




It articulated a progressive vision of Austin that successive political editors and writers have voiced for their times.

The *Chronicle* started a Council Watch column that delved into the nitty-gritty of policy making. It rooted around in the muck of campaign financing to reveal who was pulling what (and whose) strings. It covered issues often ignored or misrepresented by the *Statesman*. Occasionally, it even flew from its nest: I reported from the 1984 Republican National Convention in Dallas, and, in 1988, a ragtag crew of four (including Robert Draper, who would go on to become one of the biggest names in political journalism, and the late investigative/advocacy journalist Daryl Janes, who would later write a column for this paper) traveled to Atlanta to send back dispatches from the Democratic National Convention, highlighted by electrifying speeches from presidential candidate Jesse Jackson and keynote speaker Texas Gov. Ann Richards.

“Quality of life” was the mantra of the day, a somewhat nebulous phrase that everyone understood. It conveyed the public fear of losing the city’s laid-back, quirky character and its vital and beloved natural resources to rapid development. (The city’s population was a little over 400,000, less than half of what it is today.) I was named politics editor in 1984, just before the influential 1985 City Council election. The *Chronicle* was aggressive in backing managed-growth candidates who were vastly outspent and, except for mayoral hopeful Frank Cooksey, largely unknown. Their unlikely victory was so stunning and resounding that it even reached the pages of *The New York Times*.

The *Chronicle*, already an arbiter of artistic and cultural life, was suddenly taken seriously by the political world. For the first time in its (albeit short) history, it ran political endorsements. Along with its support of the 1985 Council candidates, one of its early successes was opposing the seemingly inevitable move of Mueller Airport to Manor. For greater representation and accountability, it favored single-member districts, which, in 1988, voters turned down, but the system of governance was ultimately approved by voters in 2012. (Vindication!) With its newfound cred, the *Chronicle* sponsored a symposium of activists, developers, and politicians to discuss Austin’s future.

The future is never what you expect. The thing is to care about it. My good fortune was to help record and comment on the times, which then seemed as pitched as they could be (little did I know, did any of us know, how pitched they’d become), and, in so doing, along with many others, help establish a scaffolding for the *Chronicle*’s political coverage to come. 

was that an evangelical religious group’s imperative to grow impacted something so completely unrelated and basically invisible – the groundwater level in the neighborhood – which in turn impacted neighborhood residents’ ability to enjoy their homes. Since writing this story, I’ve gone on to write dozens, maybe hundreds, of pieces about neighborhood battles over growth and development, NIMBYs vs. YIMBYs, and the impact of poor land use decisions, but this remains the template for me, and I’m still proud to point people to it as an early example of the nerdy topics I’ve made my beat for the past two-plus decades.

## GOING BIG-TIME

BY JIM SHAHIN

POLITICS EDITOR, 1984-1989

Looking back, I feel lucky to have served as the *Chronicle*’s first politics editor, though at the time – what with the low pay (I made \$400 per month) and dysfunctional workplace – it felt more like volunteering for a particularly grueling form of community service.

The *Chronicle* was doing important stuff during a pivotal time, and the politics section, which grew from my half-page column to a number of pages by several reporters, not only established the pugacious DNA of the paper’s political voice but was at the center of the changes that still buffet Austin to this day and helped shape outcomes. Indeed, I often say that the *Chronicle* didn’t have a readership so much as a constituency. It didn’t just report news, although it did some of that. It took a stand.

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## NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON 2021 ON TAX INCREASE

A tax rate of .10 per \$100 valuation has been proposed by the governing body of the Travis County Emergency Service District No. 5.

PROPOSED TAX RATE: \$0.10 PER \$100

NO NEW REVEUNE TAX RATE: \$0.0915 PER \$100

VOTER APPROVAL TAX RATE: \$0.1576 PER \$100

The no new revenue tax rate is the tax rate for the 2021 tax year that will raise the same amount of property tax revenue for the TRAVIS COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICE DISTRICT NO. 5 for the same properties in both 2020 tax year and the 2021 tax year.

The voter approval tax rate is the highest tax rate the TRAVIS COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICE DISTRICT NO. 5 may adopt without holding an election to seek voter approval of the rate.

The proposed tax rate is greater than the no new revenue tax rate. This means that TRAVIS COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICE DISTRICT NO. 5 is proposing to increase property taxes for the 2021 tax year.

A public hearing on the proposed tax rate will be held September 9, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. at 665 W. FM 1626, Mancha, Texas 78652.

The proposed tax rate is not greater than the voter-approval tax rate. As a result, TRAVIS COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICE DISTRICT NO. 5 is not required to hold an election at which voters may accept or reject the proposed rate. However, you may express your support for or opposition to the proposed tax rate by contacting the members of the TRAVIS COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICE DISTRICT NO. 5 at their offices by attending the public meeting mentioned above.

YOUR TAXES OWED UNDER ANY OF THE ABOVE RATES CAN BE CALCULATED AS FOLLOWS:

Property tax amount = (tax rate) x (taxable value of your property) / 100

The members of the governing body voted on the proposed tax increase as follows:

FOR: Reed Boyd, Tom Dodds, Dennis Wright, Judy Canion, Tom Quirk

AGAINST:

PRESENT and not voting:

ABSENT:

The 86th Texas Legislature modified the manner in which the voter approval tax rate is calculated to limit the rate of growth of property taxes in the state.

The following table compares the taxes imposed on the average residence homestead by TRAVIS COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICE DISTRICT NO. 5 last year to the taxes proposed to be imposed on the average homestead by TRAVIS COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICE DISTRICT NO. 5 this year:

	2020	2021	Change
Total Tax Rate (per \$100 of value)	\$0.100000	\$0.10	N/A
Average homestead taxable value	\$357,820	\$388,591	increase of \$30,771 or 8.24%
Tax on average homestead	\$357	\$388	increase of \$31.00 or 8.322%
Total tax levy on all properties	\$1,744,110	\$1,996,535	increase of \$252,425 or 13.49%

For assistance with tax calculations, please contact: The Office of the Travis County Tax Assessor-Collector  
Bruce Elfant, Tax Assessor-Collector | P.O. Box 1748 | 5501 Airport Blvd. (512)854-3858 | tnt@traviscountytx.gov