

# SENDERA

Volume 9, Number 8

August 2014  
Sendera Homeowner's Association

## Official Community Newsletter

### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings Sendera Residents,

This Fall, for the first time we will have an opportunity to elect a city council person specifically to represent SW Austin. It is paramount that all of us get out and vote for the candidate of our choice.

This edition of our newsletter includes responses to five questions our HOA posed to the four candidates who contacted us prior to the official filing date of July 21st. Other District 8 candidates interested in having their responses in the Sendera Newsletter should contact the newsletter editor at [pkgardensong@austin.rr.com](mailto:pkgardensong@austin.rr.com). The responses shown are exactly as they appeared in the communication from the candidate. If there is insufficient space for all of the answers, some responses may be moved to the September newsletter. Each candidate's response can also be viewed in its entirety at both [Senderahoa](http://Senderahoa.com) and [SenderaNextdoor](http://SenderaNextdoor.com) websites below:

[https://senderaaustin.nextdoor.com/news\\_feed/?post=5694859](https://senderaaustin.nextdoor.com/news_feed/?post=5694859)

[http://www.senderahoa.org/forums/viewtopic/24/202?post\\_id=316#p316](http://www.senderahoa.org/forums/viewtopic/24/202?post_id=316#p316) (Editor's Note: Once you have logged in, you must select the Forum tab to view the information referenced in this message.)

Happy Voting!  
Kind Regards,  
Todd Moore

### DISTRICT 8 CANDIDATES

#### RESPOND TO SENDERA HOA QUESTIONS

##### **Eliza May**

Eliza May is a 38 year resident of Austin, having lived the past 26 years in South and Southwest Austin. May has served the Austin community in many capacities including Tri-chair, AISD Bond Oversight Committee, 6 years. May has extensive executive experience as an Executive Director of state agencies and as President/CEO of a local Chamber of Commerce. Recently, May led the historic passage of the 10-1 city council and spearheaded the creation of the equally historic, Independent Citizen's Redistricting Commission that drew city council districts.

##### **Darrell Pierce**

The Darrell Pierce Campaign  
P.O. Box 93205  
Austin, TX 78709  
(512) 547-4198  
[www.darrellpierce.com](http://www.darrellpierce.com)  
[district8@darrellpierce.com](mailto:district8@darrellpierce.com)  
Campaign Manager: Chelsea Rountree

##### **Ed Scruggs**

As a 23 year Austin resident, former city hall reporter, Circle C HOA director and neighborhood advocate, I appreciate the opportunity to discuss with you what promises to be the most important election in Austin's history. For the first time we have the opportunity to elect true, district oriented representation to the council – and the choices we make will set the course

*(Continued on Page 4)*

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## Recreation Committee Announcement

*Submitted by Suzann Vera*

### Summer Movie Nights at the Pool!

Thank you to The Weakley Family for organizing Sendera Movie Nights at the pool this summer and to all those that offered to help! Movies will begin at dusk. Mark your calendars:

#### August 16 • Jaws

Movies can be watched from inside the pool or surrounding deck area. Bring your floats and maybe extra chairs! You are welcomed to bring your own snacks (no glass containers) and/or some money as snacks will also be sold for a community fundraiser.



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## *District 8 Candidates (Continued from Cover Page)*

for a generation.

Thank you once again for this valuable opportunity. I look forward to discussing these issues and others with you in greater depth over the coming months. For more information, please feel free to access my campaign Facebook page: Edscruggs4Austin8 Website: edscruggsfordistrict8.org or email me directly at Ed4Austin8@gmail.com

### **Ellen Troxclair**

Thank you for taking the time to get to know the City Council candidates from District 8! Finally having single-member districts in Austin is a huge opportunity for our community, and it is critical that we have strong representation at City Council on issues like property taxes, transportation, the cost of living, public safety, and responsible spending.

My husband, Caleb, and I have lived in Southwest Austin for many years now. Although our cost of living continues to increase, our quality of life is not improving. As a Realtor and a small-business owner, I see first-hand how issues such as skyrocketing property taxes and gridlocked traffic are negatively impacting residents. Austin is a

great city with so much potential, but we must have a focused vision for the future in order for us to manage our continuing growth while preserving our history.

### **What are your specific ideas to control out property taxes?**

**EM:** We need comprehensive tax reform that will require a commitment from Council to act on the following measures that I propose to lead as your District 8, council member.

#### **Home Owners and Renters**

- Universal Homestead exemption for all. Currently the city only provides this only for 65 plus and the handicapped. Young working families need the relief to allow them to build wealth.

- Make taxes fair by implementing the commercial property reform.
- Evaluate capping the value of property for Retirees, 65 plus.

#### **Commercial Properties**

- Demand a fair tax appraisal process for Commercial Properties. Conduct systematic property tax valuations. Valuations should only be certified if city and county can demonstrate valuations are accurate; both the city and the county need to work jointly to challenge unfair commercial appraisals.

*(Continued on Page 5)*

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**District 8 Candidates** (Continued from Page 4)

- Require Sale price disclose for Commercial Properties.
- Require that appraisal protest be based on the true market value of property.
- Require companies receiving tax incentives to pay their fair share of taxes.

**Reform City Council Business Practice**

- Lead the effort to demand coordination and accountability for local taxing entities to collaborate on when and which bonds will be offered to voters.
- Change procedures for all public hearings on budget, tax rate adoption and fee increase to maximize citizen input by requiring that hearings be held in Council's Districts. This will maximize the District 8 citizen's voice.

**DP:** Implement a phased-in, city-wide homestead property tax exemption over a period of time until we reach 20% allowed by state law of the property's appraised

**ES:** In District 8 and across this city, too many families with children are faced with soaring property tax bills. Especially hard hit are middle class families who may have moved here 15 years ago, when homes were considered more affordable. Faced with rising

taxes and years left on a mortgage, some feel as if they must either pay up – or cash out. That isn't much of a choice. For many, the only option is to move further out to face an even worse commute and everything that comes with it. More hours on the road; less time with family; increasing transportation costs that eat up the savings of more affordable housing.

For most of us, our homes are not ATMs or 401Ks – to be cashed out when times are tough. My wife and I moved to Southwest Austin 13 years ago as an investment in our family; to raise our kids in a safe environment and send them to quality public schools. This is currently under threat by a property tax system that is frankly out of control.

While the city represents approximately 20% of our overall tax bill – it has a responsibility to lead the reform that must take place if we are to get our arms around tax relief and affordability issues. Fundamentally, we must incorporate zero based budgeting and sunset review into our annual budget process. We cannot afford to accept funding levels from the previous year as a base for the next – and must start from scratch to justify all programs and positions.

It will take time to institute this change in philosophy – but it is important we get it right and set the stage for the long-term. The

*(Continued on Page 6)*



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## **District 8 Candidates** (Continued from Page 5)

council's expectation should be for the city manager to present a proposed budget at no more than the effective tax rate (meaning – a tax rate that translates into the same revenue collected as the previous year). It will then be up to the council to add or subtract from this base while formulating the final budget. Accomplishing this will shine light on the budget process and make us, as your representatives, more accountable.

I believe that once we incorporate these fundamental changes into our budgeting philosophy, it should then be possible to adopt a homestead exemption and other reforms aimed at easing the property tax burden.

**ET:** District 8 has the highest rate of homeownership of all of the city council districts, so property tax increases have a huge impact on us! There are several ways that City Council can directly and immediately lower property taxes including: 1) enacting a city homestead exemption, which could reduce property taxes by offering an exemption for up to 20% of the value of the homestead; 2) providing a taxpayer rebate with excess revenue; or 3) simply lowering the tax rate. Any or all of these proposals would provide much needed relief to our community.

However, the best way to ensure that these reductions are sustainable is to control our budget and make the City less dependent on constantly increasing revenue through responsible spending. We must focus on allocating money first to basic city services such as public safety and transportation in order to curb the need to return to the taxpayers for more money.

### **In a perfect world, how would you reduce traffic congestion in District 8?**

**EM:**

- Increase capacity on Mopac, more lanes without tolls.
- Increase bus service, more buses, and more routes.
- Promote the synchronizing of traffic signals.
- Build a permanent Cap Metro Park and Ride station in District 8, currently on second location, ACC lot at the Pinnacle Campus.
- Build more roads, increase road connectivity.
- Promote telecommuting, staggered work days, a 4 day work week
- Promote reverse lanes for high traffic roads, to move people in and out of Austin during high traffic/commuter peak hours.
- Develop a comprehensive transportation plan that addresses District 8 needs
- Implement mass transit solutions that are more efficient, less expensive and can be delivered in a short timeframe providing relief in a record time.

**DP:** There are several options that the city has available to ease the congestion in District 8. The following options include:

- Ensuring funding for a regional South and Southwest Austin transportation study is included in the November 2014 bond package.
- Completing the construction at the Highway 290 and 71 Y intersection that will improve continuous flow of traffic.
- Developing a regional consensus through community engagement

around the Highway 290 and 71 Parkway solutions being provided by Central Texas Mobility Regional Authority.

- Working with TxDOT to determine the feasibility for underpasses to be built at LaCrosse Drive and Slaughter Lane in order to remove traffic lights located on MOPAC.

- Conducting a District 8 traffic light synchronization study for lights operated and controlled by the City of Austin and TxDOT.

- Continue to study and explore options for improving traffic flow on FM 1826.

- Implementing volunteer rideshare programs and HOV lanes.

**ES:** In terms of traffic issues for District 8, I've historically opposed SH 45 because I am convinced Mopac will not have the capacity to absorb the explosion of new commuter traffic expected from the south in coming years. That being said, the project has advanced and may now be impossible to stop. If the project breaks ground, I would support the construction of underpasses proposed at the Slaughter and LaCrosse – as long as these projects pass environmental review and the impact on adjoining neighborhoods is adequately mitigated.

I also favor these additional steps to help alleviate congestion throughout District 8.

- Fix the Y at Oak Hill in a manner that minimizes the use of flyovers, keeps off the creek as much as possible, protects surrounding neighborhoods and allows residents safe and reasonable access to their homes.

- South Mopac: Expand capacity south of the river using the proposed flex lane concept, but only if it passes environmental review and questions regarding connectivity at the river are addressed.

- Cut-Through Traffic: In the planning stages of development we can do a better job minimizing the potential for cut-through traffic in existing neighborhoods, particularly near our public schools. Mitigating existing cut-through routes must become a priority.

- Dedicated Bicycle Infrastructure: We should work with local neighborhoods to seek agreement on ways to upgrade the bicycle infrastructure, promote trail / road connectivity and provide safe routes for commuting and recreation.

- Capital Metro Service Expansion: Bus service throughout District 8 must be upgraded in a way that takes the needs of the commuter seriously. Multiple, secure park and ride facilities are needed in accessible locations. Routes must be expanded and connectivity improved.

- Staggered Work Hours / Telecommuting: We must partner with the business community, the state, AISD and UT to establish a coordinated system of staggered work hours, which would take pressure off the morning and evening commute.

**ET:** I think we have learned that if you don't build it, they will still come! We need to invest heavily and immediately in increased road capacity. Seeing to the quick completion of current projects, as well as already planning for future projects is crucial. Flexible, staggered work hours and more bus routes would contribute to the short-term solution, but the vast majority of District 8 residents drive their cars to work and need more roads to alleviate gridlocked traffic.

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