



Austin Neighborhoods Council Resolution Opposing “Strong Mayor” Charter Amendment

WHEREAS, the Austinites for Progressive Reform’s petition to place a charter amendment on the ballot proposing a change to “strong mayor” governance has been certified by the Office of the City Clerk; and

WHEREAS, the proposed “strong mayor” charter amendment has now been placed on the May 1, 2021 ballot; and

WHEREAS, the proposed “strong mayor” charter amendment would eliminate the professional city manager’s office and replace it with that of the mayor; and

WHEREAS, under the proposed “strong mayor” charter amendment, the mayor would have veto power over the elected city council and any council-approved legislation supported by the community, as well as control over all utilities and administrative functions including the preparation of annual city budgets and the hiring and firing of city employees and department heads; and

WHEREAS, the strong-mayor system weakens our democratic 10-1 governance system while empowering an autocratic mayoral system by:

- Shifting power from individual council districts and voters in each district to the mayor and the mayor’s office, and
- Providing no mechanism under the current proposal for a strong mayor to implement any council legislation, even if not vetoed; and
- Eliminating the checks and balances of the 10-1 system which offers greater accountability and transparency of government while limiting the potential for corruption that exists under “strong mayor”; and
- Empowering affluent and powerful entities that already have inordinate influence over citywide mayoral elections; and

WHEREAS, in other peer cities such as Sacramento, voters recently rejected a “strong mayor” initiative, citing the risk of corruption amid the loss of transparency and accountability, and the granting of overwhelming power to one person without the checks and balances of an elected council; and

WHEREAS, here in Austin, a wide spectrum of community and neighborhood leaders, business and workers groups, as well as unions and progressive organizations across the city have expressed serious concerns about the proposed “strong mayor” charter amendment; and

WHEREAS, a coalition of these unions, including AFSCME (American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees) and the Austin Central Labor Council, stand united in opposition to the ballot measure and

WHEREAS, the proposed “strong mayor” system empowers a distant mayor, is anti-democratic and will disenfranchise low- and middle-income families, neighborhoods, and communities throughout Austin; and



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WHEREAS, our communities want to create the city *they* envision, governed with strong democratic representation respectful of all residents and neighborhoods and dedicated to working together to solve problems.

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Austin Neighborhoods Council (ANC) hereby opposes the proposed “strong mayor” charter amendment.

Presented to the ANC Executive Committee: February 10, 2021

Approved and Adopted: _____, 2021

Sponsor(s) Contact: