new council structure, the 10-1 system, is that you will hear back from your representative. I've had the same frustration when I'm on that side of the dais of feeling like I've sent emails and I don't know if anybody is getting them or if anybody is responding. So my responsibility as the district 8 representative has been to be accountable to the people in my district. I have, you know, not only just set up an auto response to let people know that I received their email, but have also personally responded. I've tried to personally respond to every single /the city/constituent who has contacted me thus far and addressed their issue. So my hope is the further we go into the system not only will you have the opportunity to of course participate in the public input process through the committee structure, but your councilmember will also make sure that you are feeling adequately represented and that they're responding to your issues and concerns. >> Casar: Mayor, if I may speak to that also briefly. As someone who has spent many hours myself making hundreds of phone calls or sometimes thousands or also helping volunteers do so so that this house can be packed when it has to be packed, I think that the current committee structure

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still creates the opportunity for that to happen because I think that it's an Austin tradition to some extent, and then also there is something to be said that it's not just about the input that is coming to council and what we are learning, but that the time that our citizens come and spend here when they come and speak to us, that that is important. So we are trying our best to preserve that in front of the full council when we can, but also have public engagement at the committee level so we can do more public engagement. And then second, I know that councilmember pool will speak to us later in the program, but as far as the call that was made around having more meetings geographically being disbursed, I know some folks will have questions about accessibility to the council or language barriers. We know that this structure isn't going to solve everything on public engagement. So just so you know, Ms. Pool will be talking about a taskforce we'll be creating to keep working on this and to come up with more answers. So we know that this is -- I don't think any of us are pitching this as the answer and so this is a continuing conversation. So thanks for y'all's time. >> Mayor Adler: Sounds good. Larry, do we have somebody else. I'm sorry, Ms. Gallo? >> Gallo: There was a question about the relationship

of the neighborhood associations and the concern that councilmembers and council offices would listen to what they presented. So in fear of that, packing the house with voices instead of listening to the summary from the neighborhood association. And I want to say that I know most of the offices, most of the councilmembers are looking at this process, this 10-1 process and being very responsive and really tasking the neighborhood associations to help us be the voices, to help be the voice that comes to us with the issues and concerns. One of the things that I know my office is going to work on is to help neighborhood associations be able to produce a survey that can go out to their partnership. So it will not just be the voice of the neighborhood people that show up at the meetings, but also the people that have young kids

[6:49:11 PM]

at home that can't come to the neighborhood association meetings. Or for whatever reason don't want to do that. But we'll be able to hear the entire voice of the community as we talk about different issues. >> Mayor Adler: Okay. Do we have a phone call? >> We do, mayor. I wanted to make sure also to highlight a couple of tweets that have come in in regard to the discussion tonight. One person defeated new council committee proposal lacks explicit stage for review of public discourse. News and blogs, Twitter debates, etcetera. Another tweet that came in had to do with a specific committee. For the committees listed didn't see technology or technology innovations. How will this be covered? There also was a tweet that actually came in before the meeting even began that says we're going to the public hearing to speak in favor of open data for improved agendas and minutes. So those were a couple of tweets -- again, the #myatxgov. Mayor, I do have a call if you're ready to take one or if you would like to respond. >> Mayor Adler: Let's respond real fast. Ms. Pool, do you want to respond? >> Pool: Yes, I'll love to respond to the Twitter about technology and innovation. We do indeed intend a committee. I think on the list it's toward the bottom and it's called innovation and creativity -- of industries and I am going to recommend that we --. And I want to make that really clear. That is an area that is very important to me personally. I sat on the telecommunications commission years ago and learned a lot and it's also an element of workforce development and skill set that we all need to be productive in the 21st century. So yes, technology will absolutely be -- have a resting place with the council committee. Thanks. >> Mayor Adler: Okay. Phone call? >> We do have a call from

[6:51:13 PM]

district 4 tonight. Dorothy is joining us and I think actually has a comment about some of the technology we're using this evening. Dorothy, if you're there, please go ahead. >> Yes, sir. I just want to thank the mayor and everyone for this wonderful opportunity to participate because I don't have a computer and this is just the best thing that ever happened to Austin, Texas. And I thank you and I will be listening all the time. Thank you very much. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you very much for participating. Thank you. We're trying to give as many people as many different ways to participate and to lower the barriers for participation. Joe bassy? Is he available? Is he in

the room? How about Monica? Monica -- nuevo lord? Ma'am, did I pronounce your last name -- >> Please, I'm begging because [indiscernible] In the city of Austin sending their boss to kill me in my apartment. They shoot something in my mouth through the light on the table. They shoot something in my ear and the doctor pulled it out at Brackenridge. Please, can the city hall come and see how messed up with the electricity.

[6:53:16 PM]

My telephone is now walking. I have TV, I have computer but they're not walking because I don't allow them to walk. My phone too. They raise my bill to \$100 and I'm on assistance. They broke my neck for the injury I had in the post office. And I went for surgery for one year. It is the bad guys and I know those people. If the city don't handle it, I will stay for them to kill me. I'll go back to Washington. I tell them that, the city don't want to protect me. >> Mayor Adler: Ms. Lord, is there someone -- >> That's all I came to say. Thank you. >> Mayor Adler: Manager, is there someone that can visit and see if there's an issue that we might be able to help with? The next speaker -- thank you, ma'am. Scott Johnson. >> Good evening, mayor and council, Mr. Ott, city staff. Thank you for the opportunity and welcome. One of the greatest challenges from my perspective in terms of the agenda is when a citizen or business representative or city staff is down here in the morning expecting an item to be heard before the lunch break, there's a couple of barriers. One is the briefings. If those are going to be changed or modified that could help. But the next is citizens communication. I want to keep citizens communication, but would like to see that moved to later in the day and still provide some time certainty. What happens when you're down there as a citizen or business interest or some of the department directors or other important staff that are waiting and then have to come back after lunch is that we lose effectiveness

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as an organization. I would propose that with the slimmed down agenda citizens communication could be slotted at 5:00 or 5:30, possibly before the proclamations and the live music. We signed for citizens communication last year say in January or February, if those same folks continue to sign up monthly and sign up in November and December and it's the same subject line that they're trying to get you to understand or help on, there may be an opportunity to offer an office meeting to them and possibly reconcile this issue. Help them with it. I'm not saying that that's a certainty, but that's something you should look into because obviously there's folks that sign up every third or fourth meeting when they're eligible. They can't sign up every meeting anymore and that code change I think was up time for people that have trouble calling between 9:00 and 9:15 the Thursday before one of the meetings. Another opportunity is to try to get as many items through before the lunch break. And hopefully all these things can help there. Regarding some of the committees, mobility should be a committee, but when you plan for the mobility of our region and you neglect to integrate the land use planning, then that's one of the reasons why we have the challenges that we have, that we don't give people options and we do not plan our city

better. Another opportunity is that I believe that we should add to one of the policy deep dives, we should add air quality, climate or integrate the two. We tend to look at climate as being something that is very important, which it is, but we tend to forget that while they're interrelated, there's two issues there. There's ground level

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pollution and there's pollution that rises to the stratosphere. And that could be added to one of the committees in open space and environment and sustainability. I would encourage the council and the staff to add -- [buzzer sounds] -- Sustainable economic development as well. That's been an opportunity for sometime. Thank you for your time. >> Mayor Adler: All right, Scott. Thank you. Do we have a phone call? Let's do that. Charlene is on the line, I don't know from what district, with a comment about improving efficiency for participating in city meeting. Charlene, please go ahead. >> Yes, precinct one, if that's what you're speaking of, to the members on the council. I like this phone communication. I hope it's a success for more citizens to put their input. We would like to know when we give our input that it made a great difference. It would be nice to know that because of the citizens, when there's a police brutality or a young man or woman has got killed, or the city of Austin is liable for something that, you know, damages needs to be awarded, that our -- the panel do not always have to go behind the scenes to make a decision whether we're going to pay for these damages or the citizens also will not be accountable. And we would like to be behind that scene when you make that decision, because you represent the citizens of Austin. So, I would like to see that more are open to the citizens. For so many people who don't have computers and who are not have a busy lifestyle, maybe with major important events

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going on in the city, pushing people out of their districts where they stay in, or in the domain, give the people, the citizens more time to participate, maybe something broadcast underneath the TV screen, because most people watch TV, or a regular broadcast station just for major events when you need more citizen participation. My last comment would be, citizen communication. When you're making decisions with the budgets, for the city of Austin, the citizen communication, I think is so important. It should be separated from maybe a couple days in that week, whenever you have it, separated from making decisions, but you already have input you can go from there for the citizens of Austin. We'd really like to know you use their comments some way, somehow, to say, our elected officials are really listening. >> Mayor Adler: Hearing. >> I want to make sure we'll have a recording of the entire call audio that you can obtain via email separately, so you can listen to with a much higher volume at your computers and so on. >> Mayor Adler: That would be helpful. I don't know who it is that's typing the transcript that comes, I don't know how that happens, but, if that person can hear what's happening on one or two other calls, I was able to read the call, even though I couldn't hear it. But, I can't do that when the screen shows the word clouds. >> It's a balancing act. >> Mayor Adler: So, when we're

having a call, if we could go back to that screen, that might be helpful. >> Sure. >> Mr. Mayor. There seems to be some fans overhead. When those things come on, I can hardly hear anything. It's off right now, but, when it's on, I can't hear the phone

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calls. >> Mayor Adler: Okay. The next speaker is **chip Rosenthal**. Is chip in the room? Okay. Now, you've been donated time from lots of people. That would entitle you to 15 minutes. If you give any of that back to the group, I think people would be appreciative. >> **Yes, mayor, I plan to give a significant portion of that back.** >> Mayor Adler: Thank you, sir. >> **It sounds like the council is going to already take action on some of the technology issues we wish to raise. Thank you mayor, councilmembers, my name is chip Rosenthal, I'm speaking tonight on behalf of an all-volunteer community group advocating for open data. We are the code for America brigade in Austin. Thanks for the opportunity to speak on this proposal. I came here tonight with four points of feedback. The first is that we support being allowed to give our public input at the committee level as you've proposed. That's worked very well for us in the past when we've been able to bring our issues to a committee and have them worked there, the action that moves forward has often been with our support and the council's consent. I think one reason that has worked so well is because the past councils have had a committee that has been dedicated to the technology issues that we've often wanted to address, the emerging tech and telecommunications committee. You know, sometimes we dive into particular subject areas, and it's very good to have councilmembers who are briefed and prepared to understand input, and understand where we're coming from when we present these issues. I came here tonight to advocate**

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for the addition of a technology commission, and I'm fully prepared to take yes for an answer, thank you, councilmember pool. >> Good. >> Rather than go through the long list of issues that justify why I think it's important that we continue a more than decade tradition of having a committee dedicated to these issues, I'd like to point out that a couple of areas I think are very important to this city are the community technology initiatives like grant for technology opportunities program and the Google for fiber communities programs. There is an article that came out just today in the Austin chronicle that talks about a lot of these very strong community technology programs that have come through the city, and those programs have primarily run through our past emerging tech committees. It's very important we maintain that presence. I would dare say in 2010, if we didn't have an emerging tech committee that was prepared to act and recognize the opportunity of Google fiber, I'm not sure we would be getting gigabit broadband in Austin today. And it's -- stepped up to the plate as a result of council, past council acting on that opportunity. Another area that really concerns open Austin a lot is the civic technology area. We do a lot of work with the city, past city council and city staff on the Austin government online initiative. And we advocate for more use of the open data portal, and so we think it's very important to have an emerging tech committee or a committee standing to handle

these issues. >>> Two final points I wish to make. Let me skip ahead in my notes. On proposal three on the speak up Austin site, there is a question relating to minutes, backup, and tracking, and two points of feedback on that. First, in addition to minutes,

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backup, and tracking, we would like to see improvements in the agenda system and support for agenda notifications. The current agenda system is difficult to navigate and has no facilities to stay noticed on a topic. The situation is more dire for council committees and commissions which don't use the system, just post a PDF document. That's a difficult situation on staying advised of council actions, it may get worse if public input is pushed into the council committee process. We would like to propose you include amendments to the system and notification support. Another part -- and this is something, be prepared to hear a lot from open Austin over your term. Every time council comes forward with a proposal for some sort of technical facility, be it a website, an app, whatever, we are going to advocate that your action also include a call to open the underlying public data beneath that. Not just keep it locked up on a website, or behind an app. Let me give you an example of that. When the previous council looked to create an app to do council district lookups so people could find out what district they were in, one of our points of feedback was that's great, but please be sure you release the underlying map data for that. As a result, the community has developed several applications utilizing this data. Our vote atx voting place finder application uses the data. Also, at the atx hack for change hack-athon last year, a hacker did a mashup between the top 311 service calls in a district and showed it on a map. Again, the underlying data is very important to us. So, thank you for the opportunity to present these issues, and we look forward to working with you. Thank you. [Applause] >> Mayor Adler: Thank you. Councilmember kitchen.

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Would you generally go over what we're talking about with respect to the committees? >> Kitchen: Yes, we appreciate the input that we've gotten so far. I want to say a few things about that item number two on the backup. So, just to fill in some of the things we've already talked about, and talk for the committees for a minute. Our purpose is to provide an opportunity for people to tell us what they think before decisions are made. And that's the purpose behind opening up and allowing for more public hearings at the council committee level, because we want to hear that input, and we want to provide for that complete opportunity for input earlier in the process before the final decisions are made. So, we recognize, of course, and we've talked about the fact it is also important to speak to the full council. We've also been talking about the fact that just because a committee has four people on it doesn't mean the public hearing will only be in front of public hearings. We expect public hearings held at a council committee level will have participation from other councilmembers as well. As we have talked about before, we expect to have hearings in front of the full council, and we have given some suggestions about when those might occur. One of those is at the request of four councilmembers. And I want to

clarify that the request of four councilmembers does not go to any individuals that speak, it goes to the actually having a public hearing in front of full council. And those four councilmembers can speak to how that is held. It may be, you know, two hours, it may be three hours, it may be an hour -- want there to be a

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misunderstanding that those four people were talking about who the individuals were that could speak. That's not the case. It's the four councilmembers will speak to the fact that we would have a hearing at the full council level. >>> Let me just say a few other things, because I want to get back to the opportunity for people to participate. In terms of the list of the council committees, thank you for all the input we're receiving on those. What we've done, essentially, is created some additional committees because in reviewing the existing committees we felt like there were some very important issues that the city council addresses that there was no place -- no committee in which we could address them. So that's one of the reasons that you see the additional committees. Also, we appreciate all the feedback, and we certainly recognize that a number of these committees will need to work together. And so, there will be opportunities for items to be held in front of joint committee meetings, and we've given an example on some of the backup material. For example, the mobility committee will need to work closely with the planning and neighborhoods committee, the housing and community development committee. So we fully expect that to occur. Finally, I would just say that we recognize and appreciate what we're hearing about access to these council committees and we're committed to making sure they're held at a time that people can participate, and that we have opportunities for people to see a televised committee meeting, as well as other opportunities to participate. So. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you very much. >> Mayor. >> Mayor Adler: Yes. >> I would like to ask you a clarifying question about something you said earlier. Under this proposal, we are entrusting the mayor with appointing folks to committees, but I believe that under this

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proposal, we are talking about making sure the council ratifies by a majority vote those decisions to create a balance of power between the council and this mayor, or any future mayors. Is that still the current proposal? >> Mayor Adler: I understand I'm on that relatively short leash. [Laughing] >> Mayor Adler: To try to do what's right. Absolutely, that's correct. Yes. >> I think there was an auditor's report that came out. It had several similar-size cities around the country, and they said all of those cities had the mayor appointing the councilmembers, so we're not trying anything new here. That's the way the other cities were working. I can get that report to you. It's quite interesting. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you. Larry, do we have another phone call? >> I wanted to mention a couple of tweets that were related to the conversation. One person is asking, how will people get selected to be on a standing committee? I think I was hearing that answered here a moment ago. One person commented, "Want to see the emerging tech committee remain. The backbone of enhanced edge gaugement is emerging tech." A tweet to that

effect. We also have a caller calling from councilmember Houston's district once again. Andrew has joined us. And Andrew says he has experience on city commissions in the past, so it would be very interesting to hear Andrew's perspective, if he is available. I'm going to wait and see whether we can bring him up, mayor, to speak to us. I believe he's there. Andrew, if you're there, please go ahead. >> I'm here. And honorable mayor, councilmembers, I'm really excited to have this unique opportunity to call in to city council. This is great. And I think it's a great start to the way of doing business. So, I just wanted to share some thoughts and experiences I had. I've been the chair of two city commissions, and served on the

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committee. And being involved with various citizen input in the process. But, what I've noticed is that sometimes the communications that happens from the citizens to the citizen committees commissions doesn't always make it to the council subcommittees. So, I think as we move forward with this process, it's going to be really important that we look at how that information gets conveyed, and to make sure that there's understanding of what the roles of the citizen commissions and committees are, and that the decisions and the citizen input that happens there gets conveyed to the council subcommittees. So, really to look at that in an organizational way on how we can improve that communication, I think will really open up a lot more citizen participation that's already occurring flowing to the council. Thank you. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you. I think that was one of the things that we were trying to deal with. There were a lot of people that served on boards and commissions, and sometimes we'd spend hours talking about language on something and then when they would watch the city council deal with the same thing, they would watch the city council kind of blow right through that language and they'd be looking at each other and saying, wait a second, there was a lot more involved with that. Now the way it works, when something comes from a planning -- a board or commission as a recommendation it will be referred to a committee that will deal with it. Beyond that, that committee, when it's meeting, can invite a member of that board or commission, the chair or designee to sit with the council on the dais while the public testimony's being taken in order to increase that measure. So, we see this as a real tool and an opportunity to increase that measure of involvement. And remember, there are lots of different ways, under this process, that things can get initiated. It could come from a board or commission and get referred to a committee. It could be something that one of the councilmembers introduced

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that then is considered by the committee. It could be something the committee working in that area decides to initiate within that area on their own, in their committee. Or the committee process can be bypassed altogether by four council people that say this should go straight to the council. We were trying to increase the opportunities as opposed to limiting them. So, thank you for that call. The next speaker that we have here is Carlos Leone. Mr. Leone. >> Thank you, mayor Adler. I am Carlos Leon, thank you for placing in in Austin Texas tonight to show why

providing greater opportunity for meaningful public engagement earlier in the legislative process and providing greater opportunity to tackle problems are critical to making the council work fairly. You all used five black and five white marshels to unfairly determine your term lengths. Document one on screen and in front of you. The first choosing councilmember had a 50% chance, five of ten, to choose black for a four-year term. If first member chose black, the second choosing member had a 44.4% chance, four of nine, to choose black. But if first member chose white, the second member had a 55.5% chance, five of nine, to choose black. Either way, second choosers chances are different from and dependent upon what the first chooser did. That's unfair. Therefore, the chance for the drawing a four-year term are

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uneven across individual councilmembers, an unfair gain. Therefore, city council should invalidate the unfair marble results and do a fair number process instead. Document two on screen and in front of you. At 11:50 A.M. At the January 2nd council meeting, each councilmember can write down a number between one and 35 inclusive on an index card, sign and date, hand to the clerk, who immediately can read out each member's choice and show the number on camera. The five councilmember's Numbers closest to the powerball megaball from the January 31st draw get the four-year terms. Absolutely means 34 is one unit from 33, and one unit from 35. And a wraparound would be in effect, meaning 34 is two units from one. The sample in front of you and on-screen shows the process in action. Transparent gain. That's a new way forward, mayor. In Jesus name I pray, amen, thank you, mayor Adler. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you. [Applause] >> Mayor Adler: That might be an interesting thing to consider the next time that we go through that process. The next speaker that we have is Stuart Hersh. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you, Mr. Hersh. >> Thank you, mayor and members of the council. My name is Stuart Harry Hersh, like most in Austin, I rent. I support your considering an

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enhanced committee structure. The most successful city council committee I ever saw was the joint council school district committee under mayor Cook. They worked through contentious issues involving code and the time it took for the school district to get remodeling and new construction permits. I know that's not an issue for y'all. They worked with staff on a schedule to allow citizen planning commission codes and ordinances and full planning commission recommendations before the council had its public hearings, and decided to take action. It was a time when council priorities and council schedules aligned with the staff performance measures. Like so many things in Austin, we used to do things better than we've been doing them recently. Sometimes the solution can come from our past rather than an academic best practices research project from some graduate students at one of our local universities. We used to be a best practice on a lot of things, and we have lost our way. And instead of looking to Portland or Seattle, or other places that people tend to show up here and talk about, I suggest we look backward to some of the things we used to do in the 20th century that people thought were

better, and begin talking about whether they may be a better path forward than what we've been doing in recent years. Thank you very much for your time. >> Mayor Adler: Mr. Hersh, thank you very much. [Applause] >> Mayor Adler: Do we have another phone call? >> Mayor, we do. An interesting caller named Jim, who I'm not sure is from which district. He had a comment about our committee structure. Jim, if you're there, please go ahead. >> Yes, thank you for accepting my call, and thank you, mayor, and new city councilmembers. I would like to say, again, thank you.

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But, first of all, one thing that has not been brought up about forming committees that I would like to suggest is a veterans affairs committee, as we have 250 veterans exiting fort hood every month now, exiting the military into the workforce and into, you know, communities around Colleen, fort hood, and, of course, Austin is one of the closest places. We are going to see an influx of veterans coming home from Afghanistan and the war. I would suggest we form a veterans affairs commission or committee I should say to assist the veterans and provide them assistance in the city of Austin if they come to our city. They are the ones that, if you think about it, that is why every committee is in there, why the mayor is there, and why everybody in the room is there, because they fought for our freedom and risked their lives for what you're doing for our city. That's just my suggestion, and thank you for accepting my call. >> Mayor Adler: Jim, thank you. [Applause] >> Mayor Adler: Ann? >> Kitchen: Thank you very much. We will flesh out the descriptions of the committees more. We have anticipated working with the veteran commission, and you just don't see it in the description. Yes, we're thinking that would be under the health and human services committee. >> Mayor Adler: I think the point is well-taken to make that explicit in what we do. >> Kitchen: Yes. >> Mayor Adler: The next signed-up speaker is Sharon Blythe. And then Lou Mccrary. >> My name is Sharon Blythe, and

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I am a long-time advocate for the city cemeteries. And I want to congratulate you. I feel honored to be standing in front of 11 winners tonight. I think there is a glaring omission of the health and human services committee in -- much if you would add that to health and human services. Thank you very much. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you, that's a point well-taken, as well. The goal is to make sure that all the subject matters that are covered by the council would have a home in a committee that would be charged with that responsibility and be held accountable for making sure that their items are addressed. Mr. Mccrary. >> Good evening, Mr. Mayor, councilmembers, I'm in district eight on the board a while ago. District nine was leading district eight. I promise to have a better contingent next time. [Laughing] >> Seriously, I want to thank you for being here tonight. We are proud of this council. We're proud of the election. I watched it all. You survived it. You ran the gauntlet. We know that you have good endurance. We know about your intelligence. And I think this is going to be a great city council for the city of Austin, and I mean it. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you. >> As you know, town hall meetings were the first form of

direct democracy in colonial times, a time and place for citizens to come together and decide how they, not the king, would run their business. By calling this meeting, the town hall meeting, the first town hall meeting for the city of Austin, you're continuing that tradition. I hope that it will continue. I know that the city of Austin is now a big city, but in my mind, and in the minds of many

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of our citizens, we think of Austin as our town. A place of schools, and neighborhoods. A place with beautiful parks, and open space. A place to raise our children. A place of great ideas and good people. All that we ask is that every now and then, when you are grappling with all the wheels of government, take a moment and think of Austin as our town. I believe that that thought will lead you in the right direction. My most sincere thanks and appreciation to all of you as a citizen for your service. [Applause] >> Mayor Adler: Thank you, Mr. Mccrary. Almost 12 months to the day, we first ran into each other, talking about this election. And you requested a town hall meeting 12 months ago. The next speaker that we have is Ernesto Calderon. >> Mr. Mayor, city council. >> Mayor Adler: Yes, sir. >> First of all, let me congratulate each one of you. As a former -- not the former, but the lead plaintiff against the city for single-member districts in the 1980s, you can't imagine how good I feel about coming before you tonight. So, with that having been said, let me address the proposal of the council on citizen input. The -- one of the things I have a concern about is, any kind of reduction in public input before the full city council. Part of making a presentation,

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for example, if I'm making a presentation, part of what I want to do is not only influence, perhaps, the member of my district, which is two, but I would also like to feel like I am influencing the total council in attempting to come to some sort of conclusion. So, anything that might dilute full participation at the full council meetings, I would hate to see come about. But, at the same time, I want to congratulate you for taking a step in the right direction in. And with that having been said, thank you. >> Mayor Adler: Mr. Calderon, thank you. And by way of response to Mr. Calderon, there was a question which concerned all of us. There's no perfect solution here. In a perfect world, we have full public hearings at every stage of the process. But, with 11 people here, and so many issues, it didn't seem like that was workable, so we're trying to find the best balance. But if we have open hearings at the committee level, then it's real important that not only the other councilmembers who weren't there to hear everybody that spoke, or as good as if they were. And not only that, but that the public is as good as if they were sitting at that meeting, and it's easy to follow. Mr. Casar, would you talk to people about transparency, and how we were talking about the record being developed? >> Casar: Certainly. The hope would be that we are coming to decisions as a full body after having watched committee hearings on our own time, that the meetings and minutes would be accessible to us as a council, and if we didn't understand an issue after having reviewed the videos or the transcripts,

that we would postpone those items, or choose to host a public hearing or

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postpone them. My sincere hope is that we'll actually have more public input, not less. That we'll have more meetings, many of which will still go pretty late. And so there are more of us that can take more public input. There was a blog post written by someone who I respect quite a bit, writing that there's an inherent tension between quality and quantity, but, that is you under the assumption that there's a limited quantity we can take. If we have more meetings and make those time certain available for public input, we can expand the quantity while enhancing quality as long as the information that is being delivered to a small council committee is actually publicly available and transparent to those of us on the dais, and I commit to, and I believe my colleagues will commit to, making sure we watch those committee hearings so any public testimony in the committee will, indeed, influence our decisions. Mayor. >> Mayor Adler: Yes. >> What we're trying to do also is, you know, I have served on boards and committees, and I was there for 14 years. So, I know the process that we serve on the board. We make our recommendation. The staff makes their recommendation, and then it goes to the full city council, and then by the time it gets -- we get to the city council, most of the decisions has already been decided. You're going to -- they're going to hear your input and the decisions have basically already been decided. What we're going to do is form a committee where -- so that's the process, that was my frustration when I was serving on the board.

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Is that worked on the commission, and by the time it got to the full council, it was totally different than our recommendation was. So, that's what I feel like this is going to accomplish. >> But we also want to address, and this is critically important, the other side of the issue is the ability of the public to have access to the meeting information. The council meetings, the commission meetings, the board meetings, so that you can track what is going on in whatever way possible. This is a great opportunity for us to be able to work on the city council website, and many of you probably feel like I do that it's not very user-friendly, and it doesn't have information in current time. So, the transparency is not just available to you, but, also available to the public. >> Mayor Adler: We have a phone call? >> A number of posts to #mytaxgov, some of which relate directly to this conversation. City staff will need to engage citizens for input, not after the decision is made. Another comment, we'd like to see council take leadership rather than following staff lead. Make arrows go both ways. [Applause] >> Council to staff and staff to council. More deliberation, more time to gather information and hear views, all good things for new. That's a tweet. Physically packing city hall equals activist tradition, what about written discourse accessible to average moderates? Needs to use tech not only to hear from citizens, but also to make sense of what they're hearing. An interesting tweet, "Not

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nearly enough young people at the Austin Texas special called city council meeting tonight, why is that? "Tweeted. That's all for now. >> Mayor Adler: I spoke to the reporter with the daily texan this weekend as well as yesterday to talk about this meeting, to talk about ways to lower barriers for further engagement, and I think we're going to talk about that subject a little bit more in just a little bit. Next speaker we have is frank Fuentes. >> Mayor Adler, for the record, honorable members of this council, Mr. City manager, for the record, my name is frank, chairman of the U.S. Hispanic contractors. I am a citizen of your district Ms. Gallo, congratulations to every one of you on your victories. At any rate, I'm here to represent not only the -- association. If I could get Ms. Carol to stand up to be recognized, please. The Austin American statesman has, over the years, in a very detailed way, has shown the city how there is a divide. Those that have and those that have not. And lately, I think we've all read how there is an exodus of minorities. So, I'm kind of surprised that at today's meeting, the very first meeting that we are speaking before you is that we're asking for your undivided attention. We see in your new structure, mayor, that the mwbe council subcommittee is being thrown in with a council subcommittee. We're asking for your undivided

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attention. Our issues are very specific, very unique, and I'm not sure that us being thrown into another council subcommittee will truly help us. Our goals over the years have not been met, we've struggled with the bureaucracy and institutional racism that gave us the mwb ordinance. We're asking today, to this council, to help us maintain this bridge to ultimately represent us. You are the bridge to the staff. So, we're asking you to maintain that bridge. We're asking you very humbly to help us. Thank you very much. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you. [Applause] >> Mayor Adler: I believe that was important. That we moved it to the economic development committee because we saw the mission and goal as being more important to the city and broader than -- we saw it being very broad, and part of the mission. So, if -- there's the perception that in any way we've discounted that, then work with us. That that committee is not to remove that scope. >> Again, no disrespect to any of the councilmembers that decided that this was the best thing. I'm sure it was all well-intended. >> Mayor Adler: This is an opportunity, we're asking for your input, so, please. >> No one ever asked us. No one ever had a conversation with the minority businesses of the city if that would work. It seems like a little bit of the old.

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No disrespect to city staff. We could lose it. It's that delicate, and it's that unique, and it is that difficult, at times. So we're asking that our issues really deserve a committee in its honor. And, again, no disrespect to any of the councilmembers. >> Mayor Adler: None taken. >> All we're saying is, no one ever asked us, or else we would have said, small minority businesses deserve a unique opportunity to speak with the councilmembers at their own committee level. >> Mayor Adler: Okay. >> I hope that makes sense. >> No, no. I understand. >> Hello, how're you? >> I'm

doing wonderful, congratulations. >> Thank you, thank you. And I certainly understand the issues that you bring to us tonight. First of all, you weren't asked, except, this is your ask, and you're giving us your feedback. But the other part of it to me is that for years, economic development has kind of been separate and apart from. And I think my feeling was that if we engaged, you know, small businesses, minority business, with economic development, we can make economic development more accountable rather than have them do whatever they do, and then have you guys do whatever you do. And so, in my thinking, it was a way to say to economic development, "These are not stepchildren. These are a part of your family, and you've got to work with them and for them in order to make this work." And that hasn't happened before, so thank you for coming. But I just wanted you to hear what my thinking was. >> Mayor, if I may respond? >> Mayor Adler: Please. >> The ordinance is specifically for minority businesses to do business with the city, specifically city contracts. Economic development is a little

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bit different, from our perspective. There we'll need help with the building permit department. It's very difficult for small businesses to go and let's just say we want to invest in a piece of property. You know, getting it developed is just incredible, and it requires an incredible cash flow -- or financial resource for us to do business with the city. The city already has the projects. It's, how do we do business with them? How do we remove barriers that impede small businesses from doing business with the city? There's quite a difference. We're in there with economic development, we're in there with labor. Ours are not labor issues. Ours are strictly business issues. How do we deal with the city and the city bureaucracy, and all the barriers that are in front of -- not necessarily just minority businesses, but small businesses as a whole. So, it's very different. And so, again, that's why we are asking. Give us your undivided attention, give us your own committee. >> Houston: Thank you so much. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you. >> God bless you all. >> Garza: Not a question for you, Mr. Fuentes, thank you, but, I guess this is a legal question. You referred to the ordinance that created the wbmbe, and if we're essentially creating a new ordinance with the new council structure, is there something in the new ordinance that needs to explicitly say that we're eliminate -- how does that ordinance that created it go away? >> [Off mic]. >> The changes will require an ordinance to make a lot of changes in the current code. So, we will handle all of that. >> So that happens in the drafting of a new ordinance? >> As we draft the new

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ordinance, we'll make all the changes. We're listening to everything going on tonight to try to figure out how to do that. >> Garza: Okay. >> Mayor Adler: Mayor pro tem. >> Thank you, mayor. I wonder if there may be some -- the actually mbewbe ordinance wouldn't go away. The committee would be replaced. I just wanted to clarify that point, but, I wanted to offer to Mr. Fuentes and anyone else who's interested, I wonder if we could do some talking in the next week. I understand, having served on the council committee, I understand the nature of that

committee's work, and I wonder if we might just talk about -- specifically devoted to the kind of work that that council committee did, because it is very specific and it has typically involved hearing from the -- from a liaison on the citizen board who is kind of the, you know, person on the ground working with a lot of the contractor groups. It also involves the councilmembers reviewing the goals and specific projects and how well we're doing at meeting those goals, and so we might find, you know, we might find some other solutions that present themselves. But, I appreciate you being here and the communications you've sent, and you raise a very good point, so thank you. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you. Do we have a phone call? >> Anne has been waiting very patiently tonight. I don't know what council district she's calling from, but her comment relates to the discussion to some degree. If you can hear us, please go ahead. >> Good evening council and mayor. I first would like to say, I'm in Ann kitchen's district. And I am excited for the new mayor and councilmembers have

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kind of lost their way to their constituency. Sometimes when you stay in a place for a good amount of time, you become complacent and you don't hear from the people you serve as much as you should. So I'm excited about the new blood that's sitting on the dais, and very proud of the new mayor, who seems very diverse already. My comment is -- I'm hopeful that -- that work with those populations that are disfranchised, and not just the homeless. Also, not to assume that funding one or two minority initiative businesses or nonprofits is sufficient to answer the consistent pattern of inequity in investment in the black and hispanic community needs. The boards and committees are fruitless if they recommend funding or any other thing and there's no real consideration, much less dollars given to it. So I'm just hopeful that you all look more closely at the funding and those things that have been allocated in the past, and look at more issues and things that are faced -- the minority community needs and that we're faced with, and to help everybody who is representative of your district, black, white, hispanic or whatever, you need assistance because of social ills that they have faced. And I just really wanted to make that comment, because I think that that's important. It's our dollars, and they should be invested equitably in every community. And finally, I think that we have a fine city manager. I think he has done a great job for the city of Austin. And he has diversified the administration at the city of Austin. And I just think that he has done a good job, and I just want

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to put that out there, that you all support him so that he can continue on helping and serving the city of Austin as well. Thank you very much, and congratulations to all of you. >> Mayor Adler: Great. Thank you, thank you for your participation. The next speaker in the hall is -- >> Can I make a quick comment? >> Mayor Adler: Yes. >> Just in response to one of the tweets we heard earlier. The person T who tweeted about the lack of young people involved in this meeting. I wanted to point out, you ever the youngest councilman and councilwoman ever to serve on the council. [Applause] >> And we want to engage the youth of our city. So, please contact me.

Please reach out to me, and tell me how we can work together to engage the youth of our city. >> If I may, we have some student government leaders from our college campus tonight, and the public information office has been meeting with college student governments to discuss ways to better engage college student populations, and I'm being assisted by a couple of current college students. We are trying to make some inroads there. >> Mayor Adler: Great, thank you. In the hall we have Luke, he's left? I thought maybe I had just so mispronounced the name that he didn't recognize it. Jennifer mcFayle. >> Hi, one of the things that I wanted to bring up, also, that had occurred to me once we started talking about having meetings in district areas is that there's a trend in politics to have more official campaigning in people's

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individual homes, and more official -- inaccessible to us. And I've served on boards and commissions many times -- accessible. There were a lot of physical barriers trying to get to those different locations. So, as you go to your districts, please make sure not only that the physical areas of the buildings that you're in already are accessible, but that there's alternative transportation like buses, and trains, and things like that. That's very important. There have been many a late night that I had to go out in oncoming traffic because of lack of sidewalk network or something like that, and I'd really rather not die to give that input. [Laughing] >> Just a preference. [Laughing] [Applause] >> So, making the meeting shorter is great, but also, especially on budget items that have an impact, not in an annual year, but many years through the future, you want more detail, not less. There's been a trend toward -- I'm sorry. Toward sharing less information from the budget online. There's not as much detail. And that's really unfair to all citizens, including you. You'd be amazed at how many times we've saved the city a lot of money from being able to look at something simple. Thank you. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you very much. [Applause] >> Houston: I'd like to speak to your issue. The town halls that I'm talking about will be in the daytime, will be always in either city facilities that are accessible on bus lines, or in other structures that have full accommodations. And so, having been a person that had been very involved with people who have differing abilities, I'm very much aware of the need to have those kinds

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of accommodations, and we'll make sure that people are accommodated. >> Also, not allowing the meetings to determine what comes on the agenda is important. Having an open and inclusive process for many ideas without keeping people here until 4:00 A.M. is important, too. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you. Larry, do you have another phone call? >> I do, mayor. From council district five, Madeline has a comment about communication with council. [Beeping] >> Excuse me, that was the speaker's timer that nearly made me jump out of my skin. Madeline is on the line with a comment. If you're there, please go ahead, Madeline. >> I'm here. Can you hear me? >> Yes, we can. Please. >> Hello, hello? >> Mayor Adler: Yes, hello. >> We can hear you. >> Okay. The schematic that was sent out by the city was kind of terrifying. And I know my way

around pretty well -- there, but -- and before they'd ever get to you guys is a little worrisome. I don't think that's a good term to be using, because, you know, who knows that that commission will be right, you know? The other thing is, this is very important to me, I've been working on this a long time. The 311 operators, we have contract laborers out there. They're our first responders of the first sort. And no matter what, we tell our tourists, old folks, people like

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me, we tell everyone to call 311. And yet, we have contract labor out there. And I have made -- I'm a retired city of Austin employee under to by Futrell, and I cannot believe what I see sometimes out on the street workers. And they don't even have labels on their vests, city of Austin, because they're not. And we're not saving money if they get hurt. So, those are my two issues. And I was so excited to be down there for the swearing in, and I really believe we can just really at least save some of what was Austin, you know. I'm very -- >> Mayor Adler: Thank you very much for participating. Next person, hiwei solovitz, and then tell me how I should have said that. >> Actually, it's hiawa. It took several years. >> Mayor Adler: I promise to do better. [Beeping] >> I'm with adaptive Texas.

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I have some of our issues that I will -- Texas the full council, and don't get our comments or issues watered-down by subcommittees. And I know that other members will speak to those issues. I'll just mention the topics we have right now, and not in major detail. Transportation to make it even better in the city of Austin, sidewalks to make sure curb cuts are there -- are followed and encouraged, and also with housing to make sure any new developments have at least a percentage of affordable housing in them, because we see many new developments around the city. Parks to make sure they are -- the trails are accessible and maintained throughout the city, because parks are a great thing, and we all want to use them. And with that, I will stop for now. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you, thank you. Our next speaker will be Karen Hayden. Is Karen still in the room? Ms. Hayden? The next speaker is Carol rizicki. >> Good evening, mayor Adler, councilmembers. It's nice to be here to speak to you today.

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My name is Carol, I am executive director of Texas rose. My organization works for affordable electricity and a healthy environment. We advocate for low-income customers here in Austin, and actually in other parts of Texas. I am a resident of district seven. But I am here today to make a few comments about this proposal that you have before you to change the city council processes. Now, number one, on the sign-up sheet, it might be nice to have a choice besides for, against, and neutral, because sometimes when I'm here, like tonight, I kind of like your proposal, but I don't like it altogether. But sometimes when I come to talk about things, I kind of don't like the proposal. So maybe we could get some different choices for people to have besides for,

against, and neutral, because sometimes when you kind of like it or you kind of don't like it, it's hard to decide which box to check. Okay. On this proposal, some things that I like. I love the idea of having more meetings, because there are some things that everybody doesn't necessarily have to be here for, and they're not here for all those things. The third thing I like is moving executive session -- complete your deliberation. So, those three things, great ideas. I also like the idea of having committees and more committees, but I have to say -- and I came here, I'm standing here before you to say it out loud in front of you, I don't like the idea of limiting the public hearings to

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the committee process. [Applause] >> And, when you come right down to it, I don't know. A lot of you I haven't seen around city hall a lot, mayor pro tem has been here a lot, Ms. Houston, you've been here for a lot of different occasions. Those of us who are here to speak to city council, we don't talk unless if we think we really have to. We don't make meetings long because we want to make councilmembers miserable. We stay here because we feel as though we, up to that point in time, that we have not been adequately heard. So if your committee process works the way you want it to, you won't have long council meetings because of public comment, because if the issues are worked out properly within the committees, those of us who are concerned about the issues will not have all that much to say. So, I really encourage you to rethink that part of the proposal. >> Mayor Adler: Okay. >> That's my time. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you. >> Mayor Adler: You have another call? >> Whenever you're ready for it. >> Mayor Adler: We're ready for it. >> Barbara is calling, don't know from which district, but had comments specifically to boards and commissions she wanted to share. Barbara, if you're there, please go ahead. >> Yes, I am and I am in district 1. I have a question about boards and commissions and how people are chosen to be on those boards and commissions because what I have run into is that some of the boards -- the people that are on there already have their own ideas and they don't give an unbiased opinion. And they really don't take into account what the neighbors or neighborhoods are looking for or what they need because they've never been out into the neighborhood. The other question is this

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is a new format for everyone and I've been down there when we've had comments from citizens and a lot of times what I'm doing is I'm seeing people that don't even have a horse in the race, but they're commenting on something that should be decided by the neighborhood and the council. Also if your district person does not agree with what the neighborhood needs or wants, how will that be resolved? >> Mayor Adler: Question? >> Houston: I want to thank Ms. Scott for calling in and how much we appreciate that. I'm sure there will be many instances where -- not many, but some instances where any one of the district representatives for whatever reasons might have a disconnect with what the community envisions. And so in those situations once you've gone through the committee process and talked to the four councilmembers and others that might want

to sit there up to five, right? Right? Is that right, up to five? The committee meetings? It's not a problem with a quorum. >> Mayor Adler: No. In fact, every one of the committee meetings will be noticed -- every committee meeting will be noticed as a committee meeting and a full down meeting so that the entire council could show up. >> Houston: So if that should happen, I would suggest then you talk with some of the other people on that particular committee and they will be just as attentive and listen to your concerns and hopefully we will be able to resolve the

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issues. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you. Pinaci Gosch. >> Thank you, all the councilmembers. I have a handout which I have given to everybody, and I do not want to make it too technical, but [inaudible]. I first got involved in some of the city processes when Mr. Ken Murray started the 10-1 process. And it was extremely detailed process which in technical language we call it at the physical level. There is conceptual level, logical level and physical level. And it is at the physical level that we find all the problems. The best gift, you are starting a new 10-1 process, which was not there before. And the best gift that you can give to the city is create a set of processes which will survive, which the city can follow over long periods of time, but these processes cannot be at the conceptual level, they have to be at the physical level because they will keep city's activity limited. We cannot make city better bicycles, we have to keep city activities limited. And that happens with good -- extremely well-defined. So I will request the city council to give us a set of processes, governance processes through which we can understand the city processes easily and we can engage the younger generation. That was my first point. I have given everybody a handout. And the second point I have,

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if four councilmembers can bring a topic to the agenda, if the same four councilmembers can take it to the public hearing, then at this point of time everybody has good relationships, it's great. It's all great. But when people do not have good relationship it turns into a quarterly formation and then you have to think into if four people can bring a topic to the agenda, then you -- another set of four people or five people to bring it to public hearing so that it doesn't turn into a quarterly effort. Those are the only twoments I have. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you. Thank you. Smitty. Is Smitty here? Tom Smith. Jean Crawford? Bill okee? Yes, I'm sorry. >> [Inaudible]. >> I want to thank the previous speaker for putting this together for us. It's very helpful in thinking through the process. >> Mayor Adler: Mr. Okee. >> Thank you, members and councilmembers. I am bill okee with the Austin affordability.com blog. And I consider tonight to be kind of a personal celebration because if any of you have read my blog in the last year, one of the things I mentioned was that back in the 1980's, over 28 years ago, I stood before the city council with a proposal to reform the meeting process. And it was because of the long meetings that I did that. And the next morning in the american-statesman there was an article titled agenda reform proponent kept waiting. I was kept waiting for

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several hours. And so I'm very happy that 28 years later it's finally going to happen. So thank you very much. [Laughter]. I recently went to the Austin history center and actually found that article, and one of the things, one of the quotes they had from me is that if you'll reform this meeting process -- and thoroughbreds. So in reviewing the structure of the committees that you've come up with, and by the way, I think the committee process is generally very good, and I think it's an excellent suggestion. I'm concerned about affordability proposals and which committee the affordability proposals would be submitted to. And the closest one that I see on there is finance, but in looking at the description of the finance committee, the last item says, budget alignment with priorities, policy impact on affordability. It looks to me like that might not be quite broad enough because some of the proposals that I have that others have talked about are things like truth in taxation and doing something about the better transparency on budget surpluses and things of that nature. And of course the giant thing of the 20% homestead exemption. So I wondered if you wanted to expand the scope of that committee and maybe even renaming it budget and finance committee because even outside of the annual budget process, which starts in the summer, there might be issues related to the budget that come within that scope. So I think if you were to revisit that language and consider that it might be helpful. The other comments I had were somewhat similar to some of the other speakers.

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I think that the committee should probably meet after working hours. And one of the things that might be helpful in terms of getting the public input to the whole city council would be if transcripts could be taken of the public testimony at each committee and then those transcripts could be forwarded to the entire council. Maybe that would help. Any way, thank you again and I'm looking forward to meeting with you and I'm looking forward to all of you helping to make Austin more affordable. Thank you. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you. >> Mr. Okee, before you go amp, thank you very much for being here. I know we had some conversations earlier about some way to get -- some method to have time certain, how we could structure to get time certain testimony for people to come in. >> Well, at the committee level, you know, I'm not so sure. Those are going to be smaller so I think they'll be much easier to manage, but the specific ideas I had were related to the general counsel meetings. And one of my thoughts was moving the zoning. I also think that, you know, if you try to anticipate which topics are going to draw very large crowds -- because you can tell if there's a lot of action in the newspaper and a lot of comment coming in to your email about a particular issue, you may want to schedule that issue for an earlier time because all of those people that are coming are going to want to be heard. I can't tell you the number of times throughout the last nearly 30 years that I've seen the biggest group of people being held to the very end of the meeting before they get a chance to speak. I think that should be reversed. Anyway, thank you very much. [Applause]. >> Mayor Adler: Mr. Okee, thank you.

[8:10:14 PM]

Larry, do you have somebody? >> Mayor, as a matter of fact, I do, but I'm a little bit behind on the number of tweets we've gotten in the last little while and we've gotten a number of them. If you don't mind I was going to read through a couple. One of the ones that's gotten a little bit of traction on line says this, anyone else feel the irony that while the city of Austin debates expanding public input, 10 blocks away the Texas legislature works to limit it? I'm directly quoting. Another comment, a couple of comments on committees. Open space is a cross-cutting topic germane to sustainability and resiliency, yes, but also to land use, social and environmental. Committees, some are exceptionally important such as Austin energy, a billion dollar business, more than four should sit. No limiting input to just committees. In my opinion goals of mobility and land use are mutually reliant. Hope to see these two committees forged together. A couple of comments from the same poster regarding committees and the expansion of committees. The prioritization of the committee process could have effect of city insiders who track committees, the ability to track 13, question mark, committees agendas is difficult and not something a majority of citizens are able to do. Swift passage through the committee process does not imply full public vetting or support. The ability to mobilize citizens post the committee process should be preserved and easy. The like the idea of committee hearings. I don't think it should circumvent testimony in front of the entire city council. And I believe also a comment, agree executive session on a different day is great. Thinking back to my first times coming to meetings as a J student, I assume that's journalism, but I don't know for sure. Mayor, we do have a call, but I'm happy to keep it on hold unless you would prefer to go. >> Let's take one or two more in here real fast if we could. I've now learned operating

[8:12:15 PM]

control central here that I need to refresh my screen more. I thought we were pacing this out pretty well, but there are actually 18 more people who have signed up to speak. So let's continue to move through the group the best way we can. So I have **ruby Ra** and then I have Mary Engel. >> **Thank you, mayor, mayor pro tem, councilmembers. I am so excited about all of y'all being on that dais. I look forward to working with each and every one of you. I signed up neutral because I wasn't quite sure. I was going to sit here and just listen, but on this draft that you have I believe that Austin energy needs to be included with public utilities. My experience since I retired from Austin energy, we are -- we are a public utility and we should have the respect to serve the public citizens and what we need at Austin energy, mayor and councilmembers, is a new way forward. We've got to respect these citizens of Austin no matter how poor or how rich you are. And that's what lacks at Austin energy. You can call up there and they'll transfer you to four or five different people, and that happened to me this week when I was trying to help a young woman that her life got cut off in district 1 -- light got cut off in district 1, but it happens all over the city. So please reconsider that and work on the customer service issues at Austin energy. Maybe we need a consumer**

[8:14:17 PM]

protection commission, a customer service commission, some training on basic manners, not only Austin energy, but the whole entire -- some of the city departments. So thank you very, very much. I look forward to working with each and every one of you. >> Mayor Adler: Yes, ma'am. Thank you very much. Thank you. >> Good evening, mayor Adler and mayor pro tem Kathie Tovo and councilmembers. I'm Mary Engle and I'm here as an ordinary citizen. I signed up tonight not for or against. I'm optimistically -- I'm cautiously optimistic about this new committee system. So I'm here as a skeptic and I'm hoping that there will be a place for a skeptic and some other skeptics so that we can keep you on track. And I'm trying to do this for the public record to make sure that skeptics have a place. And if something needs to be changed, we can be more flexible with our system because with all new processes, there are glitches. So having said that, I also wanted to comment on another speaker's comment about being concerned with limiting the public input to committees because there is a potential here for a transparency issue in the deliberation of the full council. How do we know that the whole council has reviewed all of the input? After all, we're only human. There are so many hours in a day, but some input, it might be my case, it might be somebody else's case, but that might be vital to our lives and our quality of life. So having said that, I'm leaving as a skeptic. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you. And there will always be a

[8:16:17 PM]

place for skeptics here. Larry, do we have another call? >> Mayor, we do. I don't know where Annie lives, but Annie has been holding for a long time and has been a long-time Austin resident for just over 50 years. Annie, I hope you're still on and if you are, please go ahead. >> I'm still here. I'm in Mr. Gregorio's district. I came here in 1962 for my husband to go to school and we've been here for short periods since then. I was brought up from the cradle on civic responsibility and was teased not too long ago about being a serial voter, but it's been harder and harder and harder to have any enthusiasm because the city council -- it seems like the names would change and the faces would change, but it would be the same old city council. I think maybe that was because of a lack of openness. This year I just want to give you three cheers. I am just so thrilled to see what's going on. It's so American! God bless you. Thank you. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you very much. >> Casar: Mayor, if you may entertain me for one moment, I think that it's phenomenal that we're getting these calls and I just want to recognize -- I know that a lot of us have been talking about this sort of engagement, but I want to recognize one city councilmember that has really been pushing for us to have calls come in like this, so if we could break the quorum for one second and have a hoot and a holler and applause for councilmember Houston who has been insisting we take these phone calls. [Applause]. And also real recognition

[8:18:18 PM]

for the amount of staff and technical support it must take to run a meeting like this while we're

getting Twitter feeds and surveys and phone calls over the speakers. It's a real feat. I really appreciate our staff that have been able to make this possible. It's really incredible. Thank you Larry and everybody else airtight at I.T. That's made this happen. Thank you all. [Applause]. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you. Our next speaker is bob Kafka. And [indiscernible], you're next and Jeremy Hendrix after that. >> Thank you, council. My name is bob Kafka, I'm the organizer for adapt of Texas and I'm a veteran. And I'm a member of district 9, Ms. Tovo's district. I want to build on what Jennifer said. This July 26th we'll be celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Americans with disabilities. Typically that's only included in health and human services. Accessibility needs to be across all the committees that are created. And not just physical accessibility, but interpreters, alternate format for people and those with cognitive and mental health disabilities also need to be attentioned. I just want to -- I've been told so many times when I don't know about Twitter or Facebook to ask a 12-year-old mesmerizing by technology and don't forget that we don't want a digital divide in terms of people who -- it's not an income issue. Many older people just don't communicate that way. So alternate ways of communication really needs to have input because I know

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that technology is very, very appealing, but it also can really be very narrow to a population that is more educated and knows how to use that type of information. Really concerned about the committee of four council people. And the reason why is because of the 10-1 structure. Actually having four councilmembers in the old citywide election would have made more sense than district because councilmembers, for good or for bad, were elected for their district. And there will not be, we think, adequate input if we can't have public comment to the full councilmembers. So I really want you to look and weigh the pros and cons of doing that. The other thing that might help in terms of input, Jennifer mentioned to me there used to be a comments section when you registered. That was taken out. That might be some way that people don't have written comment, they can actually put that on and if they have to leave early, it runs late, -- I think that should be raised to have more people be able to talk. And the other thing about transparency that I've been very frustrated with is that giving input is fine, but the accountability of -- you know, everything we give input -- [buzzer sounds] -- It will not be agreed upon, but sometimes it's very helpful to find out why you decided not to do it. And that at least builds that your input wasn't just taken and, oh, thank you, pat you on the head. That you get some feedback that we didn't take your comment, your recommendation because. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you. >> That would be very important.

[8:22:19 PM]

>> Mayor Adler: Thank you very much, thank you. Areth panju? >> Hi. I'm a civil rights attorney on the board of the freedom of information foundation of Texas. We safeguard opens records laws and open meetings laws. I have a young family. And in November -- I live in [indiscernible] District and in November I became a whistle blower. For today's meeting it's

important to recognize the transparency is the cornerstone of public participation and the absence of transparency yields the very opposite. In fact, the absence of transparency often gets taken advantage of. If you can put up that notice. I'm just going to give you one quick example where I live. This is a notice for the bluebonnet hills historic district. As you can see it tells us absolutely nothing. We got this in November. Nine days later was the first of three meetings coordinated to reach the outgoing city council and not the incoming city council. Now, I could see the red flags and I showed up and e-mailed an objection that said we need proper notice. I showed up in person to members of the landmark commission and since they're here the south river city homeowners group all said that this is an absurd objection and we should keep going. So that's what they did. I got the city attorney involved. They pulled it from the agenda, told me I was right and now you guys get to vote on this. The reason it's important is because I've seen this before. And it's easy to count to 11. 11 days is the proper notice. And if these things don't become clear, then you're not going to have public engagement and it will get taken advantage of. Earlier today I sent each of you an email and also a member of your staff that summarizes the results of an open meetings act request that -- an open records request that details the lack of transparency, everything about lobbying of

[8:24:20 PM]

preservation office to get this passed, emails from outgoing and still here council members staff to get it passed based on this notice. And tipping off the applicant that there's opposition and coaching them on how they could respond to it. Now, I'm one person. And I decided to step up because I've taken on the government. I litigate constitutional cases, but it shouldn't require someone with my qualifications to recognize how this is going to affect people's property rights. So what you could do when you set up these new -- this new system, this is the very core of public participation. No one knows how they're being affected if they on get something like this in the email and not everyone has someone like me that can see the red flags. If it wasn't for someone like me, right now to change my front door, I would need to get a permit if it doesn't look the right way. That should never happen in our neighborhoods and we should all care about having a meaningful way for us to engage even though some might be politically connected, the rest of us have an equal voice. Thanks for your time. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you. Jeremy Hendrix. And then Roy Whaley. Is Jeremy here? Mr. Whaley. >> Howdy y'all. My name is Roy Whaley and I have the privilege of serving as the conservation chair for the Austin regional group of the Sierra club. As I'm sure you all know, the Sierra club was established in 1892 by John murr, making it the oldest environmental organization in the world. It is a national organization and we have impacted a multitude of environmental improvements and protections. We have the lone star Sierra club is our state group and

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then we have different subgroups. We are the Austin regional group. Now then, the environment is not represented by a district on the dais. The environment encompasses everything. It does not

notice or recognize artificial lines drawn on a map. Therefore we are involved in each district. Every district up here. But we need your help. We need you to help us identify adds volunteers the environmental issues in your district and what we need to be addressing. So please reach out to us. Please let us know how we can work with you because we are ready to do that. Now then, as I look at this I want to point out that yes, we are volunteers. And so when I look at the committee structure, what I see are, as a volunteer, not billable hours, but hours, more hours to be involved in an issue. And so that is a concern, but we don't mind, most of us don't mind, putting in the extra hours if we believe we are getting a result from that. And so it is a struggle for most people. It is for me and I'll be honest, when a change like this comes along, to embrace it. On the other hand, it's not a struggle for me to see that I'm standing on the track of a speeding train and it's not going to slow down. So I'm not going to try to stop this train, I'm going to try to learn how to work with this train. One of the issues I see when I look at this flow chart is that on open space environment and sustainability that we have

[8:28:23 PM]

rivers and Lakes, but not aquifers. And of course aquifers are a concern. And water quality. I was happy to hear the quorum issue addressed. Now, Smitty Smith and Karen weren't able to stay, but we did talk before they left. And we agree that Austin energy should not be a separate four member committee. [Buzzer sounds] You are the board members of a committee as a whole and it should stay that way. And we ask that it do. But replates that with a four-member committee on something that I think is glaringly missing from this. And that is social justice. We don't have a social justice committee on here. Let's keep the committee adds a whole, but let's address our social justice issues. I always say environmental justice is always social justice. But not all issues are environmental issues. So let's please address that and thank you for your time, thank you for your service and thank you for being here. I look forward to having a relationship with each and every one of you. >> Mayor Adler: Mr. Whaley, thank you very much. Yes, Ms. Kitchen? >> Kitchen: Thanks so much -- >> Mayor Adler: Can you put on your microphone? >> Kitchen: Thank you so much for being here and sharing your thoughts. Just to clarify, the thinking is that social justice will be handled under the health and human services committee, so we'll clarify that in the description. Also I think in terms of the energy committee, I think that although we certainly need to have more discussions amongst us, but I think there is a feeling that it should be a committee of the whole. >> Thank you. And also that we should not limit public input at a time when we be moan the lack of voter turnout that we should not limit those that are willing to come down here.

[8:30:25 PM]

God knows I don't want anymore three A.M. Meetings, but I would rather see an issue thoroughly hashed out than to limit it by the time. And there are issues -- there are ordinances we have that we would not have today if we had not come down here and spent the night, watched the sun go down and watch it come back up the next morning. And it's made Austin better in

every way, including the thriving economic engine that we have now. And that comes from our environment here in Austin, Texas. Thank you again for your time. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you, Mr. Whaley. Next speaker is Stephanie guranki. I'm sorry. >> Actually, I might reserve my comment until she's done with hers since she's already walking down. >> Mayor Adler: Mr. Casar, I apologize for not seeing you sooner. >> Good evening, my name is Stephanie and I am the program director of the better builder program at workers defense project. As many of you know, workers defense project is a member-based organization. We have over 2,000 members here in Austin. And we work with low wage workers to help them achieve fair employment. We provide a host of services and also engage in various forms of advocacy. And for the past eight years, workers defense project along with various community allies have been very successful at collaborating with city council to win incredible gains for working families here in the city of Austin. And these victories have been possible because of public input system was in place that allowed our members who are working people, people who have families, people who are working often times upwards of 16 hours a week to make ends meet, these members were able to participate in the public process, share their own experiences and educate councilmembers about their own reality. And that's how we won the gains that we won to make Austin a better place for working families. So as we think about

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improving public input in the years ahead, yes, let's make sure that we maintain opportunities for public input to happen in the evenings so working folks can participate. I would echo many other speakers in urging council to use caution in limiting the opportunities that various community members have to address the full council. I also want to touch on the issue of language access because I haven't heard many comments about that thus far. I hope that that's an issue that the taskforce that's being assembled will address in more depth, but I hope that we think about language access not only in terms of the ability of community members to communicate to council during citizens communication, but also the ability of community members in the audience to understand what's happening during council meetings. Typically workers defense project has had to come with their own interpreters, their own translation equipment. I think maybe council could work to make sure that they provide those services so we don't have to. I'd also language to talk about resolutions transparency because that's not something that's been addressed thus far. There are many instances in which city council has passed resolutions that are directing the city manager's office to come back at a certain date with a proposed policy that the city council can address. And we have found that sometimes those resolutions end up kind of reaching a black hole of sorts and we struggle to meet with city manager to figure out what's going on with those resolutions to figure out what sorts of progress are being made on these resolutions. So as we think about increased input, increased transparency I hope we will think about mechanisms in which the public can have more access to information about the city manager's office -- the municipal id

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resolution that were passed this past summer. And just advocate around workplace issues, economic justice issues. I'm not clear which committee these issues would fall under. I don't know if it would be economic development, community development, but we look forward to more clarification from the council about where our pet issues would reside in the new system. And being an organization that does advocate extensively on the state level and with other municipalities in the state, we also are intimately aware of how a committee structure can be used to stall issues or kill issues. So we do want to make sure that there are mechanisms that remain in place -- for councilmembers to bring issues to the full council and create a bypass system. >> Casar: I wanted to address Mr. Wh Whaley's point about a social justice committee

because when I received the list of committees I was hoping to add one of that type, but I realized -- realized that for myself addressed in every single one of these committees because there's a proposal that comes out of mobility or public utilities or anything else that is not socially just, I might self will be voting no and will be working on my fellow councilmembers and with the community to vote no. And if things are socially just in each of these committees then to move them forward. That's the way I have thought about that issue. But in response to what was brought up by Ms. Garancan as far as economic justice and also Mr. Fuente around M.B.E., west W.B.E., I think we should consider the focus of the economic development committee or even considering a new name for that committee to show it's really about economic opportunity and not just

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traditional thoughts about economic development where our development is truly about giving opportunities to small businesses, giving an opportunity to veterans for the call we got about veterans or other disadvantaged workers to make sure that economic justice and shared prosperity is also a focus of that committee. And so perhaps I will post on the message board some ideas for -- for writing the mission of that. >> Mayor Adler: There's another issue that's coming up with respect to community engagement that goes beyond the proposal that we're considering today. Councilmember pool, can you address what we have been doing longer term with respect to community engagement? >> Pool: I sure can, mayor. Thanks for the opportunity. Building on -- on this sort of -- council feels that it is a key component to the community with austinites. If we understand the various avenues of public engagement both into the council and from the council out into the community. I think Mr. Schooler has shown us tonight that there are a number of avenues of communication -- to call in and tell people how you file about things. We even will still receive letters. So to that end we will engage a council taskforce on community engagement that will delve into these very issues. We will inventory all the wide array of tools that the city currently has and uses because it's pretty broad. And I was impressed to see

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how many avenues were available. We will look at ways to enhance that, taking into account the various languages that people speak in Austin. I know that there are some shortages in translators so some of the communities might be able to help us in finding certified translators -- interpreters for a particular array of languages. And then after six months we'll receive a report from the taskforce to find what they have discovered and recommendations they may have to enhance -- enhance and improve recommendations with the budget cycle. [Audio stopped] So that any changes -- I have three co-sponsors, councilmembers Gallo -- Houston and kitchen. January 29, thank you. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you. And we've also proposed that whatever it is that comes out of this attempt at greater public engagement is also specifically reviewed as we go through it and at a specific top time to make sure that we're doing this in a way that's achieving what the intended goals are. Let's keep going with comments. And again I would urge people if you give a few seconds back to the group we might actually be able to get everybody in here close to 9:00. But Megan misenback? >> Congratulations to all of you. And it's a delight to see you standing there.

[8:40:31 PM]

I think we've all heard terrific insights and ways of looking at problems that are -- that I hadn't even imagined. Many of you can talk a lot faster than I can. I really admire that. Just one thing I'd like to say is I think transparency is very, very important to me. I think agendas need to be posted as early as possible, at least five business days, I would say for minimum for some of the committees. And then it's very important for me. I love the schematic of the people with their little speech patterns above them. But I'd like to see a direct line from them to the council. Thank you very much. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you. Melvin wren. >> Thank you, mayor and members of the council. Congratulations. I'm a product of district 1, maybe ora might not want to admit that from time to time, but here I am. One of the things that -- one, I'll say this. I normally would not agree with Mr. Whaley, but you have a moving train and you can get out in front of it and get run over or you can try to get on -- try to catch up with it. One I would say there's too many committees. I broke it down to seven committees and I'll send that to you. Two is the public needs to be able to bypass the committee. For example, when we're dealing with issues -- and I live in colony park in east Austin. When we're dealing with issues where the council and the city have not been present or done anything for 87 years on a form of equality as far as I'm concerned, then you don't need to be sitting in a committee trying to talk to

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them about how you can get equal standards and equal participation. For example, when they did the grant that they got for the colony park neighborhood, what happens is they did the same thing they have always done, take federal money and never put their own money into it. So therefore we have people that are not going to be working in the community because the grant has run out. This is the pattern that's been there for many years. I've been here since the early '80's and it continues. No money of the city put where the federal money is and as a result you have a lot of

plans that have sat on the shelf. You have a lot of things that have never happened. So the thing I'm saying to you is we need to have a way to bypass committees and come directly to council because the issues of equity, of fairness, of equal opportunity go well beyond what the history of the city has done for years. And so the idea of pigeonholing something in the committee and thinking they're going to come up with a solution when the city itself hasn't come up with a solution in 80 something years is in my mind ludicrous and we need to begin to look at it from the standpoint of taking the issues. Where are the pockets of poverty? How do we address all the issues in the pockets of poverty and how do we make them whole? We can't go back and undo history, but what we can do is find ways to have building blocks to get them to a point where we can find equity and we can find parity and we can find an equal opportunity. So the thing I'm saying to you tonight is it's very important that you understand that in my community, my community has been in meetings after meetings and meetings working more so than I've seen any other committee where they met every week for over two years or almost three years with the neighborhood housing group as well as with other departments. And that dedication goes by the way side when we made recommendations to the previous council and they kind of pushed them aside.

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So I would say to you equity, fairness and equal opportunity should come first over and above your committee structure. And I thank you again for being willing to serve and I hope and pray that the group will do as much as it can to bring those issues to the first -- to the forefront. Thank you again. [Applause]. >> Mayor Adler: Margarita [indiscernible]. >> Mayor, while he's walking, Melvin, I'm always happy when you show up. [Laughter] >> Mayor Adler: Ms. Deseario? >> Good evening. As a community representative from also the colony park neighborhood association as well as the colony park lake side community development corporation, I do want to take this opportunity to welcome you as our newly elected mayor as well as our new city council. I want to congratulate all of you. It is our hope to continue the relationship we established with the previous council by keeping you informed as we move forward towards addressing the challenges and issues facing our community. I am not going to repeat a lot of what has already been said, but let me just go ahead and come from the positive side of how our engagement process worked for us. These are just a few highlights. As mentioned by Mr. Wren, we did have weekly meetings we held with the city departments, we held weekly meetings with nonprofit organizations, public school administrators as well as community groups. At any given week representatives from the various organizations like Andy rod dick foundation, cap metro, community care collaborative, Austin resource recovery, planning budget office of Travis county, Austin independent

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school district, parks and recs and the forestry department have shared their resources with us while providing ways in which planning and collaboration for the 288 acres have benefit the

community. Through our partnerships then we want to say that we were able to bring the community's perspective on several issues facing in colony park such as limited access to health care, lack of employment, social services, the absence of a viable transportation system as well as a concentration of underperforming schools. Through our weekly meetings our public engagement and colony park neighborhood association core team's unrelenting commitment to find solutions to the issues facing our community shaped the very nature of the way public engagement took place. Let us be clear, however, -- and again, I want to be on the positive side that the colony park public engagement plan was not something that any consultant brought to the table, but rather an outgrowth of community coming together, mixed with grassroots experiences, research and an awareness that something had to be done that was different from any type of development in the city of Austin. I wanted to also point out some of the observations of your proposed plan. Number one, because I am a representative of district 1, I see that we have a large immigrant population. There is no mention of how we are going to address -- [buzzer sounds] -- Those individuals. They have no access to technology, no emails, and we wanted to know how then are you going to fill this void? I have other recommendations, but I will then email those to you. Thank you very much and congratulations. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you very much. Do you have a phone call, Mr. Schooler?

[8:48:33 PM]

>> Mayor, I do. Just before I get to art, who is waiting patiently, there were a couple of tweets related to email input. Email input is more efficient than three minute speeches and gives council time to digest, but often no response, so we assume not read. It would be great to be able to opt in to get an email notice when certain meeting agendas are posted since there will be so many. And art is standing by from I believe district 3 with a comment for the mayor and council about an interesting idea that he has for neighborhood engagement. Art, if you're ready, please go ahead. >> Thank you very much. Congratulations, mayor. I look forward to visiting with you sometime in the future and with some of the council people. I'm a resident of Austin, Texas all my life. I've been here for 67 years, taxpayer and voter. I was speaking before the city council even before I was eligible to vote back in the early 60's. And I was very interested then in trying to set it up by district. And there's very much interest at the same time of trying to form committees that you and the council possibly could appoint individuals throughout the community that would be interested and would be willing to share their time into going to the community and really look at the hard-core issues that are brought before y'all before any action would be taken. So whenever the committees would meet, they would have a good recommendation whether they would be recommended in favor or against it before y'all, and

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then y'all would be the time ones to make that decision. I served in several committees with the school board whenever they had bond issues. I served with the late Mr. Willie Kocurek who was our chairman and I was one of their members. And we were able to go into the neighborhood and

really get the voters behind the bonds and we told them why and it did get passed where before they would just not have involvement of the community and it was very hard to sell the bonds. So I look forward to, if possible, if y'all would be interested, that I would be glad to share my free time like I have before with the school board and be glued to help in any way I can. Thank you very much. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you. Kenneth comb? And then Girard Kinney. Yes, sir. >> Good evening. Thank you for taking this load on to yourselves. Thank you. I'm Kenneth comb. I'm a psycho therapist, a certified mediator. I do train attorneys, judges and I have had in my classes every profession. But I bring one little book, a book about New York City 60 years -- 60 years this lady went before council /after/of a council and worked with the development department. It is about engagement. Wrestling with Moses, how Jane Jacobs took on new

[8:52:35 PM]

York's master builder and transformed the American city. But what about right here in Travis county? And I'm out in imperial valley. Imperial valley for you is one little bitty small spec on the map. For us it's every part of the county. The cleavage that exists between the city and the county needs to be addressed just like the ladies talked about Austin energy in the relationship. The working with the same population, being cross and not talking to each other, two ships passing on the ocean and not coming together. That cleavage, as I sat here and my body shook for the last whatever it is, three hours, I am breaking down and I cannot do 13 hubs of imperial valley, 21.5 miles by six miles, 102 square miles. I cannot -- I've had a fist in this jaw, a fist in this jaw, a fist in the face, and I can't take that anymore. I will resign and I will walk away from being the source for free written grant proposals. And I thank you for writing grant proposals, margarita.

[8:54:35 PM]

We have been loggerheads since the PGA tour. There's a question that I want to leave off this. My few minutes is just about that cleavage. The negativity. The negativity that you feel. [Buzzer sounds] With regard to getting prepared to come work with the city. And thank you for the committee program. That's really a helpful approach. The phone-in system which Larry has been able to bring about and the -- this needs to be worked. We need to have social media functioning in this city and people's relationship. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you, sir. Thank you very much. Girard Kinney. And then Julie Montgomery. >> Thank you, mayor and new councilmembers. As many of you may know I'm a lifelong austinite and I've worked 20 some-odd years on boards and commissions, chaired several of them. And mostly having to do with land use and transportation. In one way or the other, Mueller taskforce, airport design commission, on and on, and my own neighborhood association I was the founding chair of that neighborhood association. I am -- unlike Mary Engel who was skeptical of the committee system, I was skeptical of single-member district single member districts, but I think the committee system is a way to overcome the inherent problems with a single member district system because all of the council is going to be focusing on issues which, by the way, there are very few issues that you're dealing with that

only have to do with one district. They're not geographical in

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their nature. As the Sierra club person said, not only the environment, but also all of these issues really pervade all of the districts. So I congratulate you on this new concept. I think it's brilliant. I do have one specific problem that was alluded to by one of the tweeters and it has to do with the fact -- and I know that councilmember kitchen spoke about the fact that mobility and planning and neighborhood and planning will need to work together. Yes, of course they will. But they should be together. There was a time when we -- when they were separated. We brought them together and there was -- there has been a land use and transportation committee at the city level. It wasn't -- I don't think it was really functioning that well, but let's not throw the baby out with the bath. Mobility and land use should -- those two words should never be said separate from each other. They are so instruction dably tied to each other that I would suggest rather than having a mobility committee and then a neighborhood an planning committee that you have two committees, but that one of them deal with land use and transportation at a very high level, looking long-term broad issues, and that the other committee also deal with land use and transportation, but at project level and more specific implementation of those. It's a different way of looking at the two committees. Thank you. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you. >> Mayor Adler: Julie Montgomery and then Andre novamodroff. >> Good evening, mayor, mayor pro tem and councilmembers. My name is Julie Montgomery,

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resident of district 1. I'm here in support of the proposal, I think it has a lot of potential and I come before you to maybe offer a couple of suggestions to make it stronger. So I have a few ideas of ways to maximize the effectiveness of the committee system. I do think if properly implemented it could help cut down massively on the amount of time that citizens feel obligated to be here. We all have busy lives. It's really important. I think if we do have public hearings in committee, then you should allow some public testimony at the full council hearing but it should be only limited to one minute and my reasoning for that is there might be committee subconstitutes so coming to council is actually different than what you heard in committee, in which case folks might want to say hey I supported this before but now I don't, vice versa. Also at the Texas length slaughter committee system, any councilmember should be allowed to sit in and ask questions but perhaps not vote. And then if you group the committee hearings by topic, that allows folks to -- you know, if they're concerned with just particular -- one aspect of what that committee deals with, they can know [indiscernible] That night. And then finally rewards to the issue of how will the full council know what happened in the committee, I think it would make a lot of sense to have a report coming out of each committee hearing that sort of summarizes the pros and cons of each issue discussed, you know, the supporters and opponents arguments that were heard, if there's something like that also at the Texas length slaughter house research, they do those reports. The second thing I wanted to suggest was an alert system like

Heidi suggested on Twitter which would be an notification system for issues coming up in

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committee, agendas getting posted, anything like that, people could get an e-mail alert or maybe we could come up other sorts of alerts as well. Maybe we could do text alerts. That might help reach out to our younger populations and increase participation there. Texas legislature online is a great example of how they do that well. That can be a venue of how they're doing realtime amendments while being discussed. I know sometimes it's very hard to follow along with what amendments are being discussed when they're sort of verbally tossed around. Then the third thing I'd like to suggest is that B we have such a great opportunity here, there's so much momentum around increased transparency and community engagement and I think it's crucial that this continues so I would suggest that we form a citizen commission on public engagement and transparency, not just a task force but ongoing commission, as well as a council committee. >>

Mayor Adler: Okay. >> Thanks. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you very much, Ms. Montgomery. >>

Houston: Ms. Montgomery, I'd like to thank you for representing the young people in district 1.

Thank you. >> May I ask Ms. Montgomery a quick question. I know you were trying to get

through a lot of stuff. >> Sorry. >> I want to give you a moment longer to explain an idea I

hadn't heard before, which is one minute of testimony at the public hearing as opposed to to

three. You mentioned -- sorry that it was connected to addressing substitute motions or

something. Can you elaborate a little more for us your thoughts around that. >> Sure. Happy to.

So the idea would be the primary opportunity for testimony would be in the committees, people

would know when they were happening. That would be why the notification system is so

important, to make sure that folks know that there's an opportunity to come up to talk about

something they care about. So the main them, three minutes, you get it at the committee.

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Then sometimes proposals shift. By the time it comes to council it may be a different proposal

than what public testimony was given on in committee. And the public may want an opportunity,

individuals may want an opportunity to come back and say, hey, you changed this and now I

don't support it or, hey, you addressed the things I was concerned about and now I do support it.

And I think that those sorts of comments probably don't need to be a full three minutes, if you've

had the opportunity to provide that opportunity, the full three minutes at the committee level. >>

Thanks, that's helpful. Have we talked much about changes that would occur to policies between

the committee level and the council reviewing them, mayor? Have we thought much about that.

>> Mayor Adler: I don't remember being involved in conversations that were about that aspect.

>> I could just weigh in, mayor, to councilmember Garza's question. I think there was a

discussion that no votes would take place in a committee, that the votes -- the decisions on policy

would only be made by the full council at a decision-making meeting of the council on a

Thursday and that the intention would be to build the body of information in advance of the

meeting, that every one of us would be responsible for understanding and having our questions

answered in advance of the meeting so that we could arrive at a decision point more quickly. And that if any new information or new angle were offered at a council meeting that had not been vetted by the committee, that we would have the opportunity to send it to committee for that vet vetting. >> Mayor Adler: Okay. Did you want to talk, Ms. Kitchen? >> Kitchen: I was going to say in answer to your question we have talked about the fact that

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public hearings at the full council level might be limited in some way -- in terms of one minute as opposed to three minutes. >> Mayor Adler: We had all recognized that we fully anticipated there would be public hearings in certain instances, depending on the -- what was being considered, and that we all recognized that and want to make sure whatever public input there was was appropriate to that measure and that occasion and that time. >> That's right. >> Mayor Adler: Beyond that we hadn't gotten to a one size fits all rule. >> Mayor, I think my question was more to Ms. Montgomery's concern that a committee could recommend a specific resolution or ordinance language to the full council and there could be changes by the time it was put on our agenda, which seems to me to be different than what I think we're contemplating but I -- >> Mayor Adler: I don't think that we have talked about any changes post committee before council. Our -- none of us were envisioning that happening. >> Cesar: In such a case something like that happened that would make a good case why councilmembers would choose to reopen a public hearing -- >> Mayor Adler: If that ever happened you might have ten people ready to send it back down to the committee. >> Cesar: Great, thank you. >> Mayor Adler: So let's continue on. We have at this point I think five or six more speakers and then we have a poll. I think, which you're going to conduct. So Andre, labomodrof, how close did I get? >> Close enough. Good evening, mayor. Good evening, council. Thank you all for being here this evening. I want to applaud you for really taking on a very significant change to the governance of this city. Systems exist for a reason, and that makes them difficult to change. It's really heartening to me

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that you have taken a queue from the voters and really put forward a very bold proposal here tonight. I think one of the most important aspects of this is the public engagement task force, and I think that part of the reason that's so important is to me the -- this proposal shows you're willing to be bold, but the task force to me shows that, more important, you're willing to revisit the idea at a later date and ensure that it's an evolving concept and that you're open to continual change. While I think that in most cases Austin -- or Texas has more to learn from Austin than the opposite, do I think that it's a really -- really good to take the cue from the legislature about focusing on the committee process. I would add to that that I would also advocate a clean and crisp fiscal note that would clearly discuss what the potential impacts would be to taxpayer funds of proposals that would have an impact or could have an impact on taxpayer funds. And I would add that that and also another very important document, which is the affordability impact statement, which is issued by the neighborhood housing and community development

department, that those should be made available at the committee level so that there can be a complete discussion about the subject that's at hand that's influenced by those documents and that information. Last I just wanted to add that at your disposal and to help in any way we can, and appreciate your time tonight. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you very

[9:08:46 PM]

much. Mr. Zimmerman. >> Zimmerman: Andre, thank you very much for that testimony. I think the fiscal note idea that is attached in Texas legislature, let me give one specific example. There was a recent source of income ordinance that was passed. I saw some of the paperwork on that, and it said that there was no fiscal impact. So that was the estimate, I guess, from the city. Of course now it's in litigation. So now the city legal staff has to defend that in court and I don't know how much that's going to cost, tens of thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands. So I love the idea. It's just not easy to do. >> No. I understand. Thank you. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you. Larry spears, and then Juan arvitas. >> Greetings. I applaud you for your willingness to tackle the communications. I make the point that I'd like to make, I want to tell a little story that happened at mayor Adler's campaign office. We set an appointment to talk with one of his campaign people. Something happened and they couldn't. This man here stood and came out and had set aside his chores he was doing and came back and spent the time with us and kept us there even over our appointment to communicate. It showed me that he was willing to take and communicate with the people of the city, that he should be applauded for. Which brings up the points that I'm wanting to make. The point is I'm hoping that y'all keep that attitude of communication, no matter what it takes, with the people of the

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city of Austin. So many times there's voices out there that are not being heard, and I was impressed by his attitude. Also, don Zimmerman spent time to talk with me at his campaign office and others have, about all the different issues I'm not bringing up now because this is not the time for it, but the issues that -- is sometimes -- I would like for you to not just concentrate on your communication with the public, but to encourage the rest of the city to communicate with the public so things are properly run and not frustrating and getting nothing done. [Applause] >> And I would like to say this. I appreciate the attitude I'm getting from this council and the mayor's office of want to go communicate. And I believe that y'all deserve a standing ovation for this focus that y'all are doing on communicating with the voters and people of the city, those that are underprivileged, those that are overprivileged and in between. I appreciate it. I appreciate you have someone with my name as a moderator. So thank you very much. You are appreciated. And I think everybody here agrees that communication is important. So I thank you for it, and y'all deserve an applaude. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you. [Applause] >> Mayor Adler: Thank you. Juan arvitas. Brian roger.

[9:12:48 PM]

>> Hello, mayor and council. There's a lot of things I love about this, moving the executive session, the zoning, more meetings. I think that will free up a lot of time to really keep the public testimony that we hold so dear in front of the entire council. I mean, I'll do a -- I spend a lot of time digging really dip into issues. I mean, I'll give six, ten, 12 minutes before council and they'll say, Brian, that was a bang up job. I'll say they don't know I spent 80 hours, three weeks, more than that, a long time. This isn't something you can just -- stops the public hearing process. You know, sure you need four to get to the very end, but some of these issues I deal with are more arcane. Let's say I give testimony to a subcommittee and it's on a service extension request and 100% reimbursement of water utility lines. Maybe I'll find a sympathetic audience, maybe not. I know the issue well enough that if I've spent 80 hours on an agenda item, I know it probably better than you guys are going to know it. So I think it's imperative that I'm able to counter what staff says, people like Paul Robbins and others who get wonky on this stuff, it's important that we're able to come up and talk to y'all about it. Even little things like the impact the advisory commission. Yeah, that's required to have a public hearing, but leading up to that, it took a lot of change, changing of minds to realize that the city was underselling its water and waste water taps by a lot of money. In order to get a 7-0 vote it took that constant -- and we saved the rate pairs

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\$165 million. It really does add up. The economic development ordinance rewrite in 2009 requires public hearings that I hope that stays the way that it is. I know that you councilmembers have enthusiasm now to go back and watch the other subcommittee public testimony, but you guys aren't going to have the time. And, frankly, am I going to be that motivated to do all the work I do just to stick to a subcommittee and then it be done? I don't think it follows the natural trajectory of how issues come before the public because, you know, it's just art. People don't really catch on until the statesman puts an article in the paper, okay? Boom, everybody shows up. You say well we'll have a public hearing then. Yeah, there's still things -- the people don't just catch on that -- it's not -- we all understand it because we're in this building, we may be council watchers. It's got to seep in the public. If you put a lot of stuff -- if you front load it and then not allow the end testimony, I think it's going to be a problem. Thank you. >> Mayor Adler: Mr. Rogers, thank you very much. >> Yes. [Applause] Jacqueline Shicker. >> I want to thank -- oh -- all of you for the fact that it's now past 9:00 and my experience with lives is that they are also salespeople I appreciate that every single one of you is demonstrating exactly what I think this proposal demonstrates, which is a commitment to hearing the voices of Austin. I think -- I don't think it would have come -- I'm going to read off my paper or I will talk too much. I'd rather give people time to speak. I want to stress I believe the fact we have new voices -- new leaders means we should be like accepting of the fact that changes aren't coming from bureaucracy that is trying to silence us.

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Changes are coming from people who have felt silence. I don't think all of you would have run for office or we would have had the people we were having run for office if you didn't care. So I thrust that you have sat on your committee and on the dais and researched this and researched this and researched this. My understanding is that sitting in committee work is where the research gets done. Like, you can actually represent a population if you have all the information and if a committee -- if you take -- Mr. Cesar, am I saying it right? Cool. Is sitting in committee to research the topics for economic development and make a recommendation, it will better educate the entire ability for the council to vote on issues. I don't expect any single person, the whole world, to be able to cover every single issue sufficiently. Representatives can't do that. They're people. I think the committee process suggests that. The council as it stands now, is taking the initiative to say we would rather be better researched than overloaded on every single topic and I highly, highly -- I really wish y'all were advocating for yourselves forever how brilliant that is. I wanted to stand up and say that I think it's powerful and I don't think you would be sitting here if you weren't -- if this goes terribly, to not change it back. If this is somehow going to terribly affect it, I think it's already in the move of change, and in terms of if there's -- suggestions -- what you actually called this public meeting for, there's completely the public since public testimony has been the issue addressed so thoroughly at this meeting of an amazing show of democracy and public testimony for the record and patience for that, that you could put in -- I don't understand how the ordinances laws worked. I haven't researched that. I'm in university, not even law, but I think there's the possibility of putting memo the proposition a caveat of a test period if that is the major

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issue that your constituency is speaking about. This is a year of seeing if the public testimony as has been recommended by the committee -- pardon me, by the council as it stands works and if it doesn't, then going back to the old system or reevaluating because I don't think we shouldn't be moving just because we're scared it's not going to look the same. Everything shouldn't always look the same. Thank you for your time. I really appreciate it. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you very much. Mr. Zimmerman, did you have a comment. >> I want to say thank you so much for being here tonight. I really appreciate your input. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you. >> I want to point out that previous speaker is part of the student government initiative I referenced earlier. >> [Indiscernible] [Laughter] >> Mayor Adler: Well, members, that is the list of folks that have signed up for our meeting. Larry, is there a poll you want to take, then we can have comments? >> We didn't speak to the affordability committee yet. >> Mayor Adler: Let's go ahead and do that. I apologize for that. >> That's okay. Ms. Garza. >> Garza: I actually wanted to comment on the previous speaker and I'll talk about affordability really quick because I know it's late. I don't think it's something we touched on but the plan was to do a 6-month trial. >> Yes. >> Garza: Of this new system and reevaluate. If the feedback at that time is -- and if we recognize at that time the old system was better, I think we all agree that we'll go back to the old system. So thank you for reminding us that -- I don't think any of us have spoke to that. The intention was that this was a trial run, just to try to see if we could change things. Also on the -- on our proposal is an

affordability committee, and I think we have this opportunity with -- we have new

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leadership at all levels of government right now, on the county level, and we have an opportunity to improve ways that we communicate and improve the ways that we serve our community. And it is with that in mind that there will be an item on the 29th and I wish Mr. Oakee is here and if I know him he's watching so it's item 22. The goal is being -- among the goals are collaborating around future bond measures, giving entities a better feeling for bond viability, a lot of times different taxing entities have different bonds coming up. I think it's great if we can talk to each other, Travis county, cap metro, central health. My proposal would have appointees from I'll repeat them, aisd, Travis county, commissioners court, Austin college board of directors, central health board, Dell valley independent school district. I realize not all the school districts are represented there but we did take a look at the different school districts to see how many children in Austin go to these school districts and we tried to pick the ones that have the greatest representation of young adults austinites. Identify existing duplication and services between the agencies, look at -- and that's -- among that is evaluating interlocal agreements and related performance measures and also just address any other items that impact the cost of living. I don't know if I said the title, but it's original affordability committee and I would love -- again it will be on the 29th, item 22 right now and please contact my office or any of the other councilmembers and they can forward that feedback to me of how we can make that affordability committee better. Thank you. >> Mayor Adler: Great, thank you. There were also four people that registered but did not ask for time to speak. **Robert Nash registered neutral,**

[9:22:55 PM]

Joyce registered against, registered for and Heidi registered for for. Larry, you want to do a poll and then we'll conclude. >> I do, mayor. We wanted to actually solicit feedback about our process for this evening. There's been quite nice unsolicited feedback and we appreciate it but we'd like to know what folks thought about our process for tonight. You can use the text message apology and folks on the phone can vote with their touchstone phone major imprisonment a to 23333, B, not great, neutral, so so, good would be D and very good E. We've going to keep this poll for a short time because we've an open-ended one for people of that comments for how we can improve the process. We'll allow for some quick feedback and leave an open-ended question up as we go off air here in just a moment. Definitely want to take this opportunity to thank the mayor and council for embracing this slightly new fangled way of doing things tonight. We appreciate y'all's support and working with this format. >> Mayor Adler: Allocation you and the public information office and staff did a great job so thank you. [Applause] If anybody on council wants to give a concluding remark, this would be the time to do that. Ellen? >> Troxclair: I just wanted to speak a little to the issue of the title of the committees. We all have issues that are important to us. We all have issues that are important to our districts. Long list right now that are only going to grow longer. And, you know, there's not a specific committee on

property taxes, but it doesn't mean that I'm not going to be pursuing solutions for property tax relief or so -- it's -- I know it's something we discussed a lot tonight and I wanted to say

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just because a specific phrase or a specific word isn't in the title of a committee doesn't mean that it's not important to us, doesn't mean that it's not going to be in the pool of issues that we work on. And, you know, it's going to be an interesting discussion that we have from here because the number of committees, we've heard, you know, that we -- that people want a lot of committees, but then we've also heard that people want committees to meet in the evenings so that we get feedback. Also have council committees -- yeah, council meetings that will be in the evening, as well as requests -- so it's a balance between how in a transparent way while still being human, like you mentioned, and being available to spend time in our district. So that's just a discussion that we'll have I think over the coming weeks. >> Mayor Adler: I think we will. Let me just say personally how proud I am to be part of this body. You know, I went through a campaign for 12 months. Seemed like it was 12 years. There was a recurrent theme as I went around and in so many forums people almost laughing, would talk about a new 10-1 council, with the expectation almost that we wouldn't be able to do anything together. And I think that had anybody suggested during that process that in the first month this council would unanimously propose to the community something that was as significant as what it is that we're trying to do now, I'm not sure that anybody in any forum that I was at would have believed that, and I'm just very proud to be part of this group

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that has put this forward. So thank you. [Applause] >> Mayor Adler: Larry, you want to -- >> Mayor, can I say something? >> Mayor Adler: Yes. >> Renteria: I want to just let my people in district 3 know that, you know, sometimes, you know, we make meetings, neighborhood meetings to attend a meeting at lunch or an afternoon, and, you know, like today I had a scheduled meeting, and I couldn't go and attend that meeting because we had a lot of important issues that we were discussing today. So I did have my -- I'm just really proud of my AIDS that they were able to go down there and attend their meeting. So I hope that, you know, you understand that there's going to be days that my staff is not going to be in the office to answer the phone and just give us a -- we will return your calls and we will respond, you know, to your concerns, your problems or your concerns. So just -- I just want to let y'all know that, you know, I -- you know, in my mind, I'm, you know, really thinking about y'all guys and I'm really going to be working hard for you. But there's going to be subcommittee some times that, -- there's going to be some times we're stuck in committee meetings, giving inputs and there might be times I have to cancel some of the meetings that we scheduled. We're going to try our best to contact you before, you know, before that meeting is scheduled so you don't have to waste your time coming over here to city hall. >> Mayor Adler: Thank you. Mr. Serial, dschooler, do you have one last poll question. >> It's on the screen now, suggestions the public might have for

improving the format going forward. We'll certainly continue to tinker with it. >> Mayor Adler:
We would

[9:28:57 PM]

encourage everybody to continue posting. You can call into 311, speak up up.org, send e-mail to phones, work session on this on Tuesday, draft resolution people can react to I understand will be posted tomorrow that incorporates some of the thoughts but there will be more work on Tuesday as we work it through so hopefully we have something we can consider next Thursday. Any other discussion before we adjourn the meeting? >> I'm sorry. >> Mayor Adler: Go ahead. >> I want to reiterate what the mayor said about I'm really proud to be part of this body and how we all came together on this but I do want to recognize councilmember kitchen for -- she really did a lot of work on this and I really appreciate everything she did to cull all this information and get us going in this direction. [Applause] >> Mayor Adler: With that note, we stand adjourned.
[Meeting adjourned] [🎵 Music 🎵]