

SIERRA CLUB

Austin History Center



- AUSTIN REGIONAL GROUP

P.O. Box 4581
Austin, TX 78765-4581

September 26, 1993

Mayor Lee Cooke and the Charter Review Committee
c/o Mr. Jesus Garza, City Manager's Office
P. O. Box 1088
Austin, TX 78767

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ASSISTANT CITY
MANAGER'S OFFICE

Dear Friends,

The Austin Group of the Sierra Club is very concerned about appropriate land use and sustainable community growth. Thus, we would like to draw your attention to **Article X, Section 2** of the **City Charter** relating to the **Planning Commission**. The Charter states that "the planning commission shall have a minimum of four (4) members who shall be lay members not directly or indirectly connected with real estate or land development." This leaves open the possibility that the majority (five) of the commission may be connected with real estate or land development. We believe that the interests of Austin are better served by a diverse planning body drawn from a cross section of Austin. Thus, the charter should guarantee that a large majority — say, two thirds — of commission members not have a professional association with development. The Executive Committee of the Austin Group of the Sierra Club suggests revising the charter to read "the planning commission shall have a minimum of six (6) members who shall be lay members not directly or indirectly connected with real estate or land development." Furthermore, the charter should explicitly state what constitutes direct and indirect connection with real estate or land development; e.g., license, employment, family associations, etc.

"When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe." *John Muir*



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Some parties might be concerned that lay persons lack sufficient familiarity with planning to serve on the commission. On the contrary, I have heard many neighborhood and environmental speakers at commission meetings who were very familiar with planning and urban development issues. Furthermore, any deficiencies that lay persons on the commission might have regarding development could be corrected through key readings on urban planning, seminars conducted by staff, and tours of developed and to be developed areas.

Thank you for your attention to this issue.

Yours truly,

Dave W Sullivan

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Conservation Chair, Austin Regional Group
for the Group Executive Committee

cc: Craig Smith, Group Chair