

EAPP5 Meeting Minutes 10-23-2019

Meeting for Supporters of the Edwards Aquifer Protection Program October 23, 2019 GEAA Office 1809 Blanco Road

Meeting at GEAA Headquarters, called to order by Annalisa Peace at 5:30pm.

Present were Annalisa Peace, Steve Hixon, Alan Montemayor, Karen Wheeler, Terry Burns, Debbie Reid, Bebe Fenstermaker, Mary Fenstermaker, Jeanette Reynolds, Norma Alvarado, Edna Molina, Linda Nash, Ray Nash, Margaret Grelo, Robert Botello, Lisa Pack

Minutes by Terry Burns

Annalisa led discussion about challenges to Prop 1, which funds EAPP (Edwards Aquifer Protection Program). This 1/8 cent sales tax was approved by City of San Antonio (COSA) voters several times, most recently in 2015 by 78% approval. It is up for re-approval/extension, normally in May 2020. Back when Henry Cisneros was Mayor of COSA he took a half cent sales tax away from VIA to fund the Alamo Dome. That money was later allocated a quarter cent to pre-K for SA, and 1/8 cent for Prop 1, funding Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone/ Edwards Aquifer Contributing Zone (EARZ/EACZ) land easement acquisitions to protect our Edwards Aquifer, and 1/8 cent for Prop 2 funding of Greenway Parks. ConnectSA is having many meetings around SA promoting its mobility plans, AND saying they can be funded by the 1/8 cent Prop 1 money, because the EAPP “is no longer needed”. Pre-K for SA immediately took a strong public position AGAINST giving up any tax dollars from their allocation. Just this afternoon Rivard Report quoted Judge Nelson Wolf saying “he sees no other option to help VIA Metropolitan Transit work on its future bus rapid transit plans without taking the Edwards Aquifer protection sales tax.”

GEAA members are in unanimous agreement that the EAPP should be continued and Prop 1 moneys preserved for that purpose. We are far behind other areas in watershed preservation to protect our drinking supplies, with New Jersey and NYC among those that are far ahead of us. These easements are also important in protecting Hill Country from unregulated development, and sometimes can be helpful from protecting against anti-citizen and property right eminent domain efforts by groups like major pipeline companies (the Enterprise Pipeline route was shifted away from our area BECAUSE it was to cross two SA EAPP easements, which could have tied things up in courts for years.). Prop 1 funds were also instrumental in protecting Bracken Cave.

Annalisa and Francine Romero (chair of the EAPP Advisory Board) will meet with SAEN Editorial Board Josh Brodesky et al. at their request to discuss GEAA’s position on ConnectSA’s attempt to take the EAPP sales tax funds so as to promote their ConnectSA plans. Everyone recognizes traffic congestion is a huge problem, but stealing EAPP money is no way to solve our mobility problems.

San Antonio River Authority (SARA) proposals for an added property tax to fund water related programs can possibly replace Prop 2 Greenway funding, but because SARA has no authority to work outside its defined geographic boundaries, it cannot manage much of EAPP or expand its holdings over EA beyond Bexar County. The vote on the SARA proposal will be November 2020.

GEAA needs funds to help build a campaign to defend Prop 1 for EAPP. Annalisa continues to try to reach Nature Conservancy, which has helped out in the past and does benefit from EAPP, so far without success in reaching their Texas Director. Tax deductible contributions are encouraged. \$3000 could have a big impact for coordinating campaign and messaging efforts. In the absence of funds, more volunteer help will be needed.

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Campaign roll out and strategy were discussed. **Initial press conference** will be a small event at GEAA, **December 3, 10 am**. All GEAA Members are needed to provide a rep for the event and provide short comments. All GEAA Members are encouraged to get other non-member groups, church, HOA, “chess club” and any others, to send a rep also to support this roll out of the SAVE EAPP Campaign. Please send rep name to Annalisa (annalisa@aquiferalliance.org) from each group attending **BY 11/27**.

After the end of the year, a larger event will be planned with hopefully a hundred people showing up to participate, possibly on a Saturday afternoon at a park or in front of SA Conservation Society, “Good Kind Cafe”(?) in South Town or elsewhere. A rally in front of city hall before Citizens to be Heard some Wednesday evening was also suggested. A public forum about Prop 1 and EAPP, possibly in contrast to ConnectSA, was considered, with possible LWV sponsorship.

Groups and individuals are encouraged to bring this issue to their leadership, and to their various contacts, HOA’s, churches, etc. to fight back against the apparently heavy promotional work being done by the well-funded “ConnectSA” group led by Henry Cisneros, who is still involved in a financial investment company and linked to transportation bond group.

Possible support from Mayor Hardberger considered but thought doubtful. Reaching out to Pre-K for SA for possible alignment will be attempted. Potential developer opposition to EAPP was considered but without consensus. Different development besides expanding highways was felt needed, and concerns are that ConnectSA has too much road building and any tax diversion will not go directly to VIA.

GEAA is also nominating the EAPP for an SA Tomorrow award and asks for letters of support from member organization to go with the nomination (next Oct 30).

Native Prairie Association is a new local group suggested as a possible additional member.

GEAA support for Constitutional Amendments 2, 5 and 8 was affirmed.

Amendment 4, to ban state income tax, was discussed in context of burdens of property tax, prospects for passing SARA proposed added property tax, finding funding for mobility etc.

Meeting adjourned at 6:40pm.