



## PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation Number: (YYYYMMDD-XXX) (XXX is the agenda item number): Recommend that the City of Austin Council Support a Fair Pay for SXSW Performing Artists

WHEREAS, “Austinites share a sense of community pride and a determination that the City’s vision of making Austin the most livable City in the country is not just a slogan, but a reality”<sup>1</sup>;

WHEREAS, The City of Austin is the Live Music Capital of the World<sup>2</sup> and “[l]ive music, and music in many other forms, is everywhere in Austin. Musicians play everywhere from the airport terminal to grocery stores. They play outdoors at seasonal live music series and at world-famous festivals.”<sup>3</sup>;

WHEREAS, South By Southwest (“SXSW”) is an “annual March event featur[ing] sessions, music and comedy showcases, film screenings, exhibitions, professional development, and a variety of networking opportunities”<sup>4</sup> and is an “essential destination for global professionals.”<sup>5</sup>;

WHEREAS, The City of Austin waives fees associated with Vic Mathias Shores (aka Auditorium Shores), for use by SXSW and where such fees amounted to \$23,430 in 2023<sup>6</sup>;

WHEREAS, SXSW also regularly rents out Krieg Softball Complex (“Krieg Fields”), Waterloo Park, and Brush Square Park<sup>7 8</sup>;

WHEREAS, artists are required to pay a non-refundable \$55 application fee to SXSW to be considered for selection to the festival artist roster<sup>9</sup>;

WHEREAS, SXSW pays domestic artists \$100-\$250<sup>10</sup> or compensates artists with a festival wristband<sup>11</sup>;

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.austintexas.gov/department/vision-and-values>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.austintexas.org/music-scene/>

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.sxsw.com/about/>

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> PARD Event Contract SXSW 2023

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.austintexas.gov/department/parks-special-events-picnicfacility-reservations-and-filming>

<sup>8</sup> Brush Square Park was not rented by SXSW in 2023 due to construction. Brush Square Park has been used in previous years.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.npr.org/2023/03/16/1164053499/bands-at-sxsw-are-calling-for-better-pay>

<sup>10</sup> Solo artists are paid \$100. Bands are paid \$250.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.kxan.com/news/sxsw/musicians-union-launches-fair-pay-campaign-against-sxsw-says-artists-paid-as-low-as-100/>

WHEREAS, SXSW does not offer monetary compensation to international artists and instead artists from outside the United States are only compensated with a festival wristband<sup>12</sup>;

WHEREAS, compensation by SXSW to artists has not changed in over a decade<sup>13</sup>;

WHEREAS, working artists depend on income from shows and events for their livelihood;

WHEREAS, SXSW is alleged to have an estimated revenue of \$142.3 million dollars<sup>14</sup>;

WHEREAS, it is within the purview of the City of Austin to tackle issues relating to fair pay and work with dignity;

WHEREAS, the City of Austin has established a precedent for enforcing living wage compliance with its capital contracting program, which requires all City-contracted construction projects to pay their workers at least the prevailing wage for their trade as set by the US Department of Labor, or the City of Austin minimum wage as established by City Ordinance, whichever is higher<sup>15</sup>;

WHEREAS, the City of Austin should be concerned about the type and amount of compensation offered to artists by SXSW;

WHEREAS, the type and amount of compensation paid to artists by SXSW reflects our City's values and vision due to the City of Austin's strong collaboration with SXSW and its subsidization of SXSW; and

WHEREAS, SXSW uses City of Austin park space for volunteer, ticketed, and community events, often free of charge;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Parks and Recreation Board:

- 1) Recommends the Austin City Council direct the City Manager, Legal Department, and the Parks & Recreation Department to ensure that any future contracts with SXSW guarantee fair pay for domestic and international artists performing at City of Austin parks, park facilities, and city owned property;
- 2) Recommends the Austin City Council direct the City Manager, Legal Department, and the Parks & Recreation Department to ensure that any future contracts with SXSW guarantee fair pay for all domestic and international artists;
- 3) Recommends that the Austin City Council require changes to artist pay and compensation by SXSW before waiving any future fees at Vic Mathias Shores, or at other parks, park facilities, or city owned facilities; and

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<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.npr.org/2023/03/16/1164053499/bands-at-sxsw-are-calling-for-better-pay>

<sup>14</sup> <https://twitter.com/MorePerfectUS/status/1623337433679929345?lang=en>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.austintexas.gov/department/wage-compliance>

- 4) Recommends that this resolution be presented to Austin City Council, Arts Commission, Commission on Immigrant Affairs, Music Commission, Tourism Commission, and any other relevant commissions which oversee SXSW activity.

Date of Approval: \_\_\_\_\_

Record of the vote: (Unanimous on a 7-0 vote, 4-3 vote with names of those voting no listed)

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_

(Staff or board member can sign)

DRAFT