

SAWS Act PAC

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To: Candidates for City Council and Mayor, 2021
From: SAWS Act PAC
Date: 3/3/21
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: Gabrien Gregory
Office You Are Seeking: City Council District 10
Your website address: VoteGregory.com
Your social media address: @gabriengregory

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.

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

Comment:

As a rate payer and citizen of San Antonio, I believe transparency is of utmost important. I can personally think of no particular and pressing reason why anyone in the position of General Manager should maintain that position for longer than eight

years. My initial concern is how polarized and powerful the individual may become with such an extended amount of time. Secondly, I'm hesitant for people to stay in positions of power so long when issues like the Vista Ridge Water Pipeline have lacked community input and been pushed through without real investigation for causes and impacts. Lastly, I support people in positions like General Manager getting paid well for such an important role, but I agree there needs to be oversight as to how much pay is increasing every year. It is not fair to continue seeing increases in salaries for the GM or other high-up officials when workers do not always receive fair pay and residents see rate increases - especially in times like these. As Councilman, I would support this provision.

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.

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

Comment:

I personally see no reason to not support this. I am hesitant as to why someone would need to be on the board for longer than eight years. The president of the United States only serves four years in office. I am interested in hearing arguments regarding this, but here is my initial response.

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
 X no, I do not support (part) this provision

Comment:

The only stipulation I have regarding this is the proposal to require a two-thirds vote by City Council for legislative priorities. The SAWS board exists partly for the purpose of making these kinds of decisions and the board should be entrusted to oversee this. I want to be clear: the City Council should provide much more oversight over SAWS. It is important to remember the SAWS board is chosen and approved by the City Council, which is elected by the people, as it is. I do agree no one who served on the

SAWS board or in the GM position should be allowed to lobby at any level of government without approval from the City Council. I do not agree there should be a gap after completion of a term on the SAWS board. Some of the people who serve on this board can bring a productive perspective and experience to the city; people should be encouraged to serve in the future. With that being said, the City Council should provide oversight to prevent unfair practices and decisions.

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:

Oversight - a check and balance - should always exist to ensure accountability.

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:

I believe accountability matters and community input should come first. I will commit to an ordinance for an independent performance audit of the Vista Ridge water pipeline project within the 30 days of the election. This will let residents know the City Council cares about accountability and will work to better evaluate major decisions that affect neighbors and the environment in the future. In District 10, residents care deeply about rushed decisions involving rate increases, and I have their back. Frankly, I'm upset this has not happened already.

3. We believe City's fight against the SAWS petition has made a case for a stronger SAWS Accountability Act in the future – to “put the public back into our 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:

I am hesitant of the ramifications of political and financial influence should we open an election. I am concerned about who would be able to run based on position or class. The City Council appoints members of the board. There should be clear and public conversations by the Council during hearings for consideration of a new member of the board, and there should be an effort to ensure representation by ratepayers. However, I believe opening this up to an election would bring about politilization. The City Council must provide more oversight to prevent rushed decisions made almost entirely by and of the interest to developers. It is past time to place residents first and elect council members who fight for accountability and oversight.

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 an 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.)

X **yes**
 no

Comment:

I fully support this, however I can not commit to calling for an inquiry within 30 days of the election. I will absolutely commit to presenting an inquiry as soon as possible after immediate priorities in my campaign platform have begun to be addressed.