

For Immediate Release
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AUSTIN ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERS CRITICIZE CANDIDATE RANDI SHADE'S COMMENTS ON SOS ORDINANCE

Shade's comments show a lack of understanding in fight to preserve Barton Springs

AUSTIN- On the 39th celebration of Earth Day, prominent Austin environmental leaders former Mayor Gus Garcia, former councilmember Brigid Shea, Bill Bunch, Ann Kitchen, and Robin Rather released an open letter to the Austin public today criticizing city council candidate Randi Shade for recent comments that the city should have compromised with developers on the SOS ordinance.

"Ms. Shade's statement that we should have negotiated with developers shows a fundamental lack of understanding of the situation the Austin community was faced with," the letter says.

Ms. Shade made comments at the Real Estate Council of Austin (RECA) last Thursday that Austin had made a mistake by not compromising with developers instead of passing the SOS ordinance.

"This ordinance was put on the ballot by citizen initiative after decades of attempted negotiation with the developers who were building over the watershed", the letter states. "After foot dragging and watered down solutions offered by the developers as well as a hostile City Council majority that had sided with these developers, the public was forced to take this step because negotiations failed."

The letter continues, "The community made clear its will with the overwhelming passage of the SOS ordinance that the Springs were to be protected, not bargained away."

These leaders took exception to Ms. Shade's criticism of her opponent, current Councilmember Jennifer Kim, taking stands that are contrary to the rest of the membership of the council.

"A decade and a half ago, we all took a stand against what we saw as a wrong being done to a public treasure. It sure didn't win us any points with the City Hall insiders, but it was the right thing to do. Sometimes principled stands are the only thing to do," concludes the letter.

ATTACHMENT

- Text of An Open Letter from Austin Environmentalists Concerning statements by Randi Shade about the SOS Ordinance
- Transcript of Randi Shade's statement at the Thursday, April 17 Austin Board of Realtors Candidate Forum

An Open Letter from Austin Environmentalists

Concerning statements by Randi Shade about the SOS Ordinance

With Earth Day celebrations this week, now is a good time to reflect on everything Austin has done as a community to preserve the natural beauty of our city.

While the Lady Bird Lake Hike and Bike Trail and the Balcones Preserve come to mind as natural jewels in our crown, **few would dispute Barton Springs as the heart of Austin.**

That is why we were stunned to hear last week **Austin City Council candidate Randi Shade said at a public forum that she thought the City should have compromised with developers instead of passing the SOS ordinance.** This statement shows a shocking ignorance of the history of the ordinance and a disregard for the will of the Austin voters.

Ms. Shade's statement that we should have negotiated with developers shows a fundamental lack of understanding of the situation the Austin community was faced with.

Over the years through many battles, the citizens of Austin have fought to preserve the Springs. The most famous and widely supported action was the passage of the Save Our Springs Ordinance in 1992.

This ordinance was put on the ballot by citizen initiative after decades of attempted negotiation with the developers who were building over the watershed. After foot dragging and watered down solutions offered by the developers as well as a hostile City Council majority that had sided with these developers, the public was forced to take this step because negotiations failed.

The community made clear its will with the overwhelming passage of the SOS ordinance that the Springs were to be protected, not bargained away.

Ms. Shade has been very critical of the incumbent for taking positions contrary to the majority of the council. Instead, she has presented herself as someone who will put getting along with her colleagues as a top priority.

A decade and a half ago, we all took a stand against what we saw as a wrong being done to a public treasure. It sure didn't win us any points with the City Hall insiders, but it was the right thing to do. Sometimes principled stands are the only thing to do.

We are writing this letter because it is important that the public know Ms. Shade's views and the real history of the SOS ordinance.

The Council dais is a pressure cooker environment. **We need councilmembers that are committed to the values of the community and will take stands to defend those values even if it is unpopular with their colleagues or with lobbyists.**

We hope you will take these matters to heart before you cast your ballot in the May 10 City Council Election.

Former Mayor Gus Garcia

Bill Bunch

Former Councilmember

Brigid Shea

Robin Rather

Ann Kitchen

Transcript of Randi Shade's statement
at the Thursday, April 17 Real Estate Council of Austin (RECA) Candidate Forum

Question: You told Brian Rogers that we should have negotiated SOS instead of passing SOS. Why do you feel this way?

Well, I don't think that's exactly what I told Brian Rogers, but I don't know. Is he here? What I talked to him about was my viewing of the movie "The Unforeseen" which I highly recommend you all see if you haven't. It's been showing at the Alamo Draft House for about a week now. Alamo Draft House South. What I told him was how sad it made me to see it result in legislative action. That the will of the citizens was ... of Austin was basically taken by legislative process. And that there wasn't a better compromise that made everybody a winner. Because really when you saw the original proposal less land would have been developed than what ultimately did get developed. And I just ... You know I think that was what I was talking about, the importance of compromise. It was in the context of the Domain subsidies discussion that we were having.