



Interfaith Environmental Network of Austin

Climate and energy stewardship for Austin Area faith communities

March 3, 2014

Dear Austin Area Faith Community,

This letter is to inform you that the City of Austin is at the beginning stages of an important conversation about our electricity future, and your participation is crucial.

As a network of congregations and individuals of all faiths throughout Austin who focus on environmental stewardship, we want to make sure you have the information and resources you need to lend your voice to the conversation.

This conversation, now underway, will determine the sources of Austin's energy mix—coal, natural gas, solar, wind, energy-efficiency, etc.—for the next several decades. Because the sources of our community's energy affect our health and environment as well as our pocketbooks, and because the faith community has deep interests in ensuring the well being of all people today and for generations to come, it is important that Austin's faith community offer leadership and participate in the conversation.

In 2014, Austin Energy is updating the "Austin Energy Resource, Generation and Climate Protection Plan to 2020," and will present the updated plan to the Austin City Council before the end of the year. Our city utility is considering various proposals. Questions on the table include:

- How will we plan for population growth and climate change while keeping rates affordable, especially for low-income ratepayers?
- How long will we keep the coal-burning Fayette Power Plant in operation?
- How much will we invest in energy conservation and efficiency programs?
- Will we commit to building a new, gas-fired power plant?
- How much will we invest in renewable energy sources such as wind and solar?

In 2011, when Austin Energy was restructuring its rates, the faith community introduced the criteria of **Fair, Affordable, and Green** to the process. We believe these concepts can continue to serve as a useful discernment tool as our community now considers its energy future.

Fair – Ensuring that all people have an opportunity to participate in an open decision-making process, and that the costs and benefits of our public utility are justly shared.

Affordable – Ensuring that our community's energy bills are reasonable, especially for low-income and marginalized communities.

Green – Ensuring that our community's energy sources are healthy for people and the planet.

The faith community spoke up in 2011, and was an important part of creating a fair, affordable, and green rate structure. It is time to speak up again. Here are some things you and your congregation can do to learn more and be involved.

1. Go to Austin Energy's informational page about the Generation Resource Planning Process: <http://austinenergy.com/wps/portal/ae/About/reports-and-data-library/2014-generation-resource-planning-process>
2. Public input is now being received online. Read what people are saying and consider adding your comments: <https://www.formstack.com/forms/index.php?1667620-IGuaTZCDgR>
3. On March 17, 2014, at 6pm, the results of stakeholder input meetings will be presented at the Electric Utility Commission meeting. Attendees will have the opportunity to make public comments before the Commission.
4. On Tuesday, March 25, 2014, at noon, participate in Texas Interfaith Power & Light's webinar about ENERGY STAR's **new Action Workbook for Congregations**. For more info and to RSVP, go here: <http://txipl.org/content/webinar-introducing-energy-stars-new-action-workbook-congregations>
5. On Tuesday, April 1, 2014, at 7pm, join others in the Austin faith community for a special Interfaith Environmental Network forum, "Fair, Affordable, and Green: Faithfully Building Our Energy Future." The meeting will be held at Friends Meeting of Austin, 3701 E Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd, Austin, TX 78721.
6. As a congregation, get familiar with your own energy bill and host a speaker or a class that focuses on your tradition's teachings about the environment.

If you have questions about any of the above, need more information, or would like help in putting together a program for your congregation, please contact Sarah Macias, IEN Secretary, at sarah.macias@student.austinseminary.edu.

Thank you for all you do for the Austin community.

Sincerely,



Steven Folberg
Senior Rabbi
Congregation Beth Israel



Tom VandeStadt
Pastor
Congregational Church of Austin