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By Kaiba White

Good afternoon Mayor and Council Members. My name is Kaiba White and I'm speaking on behalf of Public Citizen and our Austin supporters. We are very concerned about the conversation that took place in November about rushing to put a deposit on gas peakers for Austin Energy. The [Austin Energy Resource, Generation and Climate Protection Plan](#) that City Council – including most of you – adopted just last year lays out a process to follow before approving the addition of gas peakers to the Austin Energy portfolio. The plan commits to “a report to the



City Council following the feasibility phase prior to moving forward to the pre-development phase, and subsequently gathering Council feedback, and incorporating community input, prior to bringing a project forward for approval. Further, should Austin Energy seek Council approval for any peaker units, we will show any analysis performed demonstrating why a carbon-free alternative was not available and how the requested action will impact the utility's ability to reach the goal of 100% carbon-free by 2035.” None of this has been done. The all-source RFP is currently open and it's entirely possible that clean energy alternatives to gas peakers that are quicker to deploy and potentially more affordable will be proposed.

Purchasing gas peakers that wouldn't go into service until at least 2030 is a de facto abandonment of the carbon-free by 2035 goal. Those assets would operate for at least 30 years and carbon-capture on peakers isn't practical. If you've read or heard anything about carbon offsets in recent years, you'll know that isn't a solution either, as they are [rife with a lack of accountability](#) and sometimes outright fraud. In short, [they don't work](#). What does work is to stop burning fossil fuels.

Natural gas isn't the “clean” fossil fuel that the industry would have you think it is. While gas plants produce less CO2 and other air pollution than coal plants, once you look at the entire lifecycle impact and account for the massive amount of methane that is leaked directly into the atmosphere, [natural gas has a very similar impact on climate change to coal](#). And the air and water pollution created by [natural gas extraction is creating wastelands](#) and [many health problems](#), including with [fetal development](#).

We don't push for carbon-free goals just because they sound good. We're trying to protect our communities. We're trying to keep our climate livable – and it's increasingly not. [A record 563 people in Texas died from heat in 2023. At least 135 people were killed](#) – many of



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them children – in central Texas flooding this summer. These are tragedies of our own making. It's comforting to think that our small contribution doesn't matter in the larger scope of climate change, but that that thinking has led to a tragedy of the commons, to each of us and each community contributing to our communal suffering.

You are in a position to do something to help to stop the climate crisis. Instead of rushing to invest in more fossil fuel infrastructure, we call on you to shut down Austin Energy's existing coal and gas-burning power plants.

If you agree that the City of Austin should look to clean energy solutions instead of rushing into the purchase of fossil fuel infrastructure, we encourage you to [use this page to send the Austin City Council an email](#).