

April 1, 2019

Spencer Cronk, Austin City Manager

City of Austin  
301 West 2<sup>nd</sup> Street  
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear City Manager Cronk,

As members of the Water Forward Task Force, we are writing to you today to express our concern regarding the slow-moving implementation efforts related to various water conservation ordinance revisions that were identified as part of the recently adopted Water Forward Integrated Water Resource Plan (Plan). Specifically, our concern is focused on the following specific tasks:

- Expansion of Current Centralized Reclaimed Water Connection Requirements
- Dual Plumbing Ordinance Development
- Alternative Water Ordinance Development
- Development Focused Water Use Benchmarking and Budgeting
- Alternative Water Incentive
- Landscape Transformation Incentive
- Irrigation Transformation Incentive

As we discussed at our recent Water Forward Task Force meeting on March 12, 2019, we believe that these ordinance revisions can and should be developed over a much shorter time frame than what Austin Water proposed to the Task Force at our March 12<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Austin City Council unanimously adopted Water Forward in November 2018. At that time City Council directed that the ordinance revisions be accomplished on a faster timeline than that included in the draft plan. The Mayor's direction read, "The City Manager should expedite the timelines of all codes and ordinances recommended by Water Forward, where feasible, to increase the City's resilience to the next drought". The specific direction adopted by Council Members and the Mayor with respect to fast-tracking of these ordinances and incentives is included herein as an attachment. The urgency felt by City Council to implement these incentives and ordinances reflects the same sentiments as the Task Force itself.

To put the pace of Austin Water's proposed development of these ordinances and incentives into perspective, the nearest-term ordinance to be delivered is projected for late 2021 – early 2022, some three years from now. The incredibly important programs of benchmarking and budgeting remain a work in progress for another 13 years. In contrast, the billion-dollar investment that Austin Water made in the Handcox Water Treatment Plant and associated lines and tunnels was constructed in approximately five years.

Our concern is that with robust economic growth, development projects are moving through the system without these revised ordinances in place—meaning that every day, we are losing opportunities to save water, not only now, but for the life of these new building projects. After more than five years of planning, the City of Austin is no more resilient to extreme drought today than in 2014. Enhanced water

conservation and developing alternative water resources deliver an immediate return on our city's drought resilience and should not be delayed.

We would appreciate if the City of Austin would reassess this matter and determine how these ordinance revisions could be accomplished in a shorter time frame, with initial roll out in 12-18 months. May we offer the following suggestions:

- Consider outsourcing the ordinance revision and community outreach activities to consultants or other experts within the City that have special expertise in this work, to alleviate city resource limitations.
- Consider implementing an interim ordinance that could capture some of the larger development projects immediately.
- Establish a special working group, including members of the Task Force, to guide and propel this ordinance revision work forward.
- Provide regular reports to the Task Force with metrics on development projects and opportunities captured to advance water conservation and alternative water use.

Given the importance of this work, we are requesting that you, the City Manager, organize a special meeting of affected City Departments and Task Force Members to develop a new schedule and program to get these water conservation ordinances and incentives in place at an accelerated timeline.

Thank you for your consideration.



Sharlene Leurig



Bill Moriarty



Perry Lorenz



Jennifer Walker



Lauren Ross

CC: Greg Meszaros, Director Austin Water

CC: Mayor and City Council Members