



**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION
20210112-3D**

Date: January 12, 2021

Subject: The Importance of Consistent Community Development Commission (CDC) Evening Meeting Time Slots

Recommendation:

The CDC recognizes and deeply appreciates the hard work of city leaders, policymakers, and especially City Clerk staff for their arduous work in ensuring that the machinery of democracy, namely the convening of the City's Boards and Commissions, continue to operate despite the manifold disruptive obstacles that the pandemic has introduced.

It is also clear that the rapid adaptation of our meeting medium from physical to virtual has resulted in varying meeting times, shorter meetings, limitations in citizen communication, and an understandable reduction in all-around flexibility and predictability as related to meeting schedules. One of the key challenges is that meeting times are no longer fixed every month but often vary subject to the priorities at hand. In our commission's example, this means that a meeting that typically happens during an evening time slot might suddenly be changed to a daytime slot, nearly exclusively prohibiting attendance from commissioners who don't have the privileged flexibility to parse out large sections of the business/work day to fulfill their commission obligations.

On this note, the CDC would like to point out the following:

- Austin is infamously known (anecdotally and empirically) for being a city of exaggerated social, economic, and health disparities, many having resulted from explicitly racist municipal policy.
- We are at a point where nearly 1 in 2 households are considered below Median Family Income (MFI) and at least 1 in 3 households are considered well below MFI. This is not an "us and them" situation: economic disparity has many faces, it can affect any of us, and it is doing so.
- These disparities include income, despite working the same jobs, flexibility in schedules (or lack thereof), access to resources like childcare, transportation, social capital and the

networking it produces, access to job training or related supportive services, and access to technology.

- These disparities have only been magnified by the COVID pandemic which has demonstrated that race, ethnicity, zip code, primary language, and income, often as a result of many corresponding variables are the strongest correlating determinants in social, economic, and health outcomes of Austin residents.
- Board members are liaisons who represent and advocate for low-income communities, and it must not be lost that they are members of those same communities: many members of this commission have clearly communicated their current lived experience as low-income members of the same communities that we are representing; given the traditional lack of flexibilities identified above, accommodating frequent shifts in scheduling make it ironically difficult if not entirely prohibitive to attending and participating in meetings with regularity.
- The CDC is happy with its currently provisioned regular time slot of the second Tuesday evening of the month from 5:30pm to 9:30pm, but the challenge is when outside circumstances cause meeting times to often shift, causing meetings to occur on different days, and even more challenging at very different times of day, producing unique barriers that can prohibit commissioner attendance.

As such, the CDC recommends that City staff and leaders (including our Austin City Council members, City Clerk's office) maintain--and if at all possible--even further advance their application of an equity lens to all of our democratic processes, perhaps an equity evaluation tool or mechanism to assist in uniformly assessing priority for resource assignments for Boards and Commissions, specifically as related to the allocation of meeting times for Boards and Commissions, and more specifically as related to the consistency and predictability of the meeting times for the CDC, many of whose members have clearly communicated that they don't have the flexibility to accommodate variable timings.

Date of Approval: January 12, 2021

Record of the vote: Motion to approve by Vice Chair Paup, Commissioner Mejia second, on a 11-0 vote.

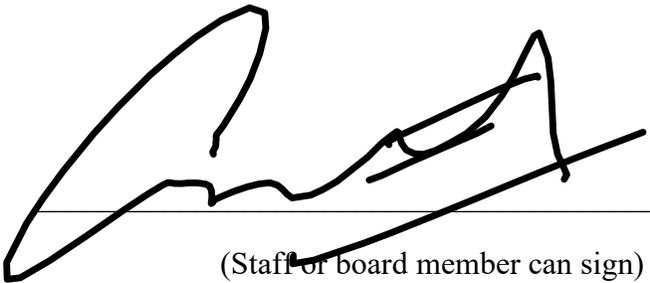
Absent:

Madra Mays

Heidi Sloan

Michael Tolliver

Attest: CDC Chair, Amit Motwani



A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end, positioned above a horizontal line.

(Staff or board member can sign)