

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, September 23, 2009

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**PLEA FROM THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, NON-PROFITS AND BUSINESS
GROUPS TO CITY COUNCIL AND AUSTIN ENERGY:
CONSIDER IMPACT ON THE POOR, AUSTIN RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES IN
YOUR PLAN TO IMPROVE THE ENVIRONMENT**

(AUSTIN) –At a Town Hall meeting today, the Catholic Diocese of Austin, One Voice Central Texas, Texas Association of Business and the Coalition for Clean, Affordable and Reliable Energy (CCARE) will ask Austin Energy to table its “Resource Generation and CO2 Plan” until there is better understanding of how it will affect city ratepayers across-the-board and what can be done to mitigate those effects.

Businesses and non-profit organizations have only recently been alerted to the rate increases that are set to hit Austin in the coming years. New transmission lines, a base rate increase and fuel adjustment fees will all result in higher energy rates in the near term. These are all items that cannot be avoided. However, Austin Energy has also proposed its CO2 Plan, which will increase costs by an additional 22 percent for residents and 19 percent for businesses. The plan is an effort to reduce the city’s carbon footprint by 35 percent by implementing more renewable energy resources by the year 2020.

“The church community asks Austin Energy to re-evaluate the bottom-line impact that the CO2 plan will have on all classes of utility customers, especially the poor and charitable organizations,” said Monsignor Michael Mulvey, administrator for the Catholic Diocese of Austin. “Going green” is a common goal, one that the church has historically supported. However, utility assistance requests are one of the top reasons people call 2-1-1, and many people cannot even afford the deferred payments leading them to turn to Catholic Charities and other charitable organizations for assistance. In the effort to be good and faithful stewards of the earth, we must find a balance between green energy and the potential effects on the poor.”

“So many of the clients we serve live in poverty or on fixed incomes. They simply cannot afford an increase in their utility bills. Any increase will have a detrimental impact on their lives,” said Dan Pruett of Meals on Wheels and More of Austin.

“The City of Austin must realize that a plan of this magnitude will drive away business,” said Bill Hammond, President of the Texas Association of Business. “It’s time the City Council reevaluates its priorities in order to maintain Austin’s status as a business-friendly environment.”

The Town Hall Meeting will take place today at 6 p.m. at City Hall. People will have the opportunity to voice their concerns about the plan. Austin City Council was set to vote on the Resource Generation and CO2 Plan on October 15. Since then, the vote has been delayed until further notice. More information is available at www.austindiocese.org/energy.

