

SAWS ACT PAC

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www.SAWSAct.org • email: Contact@SAWSAct.org

To: Candidates for City Council and Mayor, 2021
From: SAWS Act PAC
Date: 3/2/21
Re: Questionnaire – due 3/9/21

Please return this questionnaire in a word document, with your name and telephone number to us at contact@SAWSAct.org. Please use this background (“FAQs”) piece to inform you.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any concerns and for additional information.

Thank you for answering our questionnaire. **SAWS ACT PAC**

SAWS Act PAC Questionnaire – May 2021 Election

Candidate Name: Irma G. Barron

Office You Are Seeking: San Antonio City Council District 5

Your website address: www.irmagbarron.com

Your social media address: Candidate Irma Barron for District 5 (FaceBook)

Contact Information: Paul Medrano (210)393-1005 paulmedrano@sbcglobal.net
334 Castroville Rd. San Antonio, TX 78207

1. Please tell us which, if any, of the 5 provisions of the SAWS Accountability Act, listed below, you support. Please feel free to add a comment, but keep to no more than 500 words.

Provision 1, General Manager Salary & Benefits & Term

Compensation, including salary and non-cash equivalents, for the San Antonio Water System General Manager shall be fixed annually by the City Council, and shall not exceed an amount equal to ten (10) times that of the lowest paid fulltime SAWS employee in the same period. The term of the General Manager shall automatically terminate after 8 years in office and the SAWS Board of Trustees may recommend a replacement to the City Council, however the Council must replace the General Manager within 30 days after the expiration of the incumbent’s term. A General Manager may be retained for up to one additional 4-year term by a retention election placed on the ballot by the Council or by petition, and held no later than 30 days after such term expiration.

* yes, I support this provision
 no, I do not support this provision

Comment: I would most certainly support a provision of limiting term and salary/benefits packages for SAWS General Managers. I feel too many times people in charge have a tendency of becoming too comfortable in their roles and change mostly always results in positive outcomes. The changing of the guard would also bring about more diversity and a different outlook in leadership. In regards to salaries and benefits, of course more research would have to be involved to keep competitive with other cities and thus allowing for our city to keep the most qualified and highly skilled General Managers. But truthfully, 10X times more than the lowest salary sounds more than fair.

Provision 2: Term Limit Enforcement for Board of Trustees

The SAWS Board of Trustees is appointed by the City Council and in like manner may be terminated. Trustees are limited to two four-year terms, and may not hold over or otherwise continue in office more than 30 days after the expiration of their first or second term. A Trustee eligible for reappointment shall be reappointed within such 30-day period. Any Trustee who serves out an unexpired portion of two or more years of another Trustee's term shall be considered to have served a full term.

* yes, I support this provision
 no, I do not support this provision

Comment: Term limit enforcement for Board of Trustees would be another provision that I would support. As mentioned previously, change is good. This would allow for complacency not to exist. It would also allow more people the opportunity to serve the residents of San Antonio and surrounding areas. Term limits for Board Trustees would also allow for new members to assess and monitor quality control and how things are being run.

Provision 3: Legislative & Regulatory Lobbying

The City Council shall deliberate in open session and approve, by a two-thirds majority vote, all recommendations by the SAWS Board, General Manager or staff regarding legislative or regulatory priorities, including support or opposition thereto. Neither the SAWS Board nor the General Manager or the staff shall directly or indirectly lobby or advocate for legislation or regulatory policies at the Local, State or Federal level absent prior approval from the Council. After completion of their term, Trustees and the General Manager are prohibited from working for the City or SAWS, or representing others before the City or SAWS for a period of four years

* yes, I support this provision
 no, I do not support this provision

Comment: Whether in favor or in opposition, in my opinion, City Council open sessions and a mandatory approval by 2/3 majority vote almost guarantees fairness and equity to the legislative or regulatory decisions being made. This is extremely important especially when they affect more than a million SAWS customers. Direct or indirect lobbying by the General Manager, SAWS Board of Trustees and staff should be non-existent. That is not the role or job they are appointed to perform. Lets leave the lobbying to politicians and other representatives. After term completion, I feel General

Managers and Board Trustees should be thanked for their service to the residents of the City of San Antonio, but should be prohibited from working or representing SAWS or the City of San Antonio for a minimum period of four years.

Provision 4: Ethics

The SAWS Board and General Manager are subject to Federal, State, and Local ethics requirements as applicable and may be removed by the City Council for violations by a majority of Council members present and voting.

* yes, I support this provision
 no, I do not support this provision

Comment: In today's day and age transparency is key. Therefore, ethics must be of utmost importance no matter what position we hold. This is amplified even more if those appointed are representing the City of San Antonio and its residents. So as pillars of the community, the General Manager and SAWS Board Trustees must be held accountable when it comes to Federal, State, and local applicable ethics requirements. In case of violations, I feel a majority vote by City Council is just in the removal of such SAWS Board member or General Manager.

Provision 5: Performance audits of \$1B or more projects before signing and including Vista Ridge

Existing projects and future projects, including related contracts and documents, that individually or in combination exceed \$1 billion shall undergo an independent performance audit within one year of adoption of this Charter Amendment or within one year of execution, as applicable, and in each case every five years thereafter. The City Council may determine that a shorter audit term is necessary. Federally mandated projects are excluded from such audits. The Vista Ridge Project and related agreements are specifically subject to performance audit and all other provisions in this Par. 5. The performance audit shall conform to Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS) for performance audits and shall include: (1) a management audit; and (2) an economic impact audit. The management audit shall determine the extent to which the project's governance and management structure creates risks to the City, SAWS, or SAWS ratepayers, and the extent to which these risks have been mitigated by insurance, bonds or other means. The economic impact audit shall include findings regarding the costs and benefits associated with the project, including without limitation long-term environmental impacts, reliability of the particular source of supply, and impacts on communities that depend upon that supply. The Council shall solicit and select qualified independent auditors in response to public requests for qualifications. Independent auditors must not have direct or indirect ties, financial or otherwise, to the City or County governments, including SAWS, CPS Energy, or any entity controlled directly or indirectly by the City. The Council will conduct a minimum of two public hearings before the selection of any independent auditors. All audits shall include a determination that recommendations and representations by SAWS employees or consultants to the SAWS Board and/or Council that relate to a particular project were correct or have been fulfilled and if not, provide specific findings regarding the discrepancy. The selection of an independent auditor shall not be done by means of a consent agenda. Government Accounting

Standards Board accounting standards (GASB) shall apply to all SAWS contracts and project documents adopted after the effective date of this amendment unless waived by the Council based on specific findings of public benefit. Contracts awarded by the Council for independent performance audits shall not exceed \$150,000 plus .000104 multiplied by the project's value, unless waived by the Council based on specific findings of public benefit.

* yes, I support this provision
 no, I do not support this provision

2. Will you commit to sponsoring – within the first 30 days of your election -- an ordinance for an independent performance audit of the Vista Ridge water pipeline project as outlined in Provision 5 of the SAWS Accountability Act?

* yes
 no

Comment: When it comes to accountability, Evaluation and Assessment are key. I would strongly favor an independent audit of the Vista Ridge waterline project. Key factors I would want to see in the audit would be the Economic impact, Environmental impact, and the Cost Effectiveness of the project.

3. We believe City's fight against the SAWS petition has made a case for stronger SAWS Accountability Act in the future – to “put the public back in public utilities”. Will you join us in a call to elect the SAWS Board and to guarantee representation on the Board for all ratepayers, including those who live outside San Antonio? (Keep in mind we support geographic districts, otherwise known as single member districts, not at-large districts).

* yes
 no

Comment: It is highly evident that business models today favor a more corporate structure where the rich and powerful continue to remain strong and the less affluent and common people continue to struggle. I strongly believe that we need to bring back the true so called public utilities. A public run company would insure what is fair and equitable for all. Profits and bonuses should not be granted to those with big titles but rather be shared by all the residents of the City of San Antonio and surrounding areas. Just recently a winter storm caused us experiences ranging from turmoil to heartaches something that was entirely unexcusable. A public run utility company, In my opinion, would have never let the situation get as bad as it did. I would strongly support electing a SAWS Board that truly represents all ratepayers of all sorts of shapes and sizes and not only those select few.

4. Do you support the right to petition for a public vote on city charter amendments, guaranteed by Texas Constitutional Amendment for Home rule since 1912? If so, would you support a public inquiry into the expensive legal actions taken by the City, SAWS and CPS in attempt to thwart petitioners for SAWS and CPS accountability, and will you pledge to call for

such an inquiry within 30 days of your election? (For background use [this article in the San Antonio Report](#), outlining the litigation filed and withdrawn by SAWS before the Court was likely to rule against them. Note that CPS petitioners are also now appealing their case.)

* yes
 no

Comment: A question that comes to my mind.... Is the City of San Antonio, SAWS, and CPS serving the residents of San Antonio, or are we to serve them? Well of course the easy answer is that they serve us since we pay for a service. That being said, we the public should have the right to petition for a public vote on city charter amendments. As tax payers we have the right to question how our money is being utilized whether its for litigation, payroll, etc. etc. and if it is not being spent wisely we must hold certain people or entities accountable. As a member of the public, a tax payer, a resident of the city, and as an elected official I would certainly support and welcome public inquiry into expensive legal actions.