

Comments to San Antonio Mayor and City Council 8/20/2020
By Annalisa Peace

I am speaking on behalf of the 18 member groups of the Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance that are within SAWS service area.

I was saddened to learn that a majority of you declined to approve appointment of Robert Potts to the SAWS Board on August 6th, especially given his recommendation by the Governance Committee. This breach of process does not reflect well on San Antonio.

This is a sample of the feedback we got from throughout the state when we announced GEAA's endorsement of Mr. Potts, "Robert Potts is a rock star of conservation and ethical decision making. I'm amazed he agreed to sit on this Board as he has many other conservation groups vying for his attention. I'd expect him to be a great steward of water and the communities that depend on it."

Given the many complicated issues you must deal with as Council representatives; we would not expect you all to know every player in the water arena. GEAA strives to be a resource for our region in advocating sound water policy and expert representation on our boards and commissions. Hence, we began looking for good candidates to fill the upcoming vacancies on the SAWS Board in November of 2019. In that we represent eighteen diverse organizations within SAWS service area, GEAA takes very seriously any recommendations we make.

I have personal knowledge of the history of inequities associated with our City owned water utility as a result of an overabundance of influence exerted by vested interests. In the early 1990's, working with LULAC, MALDEF, and COPS/Metro, I organized press conferences to highlight the fact that water service was being extended to new subdivisions on San Antonio's north side while several established communities on the south side of town were refused SAWS service. It took public exposure to fix a problem that had been festering for years. More recently, it has been an ongoing struggle to make sure that impact fees on new water and sewer service contracts are assessed at the maximum amount allowed by state law so that existing SAWS ratepayers are not required to cover the cost of new development. Suffice it to say that I have learned from experience that it is a great benefit to have trustees who are committed to representing the best interests of all citizens.

Based on a longstanding working relationship with Robert Potts, I can assure you that he is a consensus builder who carefully balances competing needs when making decisions. It would greatly benefit our community to employ his expertise in the oversight of SAWS.

At this time, when SAWS faces a number of challenges, it is vitally important that City Council chooses the right people to represent us. Anticipated SAWS rate increases must be structured fairly. The addition of large volumes of water from Vista Ridge should not cause us to abandon the conservation practices that are an example to other cities nation-wide. The expansion of urban development over the Edwards Aquifer demands a serious discussion on how SAWS policies impact water quality and water pricing. And, a record of all too frequent water quality

violations at SAWS' Dos Rios wastewater treatment plant, as well as problems in meeting the EPA's decree to fix our aging sewage infrastructure indicates that we cannot afford to be complacent. SAWS plays a major role in the health and safety of our community. We need someone on the Board who represents our entire city and who will work hard to insure that SAWS practices and policies are fair, competent, and sustainable.

I urge you to vote to appoint Robert Potts to the SAWS Board of Trustees today. Thank you.