

Open Letter to the CPS Energy Board of Trustees

I hereby resign from my position as Chair of the CPS Energy Environmental Stakeholders, a broad group of environmental advocates that meets quarterly with CPS Energy senior staff. I have participated in these meetings for over four years, serving as chair for the last two years.

In all the time that I have participated in these closed-door meetings, I have seen zero progress come about as a result of our discussions. Staff are reluctant to share information with stakeholders and even more reluctant to put anything into writing. In short, these meetings serve no more than to provide the optics of public participation and accountability.

After years of participating in these meetings, we recognized that the process was clearly broken and felt the need to revisit their purpose. I submitted “Purpose of Environmental Stakeholder Meetings” as the first agenda item for our August 2019 meeting.

In that meeting we told CEO Paula Gold Williams that we did not believe that CPS Energy was meeting with us in good faith and that meaningful conversations were taking place in our meetings. Four days later Gold Williams reported to the CPS Energy Board of Trustees that she met with the Environmental Stakeholders, and that “This group formally opposes our positions.” Environmental Stakeholders believe that our message was deliberately misrepresented at that board meeting. Having a meaningful conversation and disagreeing is perfectly understandable. Not meeting with us in good faith is unacceptable. ([Watch board meeting video 26:28 mark](#). View CPS Energy Board Presentation [PowerPoint slide 15](#).)

One meeting topic that stakeholders repeatedly requested was exploring conditions for and impacts of an early retirement of CPS Energy’s Spruce coal plant. We asked CPS Energy to run a model to determine what it would take to shut down their coal plant earlier than its current 2065 retirement date so that we could have conversations on possible energy generation replacement options, total cost, average customer bill impact, maintaining reliability of service, new job training for current plant employees, etc.

After years of asking, CPS Energy agreed to model this scenario, and we were told that they would share the results with us at our August 2019 meeting. However, we were instead informed that the ranges of inputs for this model were so large that nothing could be concluded from the outputs of that model. No other information was shared at that meeting.

Stakeholders were left wanting a more meaningful conversation on that topic. At our following meeting, I pressed Gold Williams for more details, and she responded that her staff never modeled an early coal plant retirement scenario. Environmental stakeholders remain confused as to how to interpret conflicting versions of what we were told.

Environmental Stakeholders have also made repeated, written requests for opportunities to weigh in on the development of an updated Save for Tomorrow Energy Program (STEP). Our

membership was aware that the previous 10-year STEP program was coming to an end, and on three separate occasions we submitted proposed agendas asking for opportunities to provide input on this program. We submitted these agendas in November 2018, August 2019, and November 2019. At every one of these meetings, senior staff told us that there would be plenty of opportunities for us to weigh in on this program in the future.

The first time that CPS Energy extended an opportunity for us to provide input on a new STEP program was in an email that Kathy Garcia sent us on January 9th, 2020, stating, “*We would really like your input on which programs you would like to see included going forward. We would be happy to set another meeting to discuss this.*” Five days after we received that email, CPS Energy’s board of trustees voted to approve an extension of the outdated STEP program. For seventeen months stakeholders asked for opportunities to provide input on that program. It goes to a vote for approval at City Council in three days, and we have yet to be provided an opportunity to share our ideas and concerns.

For too many members of the public who have tried to work with CPS Energy, trust is broken. Rather than approaching stakeholders as possible partners to work with in seeking solutions to our community’s challenges, senior staff have consistently treated us as adversaries to be undermined.

Over the past few years I have had the opportunity to interact with dozens of CPS Energy staff members, and there are many great people here who care about our community and do impressive work. By no means do I mean to cast a wide net and criticize the entire team. There are many employees at CPS Energy who I admire and even consider friends.

I will also tell you that I have no desire to tear CPS Energy down or negatively impact your bottom line. San Antonio is my home and CPS Energy is my public utility. I want us to be the best public utility in the nation, serving as a model for others to see and follow. When a group of stakeholders bring forward ideas on how to improve our utility, I want them to be treated with respect. I believe that if we all put our minds together and challenge each other’s ideas in a productive and respectful manner, we can overcome our biggest obstacles and achieve great things.

However, I am no longer willing to spend my time in closed-door, cat-and-mouse stakeholder meetings, and I therefore submit my resignation today.

I will close by telling you that I believe that there is a better way forward, and you don’t have to reinvent the wheel. My ask to you today is simply that you develop a new public participation process that meets best practices as recommended by the American Public Power Association’s [Public Participation for Community-owned Utilities, An Implementation Guide.](#)

Thank you,

Mario Bravo

Resigning Chair, CPS Energy Environmental Stakeholders