

## **Citizens to Be Heard, City Council B Session, Oct. 1, 2014, City Council Chambers**

Honorable Mayor Pro temp, City Council Members and Staff, and Concerned Stakeholders. I am Margaret Day, Alamo Sierra Club Chair.

I speak here on behalf of our Vista Ridge Campaign Coalition—The Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance, League of Independent Voters of Texas, COPS/Metro Alliance, Alamo Group of the Sierra Club, San Antonio Area League of Women Voters, imagine San Antonio, Hill Country Alliance, Fuerza Unida, Green Sanctuary First Unitarian Universalist Church, Trinity University Environmental Studies, Environment Texas, Helotes Heritage Association, Environmental Stewardship of Bastrop Texas, and Save Our Springs.

We are asking you for transparency and dialogue on the Vista Ridge decision.

Despite repeated assertions by SAWS, there has been no opportunity for those who represent diverse and valuable stakeholder groups to present concerns about the project in any meaningful way. Public education has been tightly controlled by SAWS to sell this project. So far my experience of the community events has been frustration. Events are either structured to sell the project or restrict the exchange of ideas—such as all panel members well known VR advocates, two minute limit on comments, limited or no Q&A.

We are asking you to slow this process down to allow for review and dialogue between concerned public and decision-makers. Most importantly, we are asking you to hold a full public, recorded hearing on this contract and community input meetings in each Council District before you vote on the Vista Ridge Contract. We suggest repeating the structure of the CPS Energy South Texas Project decision district meetings and public forum, where, in both, the focus was on citizen input. In district meetings, as much time as necessary should be allowed to accommodate all speakers—3 minutes for individuals, 9 for groups—with decision-makers as the audience. In the public forum, opposition stakeholder groups each make a statement followed by a question, which they can direct to decision makers or staff. We believe we – San Antonio's ratepayers and all the people along the route who will be impacted financially and ecologically – deserve to be able to express and learn about alternatives and concerns.

The \$32m streetcar decision was delayed. Well, this project will cost ratepayers 100 times that city investment, plus the added externalized costs we as individuals or taxpayers will bear if we do not select the optimum, most sustainable solution for our future water needs.

To build public trust in good government, Mayor and Council, please make a good faith effort to satisfy this request.

Thank you for this opportunity.

[Councilmembers present: Saldaña, Toney, Nirenberg, Aguirre-Rodriguez, Gallagher, Lopez  
Absent: Mayor Taylor, Gonzalez, Krier, Bernal, Viagran  
Sent by email to all the above on 10-3-14]