

**Austin Water Resource Planning Task Force
Strawman Goals, Framework and Timeline
May 19, 2014**

Goals:

The Austin Water Resource Planning Task Force is created to:

- 1) Evaluate the city's water needs
- 2) Examine and make recommendations for future water planning
- 3) Evaluate potential water resource management scenarios

1) *Evaluate city's water needs*

Right now, need is treated as though it is synonymous with use, but there is a difference. For this Task Force to provide guidance on the city's water needs, we must:

- Disentangle "need" from "use"
- Disaggregate uses to understand what among our uses are "needs": indoor use, fire suppression (health and human safety), tree canopy, urban ag, industrial
- Separate potable and non-potable uses
- Differentiate between average year needs and drought needs.

2) *Examine and make recommendations for future water planning*

The Task Force has been directed by Council to consider options including:

- Conservation
- Reuse (decentralized and centralized)
- Regional transmission systems
- Groundwater
- Aquifer storage & recovery
- Other potential sources
 - Rainwater

It should be noted that nowhere in the resolution does the Council specifically direct us to only consider centralized options. It should be a matter of Task Force discussion whether to include decentralized options.

The timeframe for consideration by the Task Force is not established in the wording of the Resolution. However, the first two "WHEREAS" clauses indicate that we are being asked to consider both short-term (current) drought response and long-term "future years" when climate change may reduce water availability; it is also clear in WHEREAS clauses 4-6 that this Task Force has been developed to consider in light of community values the recommendations made by the City Manager for short-, mid-, and long-range needs.

3) *Evaluate potential water resource management scenarios:*

This aspect of the resolution has many potential meanings. For example, this could mean that the Task Force recommends scenarios to guide Austin Water's planning, or it could mean that we evaluate Austin Water's scenario planning approach to assessing water resource management options.

How should we interpret this language? Should the Task Force consider recommending scenarios for possible water resource management pathways/futures—for example, a "Highly Decentralized" scenario?

Framework:

(Foundational Question) Should the Task Force provide a framework for decision-making? If so, should these questions be part of the framework:

- Does the option make Austin a good neighbor?
- Does the option encourage growth in aquifer protection zones?
- Does the option imperil affordability of essential water use?
- Does the option increase the carbon intensity of Austin Water's services?
- Does the yield of the option vary considerably under climate change scenarios?
- Does the option improve Austin Water's drought resilience?
- Does the quality of the supply option match the intended use?
- Does the option protect the reliability of Austin Water's existing supply?
- Does the benefit of exercising the option outweigh the cost of the option when considered over its lifetime, all costs included (capital, financing, operations & maintenance, local externalities)?

Ultimately these questions are only meaningful in the context of the overall portfolio. For example, a water reuse or aquifer storage and recovery option may help to improve the overall resilience of the portfolio but taken on their own, may increase the carbon intensity of the supply portfolio.

Timeline:

Our report to City Council is due June 20th, leaving us 4 weeks for production.

To have 2 weeks to revise, the first draft would need to be completed by June 6.

Propose breaking production down by three goals listed above. Seeking volunteers!