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One District One Vote

We the voters create government. In Austin more than 50 citizen boards and commissions suggest policy and pass recommendations along to council. Staff implements the policy. *Historically this has been a very successful institutional model, a broad base of public support and fast to the top.*

The Coup, *hey guys, let's give ourselves a big pay raise. We can have the citizen boards and commissions recommend it!*

When the fox gets in the hen-house, when staff takes over control of the boards and commissions we have a very different form of government – government run by government for the sake of government and lunatics have take over the asylum.

Example of the systemic problem: The Commission on Seniors

Section 2-1-131 of the City Code: The commission shall advise the council on issues related to the senior population in the Austin area; evaluate and recommend programs, policies, and practices that create a positive impact and reduce the burden on seniors; **determine the needs of seniors in the Austin community, and advise council** regarding these needs; and promote the contributions of seniors to the cultural, economic, and historical value of Austin.

The commission should be composed of one member from each of the 10 districts and we would expect **ONE DISTRICT ONE VOTE**.

But guess what? There are 5 extra members, 5 extra voters. (staff of various governmental departments) bringing the total to 15 commission members. By laws of the commission Seniors - See below

To make things more interesting, Each of the 10 district representatives place their email communications on the public record, but the extra 5 members don't have public email and can lurk in the shadows reminiscent of the old-time back room dealings to defeat the public's right-to-know (called **transparency**). Members of Commission on Seniors

IMPORTANT NOTICE: The City of Austin provides e-mail addresses for members of its boards and commissions for their use as board members... **E-mail messages may be subject to required public disclosure under the Texas Public Information Act.**

But wait there is more – paralysis of public input.

There are 15 members. If 9 show-up at a meeting it takes 8 (89%) to pass a resolution, 10 show-up then 8 to pass a resolution((80%) etc... Only when the full 15 are in attendance does a simple majority (8) pass a resolution and the extra 5 have a 33% advantage. *For staff to veto, they stay home, which would force a nearly 100% affirmative vote to pass. Under the rules it cannot come back-up.*

(H) To be effective, a board action must be adopted by an affirmative vote of the number of members necessary to provide a quorum. If only a quorum is present at a meeting, a board action is adopted by affirmative vote of two-thirds of the quorum (15 member board = 6 votes). **If more than a quorum is present at a meeting, a board action must be adopted by an affirmative vote of the number of members necessary to provide a quorum (15 member board = 8 votes).**

And if that is not enough. For the convenience of staff. The commission meetings are mostly held at city hall rather than being spread around into the 10 districts allowing for easy public easy access.

PROPOSAL: ONE DISTRICT ONE VOTE

- **That**, each commission be composed of 11 (10-1) members, one member from each each district appointed by their district representative and one appointed by the mayor.
- **That**, to pass resolution a simple majority of members is required (assuming a quorum is present).
- **That**, all distinct representatives and staff communication be on the on the public record (including email).
- **That**, meeting locations be spread out into the districts.
- **That**, the first hour of each meeting be a “Meet and Greet” - an informal social opportunity for members and the public to become acquainted.

**BYLAWS OF THE
COMMISSION ON SENIORS**

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8 **ARTICLE 1. NAME.**
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10 The name of the board is **COMMISSION ON SENIORS**

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12 **ARTICLE 2. PURPOSE AND DUTIES.**

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14 The purpose of the board is to serve as an advisory board to the council concerning the quality of life for
15 senior citizens in the Austin area and to help ensure older adults are productive, independent, and
16 healthy.

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18 **ARTICLE 3. MEMBERSHIP.**

19
20 (A) The board is composed of **eleven fifteen** members. **Eight members are appointed by the City**
21 **Council.** Two members are nominated by the Mayor and each council member nominates one
22 member. One member is appointed by Travis County Commissioners Court. One member is
23 appointed by the Area Agency on Aging of the Capital Area. One member is appointed by
24 Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

25 (B) A member serves at the pleasure of the appointing body.

26
27
28 (C) City appointed board members serve for a term of **three four** years beginning **August March** 1st
29 on
30 the year of appointment. County-appointed board members serve for a term of two years beginning
31 in February of the year of appointment. The tenure of a board member nominated by a council member
32 runs concurrently with the tenure of the city council member who nominated the member.

33 (D) An individual board member may not act in an official capacity except through the action of the
34 board.

35
36 (E) A board member who is absent for three consecutive regular meetings or one-third of all regular
37 meetings in a "rolling" twelve month time frame automatically vacates the member's position
38 subject to the holdover provisions in Section 2-1-27 of the City Code. This does not apply to an
39 absence due to illness or injury of the board member, an illness or injury of a board member's
40 immediate family member, **active military service**, or the birth or adoption of the board member's
41 child for 90 days after the event. The board member must notify the staff liaison of the reason for
42 the absence not later than the date of the next regular meeting of the board. Failure to notify the
43 liaison before the next regular meeting of the board will result in an unexcused absence.

44
45 (F) At each meeting, each board member shall sign an attendance sheet which indicates that the member
46 does not have a conflict of interest with any item on that agenda, or identifies each agenda item on
47 which the member has a conflict of interest. Failure to sign the sheet results in the member being
48 counted as absent and his/her votes are not counted.

49 (G) A member who seeks to resign from the board shall submit a written resignation to the chair of the
50 board, the staff liaison, or the city clerk's office. If possible, the resignation should allow for a
51 thirty day notice so the city council can appoint a replacement.

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53 **ARTICLE 4. OFFICERS.**

54
55 (A) The officers of the board shall consist of a chair and a vice-chair.

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57 (B) Officers shall be elected annually by a majority vote of the board at the first regular meeting after
58 **October April** 1st 11 . In the event a current officer becomes ineligible to serve as an officer, the board
59 12 may hold an emergency election as needed.

60 (C) The term of office shall be one year, beginning **November May** 1st and ending **October 31st**
61 **April 30th**

62
63 (D) An officer may continue to serve until a successor is elected. A person may not serve as an
64 officer in a designated position of a board for more than **three four** consecutive one-year terms. A
65 person who has served as an officer in a designated position of a board for **three four** consecutive
66 terms is not eligible for re-election to that designated office until the expiration of two years after
67 19 the last date of the person's service in that office. The board may override the term limit provision
68 20 for an officer by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the authorized board members.

69 (E) A member may not hold more than one office at a time.

70
71 **ARTICLE 5. DUTIES OF OFFICERS.**

72
73 (A) The chair shall preside at board meetings, appoint all committees, represent the board at ceremonial
74 functions and approve each final meeting agenda.

75 (B) In the absence of the chair, the vice-chair shall perform all duties of the chair.

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77 **ARTICLE 6. AGENDAS.**

78
79 (A) Two or more board members may place an item on the agenda by oral or written request to the staff
80 liaison at least five days before the meeting. After first consulting with and receiving input from
81 36 the staff liaison, the chair shall approve each final meeting agenda.

82 (B) The board liaison shall submit the meeting agenda through the online agenda posting system for
83 39 each meeting not less than 72 hours before the meeting.

84 (C) Posting of the agenda must comply with Texas Government Code Chapter 551 (Texas Open
85 42 Meetings Act).

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87 **ARTICLE 7. MEETINGS.**

88
89 (A) The board meetings shall comply with Texas Government Code Chapter 551 (Texas Open
90 5 Meetings Act).

91 (B) Board meetings shall be governed by Robert's Rules of Order.

92 (C) The board may not conduct a closed meeting without the approval of the city attorney.

93 (D) The board shall meet monthly.

94
95 (E) The chair may call a special meeting, and the chair shall call a special meeting if requested by three
96 12 meetings for the upcoming year, including makeup meeting dates for the holidays and cancelled
97 meetings.

98
99 (F) **Six Eight** members constitute a quorum.
100
101 (G) If a quorum for a meeting does not convene within one-half hour of the posted time for the meeting,
102 24 then the meeting may not be held.

103
104 (H) To be effective, a board action must be adopted by an affirmative vote of the number of members
105 27 necessary to provide a quorum. **If only a quorum is present at a meeting, a board action is adopted**
106 **28 by affirmative vote of two-thirds of the quorum (15 member board = 6 votes). If more than a**
107 **29 quorum is present at a meeting, a board action must be adopted by an affirmative vote of the**
108 **30 number of members necessary to provide a quorum (15 member board = 8 votes).**

109
110 (I) The chair has the same voting privilege as any other member.
111
112 (J) The board shall allow citizens to address the board on agenda items and during a period of time set
113 35 aside for citizen communications. The chair may limit a speaker to three minutes.

114
115 (K) The staff liaison shall prepare the board minutes. The minutes of each board meeting must include
116 38 the vote of each member on each item before the board and indicate whether a member is absent or
117 39 failed to vote on an item.

118
119 (L) The city clerk shall retain agendas, approved minutes, internal review reports and bylaws. The
120 42 Health and Human Services Department (HHSD) shall retain all other board documents. The
121 43 documents are public records under Texas Local Government Code Chapter 552 (Texas Public
122 44 Information Act).

123
124 (M) The chair shall adjourn a meeting not later than 10 p.m., unless the board votes to continue the
125 47 meeting.

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130 5 Meetings Act).

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132 (C) The board may not conduct a closed meeting without the approval of the city attorney.

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134 (D) The board shall meet monthly. 11 In November of each year, the board shall adopt a schedule of the
135 12 meetings for the upcoming year, including makeup meeting dates for the holidays and cancelled
136 meetings.

137
138 (E) The chair may call a special meeting, and the chair shall call a special meeting if requested by three
139 16 or more members. The call shall state the purpose of the meeting. A board may not call a meeting
140 17 in addition to its regular scheduled meetings as identified in its adopted meeting schedule, more
141 18 often than once a quarter, unless the meeting is required to comply with a statutory deadline or a
142 deadline established by Council.

143
144 (F) **Six Eight** members constitute a quorum.

145
146 (G) If a quorum for a meeting does not convene within one-half hour of the posted time for the meeting,
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167 44 Information Act).

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169 (M) The chair shall adjourn a meeting not later than 10 p.m., unless the board votes to continue the
170 47 meeting.

171
172 (E) Working groups are not required to post their meetings in accordance with the 1 Texas Government
173 2 Code Chapter 551 (Texas Open Meetings Act).

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175 **ARTICLE 9. PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY.**

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177 The rules contained in the current edition of Robert's Rules of Order shall govern the board in all
178 8 cases to which they are applicable, except when inconsistent with these bylaws or with special rules of
179 9 procedure which the board or city council may adopt.