

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

# One City’s Municipal Charter

Read over the passage below from the City of Austin Charter. Then answer the questions below.

1. A magistrate is a \_\_\_\_\_
  - a.) mayor
  - b.) council
  - c.) disabled person
  - d.) judge
  
2. How long is a magistrate’s term in Austin? \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. How does a magistrate get the job? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a.) from city council appointment
  - b.) from the state constitution
  - c.) from the State of Texas
  
4. If a person wants to become a magistrate, name one thing that person should do.
 

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5. When would a magistrate be removed from office?
  - a.) on January 1st of an even-numbered year
  - b.) when he or she became disabled
  - c.) when he or she is admitted to practicing law
  - d.) after serving for two years
  
6. Why does the charter probably require a magistrate to have lived in the city for 2 years before the appointment?
 

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7. The best title for this section of the city charter might be:
  - a.) How You Can Become a Magistrate in Austin
  - b.) How the Austin City Council Chooses a Magistrate
  - c.) How the Austin Municipal Court Operates
  - d.) Qualifications for a Magistrate in Austin
  
8. The hardest part of this passage for me to understand was the phrase
 

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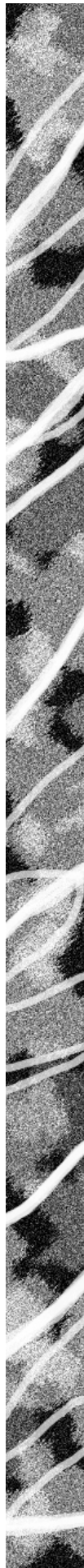
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9. This was confusing to me because \_\_\_\_\_
 

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10. What would be another method the City of Austin could have used to choose municipal judges? Would this be better for the city, in your opinion? Explain.
 

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## Answer Key: One City's Municipal Charter

1. d.) judge
2. 2 years
3. a.) from city council appointment
4. A person who wants to become a magistrate should become a lawyer, practice for at least two years, live inside the city limits, and make his or her ambitions known to city councilmembers.
5. b.) when he or she became disabled
6. The charter authors probably thought that a person who lived in Austin would be the best judge of persons accused of violating Austin ordinances. They are presumably familiar with the people, the norms, and the values of citizens.
7. d.) Qualifications for a Magistrate in Austin
10. Judges could be elected, or appointed by the mayor.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

## Checking out a Town Budget

A city budget is a way a city states what is most important and needed for that city in a particular year. The **budget** is a listing of all the activities, programs, and things the city plans to buy that year. In writing the budget, the city council sets **priorities**, which means the city council decides what programs are essential, important, and not so important to citizens. The money spent through the budget can be used to help the town government solve problems. The money spent by the city can encourage economic growth. Just about everyone in town has a different idea about what is the most important part of city government to fund.

The budget also contains a list of the city's expected sources of income. The city needs to have a fairly good idea of how much money it will take in that year, before it knows how well it can fund city programs. During the budget process, persons in town who feel they pay too many taxes often encourage councilmembers to cut back on city government spending.

Since the process of deciding the budget is so important, then, it is usually closely watched by people who will be affected by it. During budget time, many people **lobby** councilmembers to be sure that funding is set aside for programs they think are important. In lobbying, people share information with the council to try to persuade them to vote a certain way. Lobbyists and interested persons may give speeches to city council, write letters, meet with councilmembers, invite councilmembers to parties or other events, and so forth.

Each town uses a slightly different way of writing and agreeing upon the budget, though there are some basic requirements by state law. In writing the budget, the city manager (in a council-manager city) or mayor (in a mayor-council city), with lots of help from staff members, writes up a proposed budget. In a city the size of Austin, the budget takes up hundreds of pages in several volumes. For a smaller city, with fewer programs and a smaller amount of money to spend, the budget may be much shorter.

Budget workers refer to the budgets of earlier years to see what has been done before. They ask each city department to state its goals and needs for funding. The city staff and councilmembers may hold working sessions in which they exchange ideas about the needs and the future of the city. Councilmembers need to understand the needs of citizens and city departments before they vote on the final budget.

Copies of the proposed budget are also printed and made available to residents. A public **hearing**, or meeting, must be held before the budget is voted on by the council, and this hearing must be announced in the town newspaper. At this hearing, any resident who wishes to comment on the budget has a chance to speak. In some cities, a number of public hearings may be held in different parts of town, so that everyone feels included in the process. The people involved in approving the budget have to make a number of **compromises** along the way to the final budget.

1. Read the material below, which is an overview sheet listing the total amounts spent by the city of Austin in its 1993-1994 capital budget. It is just one of hundreds of pages of budget information prepared for the city government for 1993-94. This sheet lists the total amounts of money the city spent for each department on major items that would be expected to last several years or more.
2. Then answer the questions on the following pages.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## A Piece of One City’s Budget

1. Which budget category received the largest funding that year? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How much funding did that category receive? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Think about what this department’s expenses might include. What might account for this large amount of spending by this department?

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4. About what fraction of the total capital budget will go to this department?

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5. Imagine that you felt funding for another department was more important than for this department mentioned above. Imagine you wanted to prove that the program you care about is being underfunded. What is one piece of information you could use to prove your case?

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Now look at the budget sheet from the Electric Utility Department, also of the City of Austin. This sheet is used to explain the department’s job and other information that the readers of the budget should know.

1. What is the job of the electric utility department? Explain using your own words.

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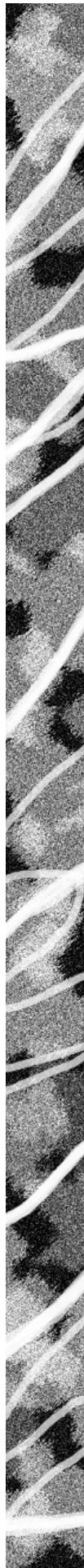
2. Name two kinds of power plants that the city uses to produce electric power.

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3. The total generating capacity of these power plants is \_\_\_\_\_ megawatts.
4. The highest requirement for power used at one time was \_\_\_\_\_ megawatts.
5. How many “spare” megawatts of generating power did the city have? \_\_\_\_\_



Name \_\_\_\_\_

6. The city has the power to make more electricity than it uses. Is this a waste of money and resources? Explain your thinking.

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7. What trend do the numbers in the chart show about the number of electric utility customers in Austin?

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8. What pattern does the chart describe in the amount of power that can be produced by the power plants (generating capacity)?

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9. If you managed the electric utility department, what do you think you might want to spend money on in the future?

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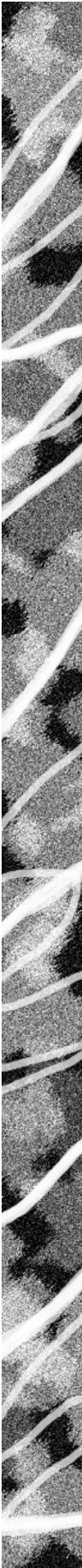
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10. What are two different ways you could use to achieve your goal?

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11. How did you find reading this budget? Was anything confusing to you? What additional information would help you understand better?



## ***Capital Budget - 1993-94***

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### 1993-94 Approved Capital Budget General Government

Environmental and Conservation Services (open space)	\$711,000
Environmental and Conservation Services - Efficiency Improvements	326,000
Fire	1,272,000
General Government	575,000
Health and Human Services	11,625,881
Law	122,721
Library	661,000
Parks and Recreation	5,210,622
Planning and Development	900,287
Police	1,250,000
Public Works and Transportation	20,390,000
 TOTAL	 \$43,044,511

Source: City Manager's Approved 1993-94 Budget. City of Austin, TX

# Electric Utility - 1993-94

## Department Services

The Electric Utility Department meets the demand for electric utility service to customers within the service area certified by the State of Texas by providing an adequate amount of electric energy to meet the customers' instantaneous needs for electricity and by maintaining electric utility service at adequate levels of quality and reliability.

The City of Austin owns three gas/oil-fueled electric generation facilities, a photovoltaic plant, and a gas turbine generating station, and it jointly participates with other utilities in the ownership of coal-fueled and nuclear-powered generation facilities. Total current generating capacity is 2,420.3 megawatts. The system's highest capacity peak-load requirement of 1,581 megawatts occurred in July and August 1993.

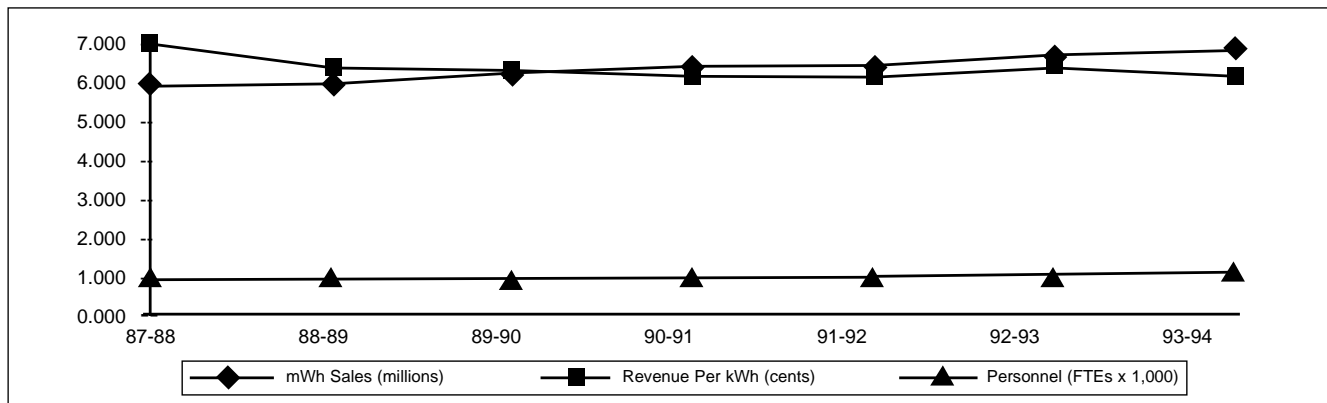
The proposed budget achieves the goal of no increase in electric rates in 1993-94. Because of uncertainties associated with the South Texas Project and the Holly Power Plant, additional information or decisions pertaining to these plants could necessitate a rate change in 1993-94.

### ELECTRIC UTILITY INDICATORS

Since 1987-88:

• Average customer cost/kilowatt-hour	Down	8%
• Number of customers	Up	14%
• Kilowatt-hour sales	Up	19%
• Generating capacity	Up	4%
• Inflation	Up	27%
• Staffing	Up	11%

### SALES, REVENUE AND PERSONNEL



	1991-92 Actual	1992-93 Amended	1992-93 Estimate	1993-94 Proposed	1993-94 Approved
Revenue	\$448,864,604	\$498,830,422	\$497,337,429	\$459,269,960	\$459,269,960
Requirements	\$462,082,428	\$499,606,674	\$499,007,494	\$460,097,794	\$460,097,794
Full-Time Equivalent (FTEs)	1,103.00	1,210.50	1,210.50	1,275.25	1,275.25

ARTICLE VI  
**Municipal Court**

Section 1  
**MUNICIPAL COURT**

As amended at election of April 7, 1973.

There shall be a court known as The Municipal Court of The City of Austin, with such jurisdiction, powers, and duties as are given and prescribed by the laws of the State of Texas.

Section 2  
**JUDGE OF THE MUNICIPAL COURT**

As amended at election of April 7, 1973.

The municipal court shall be presided over by a magistrate who shall be known as the judge of the municipal court. He shall be appointed by the Council for a two-year term beginning on January 1st of even numbered years. He shall be removed only for cause of disability as defined in the State Constitution. he shall have been admitted to practice law in the State of Texas for not less than two years and shall have resided in the city for a period of not less than two years immediately preceding his appointment.

In the event the judge of the municipal court is unable to act for any reason, the Council shall appoint an attorney possessing the qualifications required above to act in his place. The judge, or anyone acting in his place, shall receive such compensation as may be set by the Council.

The Council shall have the power to create and establish additional municipal courts, and to appoint more than one judge of each municipal court, whether one or more, each of whom shall be a magistrate and shall have the qualifications and serve the term of office prescribed in the first paragraph of this section.