



Position on Austin Energy Governance

The Austin City Council is poised to make a fundamental change to the governance of Austin Energy, our publically owned utility. A forthcoming ordinance would turn control of the utility from the elected City Council to a new Electric Utility Board comprised of appointees. Based on available information and Council action to date, Solar Austin's position on the issue is as follows:

- **Open Public Process.** First and foremost, Solar Austin objects to the speed of the ordinance development and approval process. A decision of this magnitude over one of our primary civic assets should be undertaken deliberately and with extensive public input. At a minimum, this would include a clearly articulated case for change, a published timeline for key process steps, and multiple opportunities for stakeholder input to collaboratively design the best solution. No crisis currently exists that warrants fast track action without this public input.
- **Active Citizen Engagement.** Through decades of robust public participation, we have built Austin Energy into an award-winning national leader in public power with a proud track record of innovative energy efficiency and solar programs. Citizens engaging with their elected representatives to demand clean energy have enabled a thriving local solar industry of more than 600 employees and \$20 million in annual payroll. Effective integration of fast-approaching smart grid technology, electric vehicles, and widespread distributed generation will require even greater public engagement.
- **Expanded Oversight.** Solar Austin supports increasing transparency, accountability, and the resources devoted to the governance of Austin Energy. We invite the City Council to expand its oversight role by establishing dedicated monthly meetings (as exist for the standing Committees of Council), assigning dedicated staff to serve Council needs, and allowing for expert consultant analyses when necessary.
- **Austin Energy Management Support.** Solar Austin agrees that expert management is necessary to ensure successful operation of our public utility. We support increasing resources as necessary to ensure that we can offer competitive professional salaries and attract top-flight talent.

- **No Appointed Board.** Solar Austin does not support any change to Austin Energy governance that takes control of utility activities away from our elected representatives. A board comprised of appointed rather than elected membership risks our ability to hold Austin Energy accountable and would itself be less accountable to the public interest. Austin citizens have driven the City to pursue a sustainable path, and weakening citizen control of our own utility risks losing our national leadership in energy efficiency and solar implementation. Taking control away from citizen-elected representatives is an extreme response to concerns with the status quo and we can find a more moderate solution.
- **Representation for all ratepayers.** Solar Austin supports formalized representation for Austin Energy customers who live outside the city limits, but in a manner that gives them a vote rather than one that takes it away from the rest of the ratepayers.