

January 30, 2019

Open Letter to the Mayor and City Council

Member Organizations of the Climate Action SA Coalition oppose the nomination of Janie Gonzalez by the current CPS Energy Board of Trustees for a vacant Board position. Many of us have been able to meet with Mrs. Gonzalez in person in quickly arranged, last minute meetings, and since then we have discussed this matter at length.

Ms. Gonzalez, like every other CPS Board member, brings important financial and business management skills to the vacant position. However, CPS Energy's Board is already made up of members with those skills. Unfortunately, the Board's self-selection process results in self cloning. Gender and ethnic diversity may receive consideration, but only if the candidate meets the primary financial and business values the Board seeks.

The record shows that there is no effort in seeking a candidate with diversity of thought or background, knowledge of the energy industry, commitment to sustainability, etc. The Board currently has no public health officials, energy experts, or community organizers. This is a five year appointment, usually renewed for a second term, which means the current nominee could serve until 2029, well past when the current mayor and all council members have reached their term limits.

For the second time in less than a year, CPS has selected a new Board member behind closed doors. Board appointments should be done through a public process, with published criteria and questionnaires for selection. Interviews with applicants should be public in a manner that reflects the best public participation guidelines that COSA recently adopted for itself.

CPS Energy is by far the largest emitter of greenhouse gases in San Antonio. Our climate action and adaptation draft plan that was just released cannot succeed without cooperation from CPS Energy, and we have yet to see that cooperation. While CPS Energy staff attended every steering committee and working group meeting for the development of the draft climate plan, CPS staff did not sit at the table with representatives from SAWS, San Antonio River Authority, USAA, Whataburger, Real Estate Council of SA, UIW, VIA Metro, Joint Base San Antonio, Alamo Area Metropolitan Planning Authority, etc. and contribute ideas. Instead, CPS Energy staff sat quietly at the back of the room and took notes.

Also, do not mistake last month's closing of the Dirty Deely coal plant as action taken under the current leadership of CPS Energy or in response to the current climate plan that the city is drafting. The decision to close that coal plant was made eleven years ago under a different board and CEO. While city staff were busy developing a draft climate plan, the current leadership of CPS Energy unveiled their own energy generation plan, which completely ignores both the city's climate plan and the direction set by council when they passed a resolution committing to meet the Paris Climate Agreement goals at the local level.

CPS Energy will have to make significant changes to allow our utility to be competitive in the future. That won't happen by appointing more like-minded people to their board. The board desperately needs members who will question the assumptions of senior CPS Energy staff and embrace new solutions in an industry that is rapidly changing. The next five to ten years will be critical to move CPS Energy

away from fossil fuels and toward renewable energy. It will be a time of both technological innovation and worsening climate impacts. We need Board members who have been vetted by the public, and start with a broad and deep knowledge of these issues. We see no evidence of that knowledge from Ms. Gonzalez.

City Council has historically not exercised its oversight authority over CPS Energy. Up until recently, Council was an unpaid, part-time second job, operating as though San Antonio were some backwoods village. We recently transitioned to paying council members, most of who now treat it as a full-time job. However, our new council has yet to shift its operational culture and focus to provide any real oversight over CPS Energy. This is City Council's chance to show CPS Energy who runs this city.

Our city government must make our utilities more responsive to the community as a whole. Ms. Gonzalez was selected by a secret, undemocratic process. It is past time we put the "public" back into our public utilities. Please vote no on her nomination, and demand CPS start again under a transparent public nomination process. We'll never get the city we deserve without the public utility we deserve.

Many Thanks for Your Consideration,

Terry Burns
Climate Action SA
Lone Star Sierra Club

Briauna Barrera
Climate Action SA
Public Citizen

Adelita Cantu
Climate Action SA
Alliance of Nurses for
Healthy Environments

Climate Action SA

Working Organizations

Public Citizen; Texas Victory Project; Our Revolution San Antonio; William C. Velasquez Institute; Southwest Workers Union; Sierra Club, Alamo Group; Vecinos de Mission Trails; Bexar County Green Party; San Antonio Progressive Alliance; Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club; imagine San Antonio; Ignition Green; Moms Clean Air Force; SustainableSA.com; Politiqueers; Energía Mía; Guadalupe County Democratic Party; Deceleration.news; MOVE San Antonio; San Antonio DSA; Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments

Supporting Organizations

Domesticas Unidas; Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance; Citizen's Climate Lobby-SA; San Antonio Interfaith Environmental Network (SAIEN); Native Plant Society of Texas, SA Chapter; American Indians in Texas at the Spanish Colonial Missions; Martinez Street Women's Center; Texas Drought Project; Society of Native Nations; Build San Antonio Green; Bexar County Young Democrats; Bexar County Democratic Party; Stone in the Stream/Roca en el Rio; Greater Faith Institutional Church; U.S. Green Building Council; Fuerza Unida; Environmental Defense Fund