

THE CITY OF SUGAR LAND  
LEGISLATIVE AGENDA FOR THE 86<sup>TH</sup> LEGISLATURE  
Position Statements

**Municipal Powers**

1. **Support legislation that supports or advances the principles of local control** to allow for locally elected officials to make decisions that are beneficial to the interests of City residents or that is otherwise beneficial to the City's interest.
2. **Oppose legislation that preempts or erodes the authority of city government** or is detrimental to the City's ability to pursue citizen priorities or respond to local citizen concerns.

**Municipal Revenue and Budgeting Authority**

1. **Support legislation that reduces the overall tax burden on residents and businesses, including legislation that:**
  - a. Adequately funds and reforms the public school finance system;
  - b. Eliminates unfunded mandates on municipalities for which the cost is then passed down to residents;
  - c. Protects or enhances municipal revenues such as property taxes, sales taxes, right-of-way revenues, service fees, and court fines;
  - d. Allows and encourages local governments to continue to offer homestead and senior exemptions;
  - e. Requires remote sellers to collect and remit state and local sales taxes on goods shipped to customers living in Texas in recognition of the U.S. Supreme Court decision on Wayfair v S. Dakota;
  - f. Accurately notifies and explains to taxpayers the actual impacts of the effective tax rate while deleting parts of the notification and adoption process that causes confusion and is inconsistent with the goal of providing a transparent budget and tax rate setting process.
  - g. Simplifies the effective tax rate calculation for notice purposes only, provided the legislation would have no effect on the underlying effective tax rate and rollback tax rate calculations themselves;
  - h. Expands the use of public, educational, and government (PEG) fees to include operational and related costs associated with PEG channels; and
  - i. Increases funding for arts & cultural programs.
2. **Oppose legislation that would detrimentally affect the City's financial position** and limit local budgeting authority by reducing revenue streams that fund services citizens depend on or negatively impact potential revenue growth critical for providing services – such as public safety – for a growing and aging community, **including legislation that:**
  - a. Imposes a revenue cap of any type, including a reduced rollback rate, mandatory tax rate ratification elections, lowered rollback petition requirements, limitations on overall city expenditures, exclusion of the new property adjustment in effective rate and rollback rate calculations, or legislation that lowers the rollback rate and gives a city council the option to re-raise the rollback rate;
  - b. Lowers the appraisal cap or otherwise creates property tax exemptions that would unfairly shift the financial tax burden to other taxpayers;
  - c. Restricts the ability of the City to issue debt in order to fund public improvements through either General Obligation or Certificates of Obligation bonds or causes unnecessarily

- complex public notification requirements that are confusing to voters;*
- d. Imposes an unfunded mandate that would require any City expenditure unless all costs are reimbursed by the State;*
  - e. Requires the City to generate revenues for the State thereby unfairly shifting local tax dollars outside of the City.*

### **Economic Development**

- 1. Support the City's right to continue participation in the qualified hotel project program and to receive a refund or rebate of various state and local taxes to finance the construction of a qualified hotel project.*
- 2. Support the renewal of Chapter 312 (Property Redevelopment and Tax Abatement Act) of the Tax Code which is set to expire September 1, 2019.*
- 3. Oppose legislation that would erode or restrict current municipal economic development tools including but not limited to economic development corporations [Type A (4A) and Type B (4B)], tax abatement, tax increment reinvestment zones, Chapter 380 agreements, the Texas Enterprise Fund, Skills Development Fund, the Texas Enterprise Zone Program, Research and Development tax credit program, the Events Trust Fund and the Major Events Reimbursement Program.*
- 4. Support legislation that expands the application of current municipal economic development tools such as allowing land to be used, transferred, conveyed, or swapped in Chapter 380 economic development agreements.*
- 5. Support the current ability of cities to eliminate one sales and use tax and to adopt another within the same ballot initiative.*
- 6. Support continuation of the Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) for tourism marketing.*

### **Land-Use Regulation and Annexation**

- 1. Oppose legislation that would diminish the City's authority to regulate growth and development through land use and zoning regulations, building codes, comprehensive planning, annexation, or eminent domain, or that would erode the City's authority to assess inspection fees for new, existing, or re-development.*
- 2. Monitor the creation or modification of special districts within the City and its ETJ, and support or oppose them as necessary.*

### **Right-of-Way and Utilities**

- 1. Oppose legislation that would erode the City's authority to manage and control public rights-of-way and publicly owned land or limit the City's ability to receive fair market compensation for use of public rights-of-way.*
- 2. Oppose legislation that seeks to limit the authority of cities to enter into limited liability agreements with electric utilities for the construction and operation of hike and bike trails and recreational amenities on land and easements owned and occupied by an electric utility; including the increasing of liability of a political subdivision that arises from the use of the electric utility property.*
- 3. Support legislation that would increase the authority of municipalities in requiring increased public notice of major pipeline activities – such as flaring – that have a direct impact on the quality of life of city residents.*
- 4. Oppose legislation that would impose on cities: mandatory water conservation measures; “tap fees” or other types of state charge on municipal water systems; or any other onerous regulations as it relates to utilities provided by a city.*

5. *Oppose any legislation that would diminish or limit the City's original jurisdiction over electric and gas rates.*

### **Transportation**

1. *Support legislation that increases state funding for transportation projects or creates local-option funding choices for transportation projects or that discontinues the diversion of transportation revenues to non-transportation purpose.*
2. *Support funding of the voter-approved Texas Rail Relocation & Improvement Fund.*

### **Water Resources**

1. *Actively monitor, evaluate, and act, if necessary, on any legislation related to the Gulf Coast Water Authority, the Fort Bend Subsidence District, and the Brazos River Authority including governance, water planning, water fees, and Watermaster issues.*
2. *Support legislation that would protect and expand the City's ability to purchase water, provide water to its residents and customers, use water within its City and Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Areas, and collaborate with local and regional entities on projects or initiatives that seek to enhance the City's water resources goals.*
3. *Support legislation that provides funding for State Water Plan projects that increase the State's water resources or further establishes long-term planning efforts for an affordable and reliable water supply for the Fort Bend and Houston areas – provided that the investments already made by the City are reflected in any proposed financing mechanisms.*

### **Public Safety**

1. *Seek Introduction and Passage\* of legislation granting cities the right to obtain information on incidents within their jurisdiction that affect the public health of the general public and first responders and obligating state agencies to provide immediate notice to cities when incidents occur that may result in an immediate public health risk or compromise critical infrastructure within the City.*
2. *Support the ability of local governing bodies to determine the appropriate use of technology in public safety.*
3. *Support legislation that allows a city to impose more stringent requirements than the state related to a statewide ban on texting while driving.*
4. *Oppose any further reduction of local government oversight of the safety of home cottage food facilities.*

### **Purchasing**

1. *Support continuation of alternative project delivery methods that allow municipalities to select contractors based on both price and qualifications.*

### **Open Meetings/Open Records**

1. *Support legislation reducing the financial burden on local governments required by the Open Meetings Act and Open Records Requests such as expansion of the ability to charge for costs related to reproduction of public information.*

2. *Oppose any attempt that would make the current open meetings and public information laws more restrictive and ambiguous and support clarifications that enhance communication between elected officials and their constituents.*
3. *Support uniform application of the public information and open meetings laws at every level of government including State legislative and executive branches.*

### **Transparency/Ethics**

1. *Support legislation that improves government transparency so long as such legislation does not create legal confusion or duplicate existing disclosure requirements.*

### **Elections**

1. *Support legislation that supports and/or increases voter participation so long as the option for the May uniform election date and the non-partisan nature of municipal elections are retained.*

### **Public Advertising**

1. *Support legislation that would enable the use of electronic notice for all public notices.*

### **Collective Bargaining**

1. *Oppose legislation that would impose expanded collective bargaining rights or expand current meet and confer laws.*

### **Texas Municipal Retirement System (TMRS)**

1. *Support legislation that would protect the City's previous and future investments in the TMRS system.*

### **Homeowners Associations (HOAs)**

1. *Support the authority and role of HOAs and oppose limitations on functions HOAs were created to perform except when those functions conflict with City ordinances, policies, and regulations.*