



Date: May 19, 2026

To: Mayor Kirk Watson and Austin City Council Members

From: Visit Austin

Subject: Support for Agenda Items #7 (Austin Energy Generation) and #16 (Convention Center Special Tax Revenue Bonds)

Dear Mayor and Council Members,

On behalf of Visit Austin and the 150,000 Austinites who power our city's hospitality and tourism industry, I am writing to express our strong support for two critical items on the May 21st City Council agenda: the approval of Austin Energy's peaker generation units (Item #7) and the issuance of Special Tax Revenue Bonds for the Austin Convention Center expansion (Item #16).

Item #7: Ensuring Energy Reliability and Public Safety

The hospitality industry is more than an economic engine; we are a vital component of Austin's emergency infrastructure. During extreme weather events and grid emergencies, our hotels and the Austin Convention Center serve as essential warming centers and shelters for residents and first responders. To fulfill this civic duty, we require a reliable, uninterrupted power supply.

We support Austin Energy's plan to implement efficient, local peaker generation units as part of a broader strategy that continues advancing Austin's long-term clean energy goals while ensuring reliability during extreme weather events and grid emergencies. These units act as a necessary insurance policy, ensuring that when renewables alone cannot meet demand during long-duration emergencies, the lights stay on. For the thousands of workers, residents, emergency personnel and small businesses that depend on Austin functioning safely during extreme weather events, reliable and affordable energy is not a preference – it's essential to public safety, economic stability and community resilience.

Item #16: Advancing the Convention Center Redevelopment

We also urge the Council to approve the issuance of Special Tax Revenue Bonds to fund the Austin Convention Center expansion. Following years of community planning, public discussion and Council action, now is the time for execution. This project represents a long-term investment in Austin workers and small businesses, supporting everyone from hotel employees and restaurant workers to musicians, AV crews, drivers, retailers and local vendors whose livelihoods depend on a strong and active visitor economy. Critically, every dollar of debt service on these bonds is repaid by visitors through the Hotel Occupancy Tax, not by local residents. As you know, the visitor economy plays an important role in helping



fund public services and reducing financial pressure on Austin residents. Moving forward toward the Spring 2029 goal helps protect Austin's long-term economic competitiveness, sustain local jobs and ensure the city continues generating visitor-supported revenue that benefits residents and businesses across the community for decades to come.

These investments will help strengthen Austin's resilience, support local workers and businesses and position the city for long-term economic stability and growth. We respectfully ask for your approval of both items to keep Austin powered, open, and ready for the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Noonan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rob Gillette". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "G" and "L".

Tom Noonan, President & CEO, Visit Austin

Rob Gillette, Board Chair, Visit Austin & General Manager, Renaissance Austin Hotel