

January 16, 2019

To the Mayor and Councilmembers of the City of San Antonio:

We thank Councilwoman Ana Sandoval for the proposed public participation guidelines and her commitment to fostering trust and accountability between our community and City Hall. These guidelines will work to ensure that the relationship between community and government be meaningful and productive on both ends. Community participation should always be engaged throughout the development and operations of our city, which has not been the case for many years. Due to the vital impact of community engagement, it is important that all of our neighbors are well informed as we create public policy. It is then equally as important that any community input is thoroughly considered before action is taken.

While the Esperanza Peace & Justice Center is in support of the resolution, we remain anxious about a few areas of concern:

- City Council meetings are currently held during the day, during the week, which tends to be an inconvenient time for many community members;
- The Citizens to be Heard portion of city council meetings should be televised or broadcasted online in order to allow participation from community members who may not be able to attend the meetings;
- All televised or recorded meetings must be accompanied with subtitles for the hard of hearing and deaf community;
- Community members who do not have access to television or Internet are excluded from CTBH;



- All meeting details, agendas, and minutes should be available in Spanish. If a community member requires these items in a different language, they should be able to request and have access to such items;
- A large number of people signed up for CTBH results in the time allotted to each participant to be reduced, which is inconsiderate of people who have taken time off to attend CTBH and prepared their talking points ahead of time;
- Additionally, meeting minutes appear to be unavailable for the public to view. This is seen as irresponsible record keeping and exclusion of community members.

These concerns do not lessen the support we have shared for the resolution – they are simply recommendations for items that we believe could be addressed and resolved in Councilwoman Sandoval’s resolution. Should the local government take more care and consideration in fostering an inclusive democratic system, community engagement and participation can be more valued and more noticeable as San Antonio continues to grow.

Sincerely,

*Esperanza Peace and Justice Center*









