

# Barton Creek study errors made

*Consultant says mistakes won't alter ordinance recommendation*

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A consultant to the City Council conceded Thursday that mistakes were made in its report to the council on pollution levels that could occur in Barton Creek if development continues along the creek.

But the consultant said the mistakes, which were not specified, would have no effect on its recommendations to the City Council regarding an ordinance that would restrict development on Barton Creek.

The consultant, Espey, Huston and Associates Inc., presented the proposed ordinance to the council in mid-December. The council held its second public hearing on the recommendations Thursday night and has scheduled a final public hearing on the recommendations Feb. 21.

"We realize there were errors in the report and are preparing errata for them," Joe Beal, a vice president at Espey, Huston and Associates, told the council.

Joe Riddell, one of three citizens who spoke on the recommendations, claimed that Espey Huston's report was "full of tenuous assumptions" and that the council would be "foolish to rely on the consultants' recommendations to protect Barton Creek and Barton Springs."

Riddell said the report's estimates of potential pollution from leaking sewer lines under the creek and septic tanks on its banks were "underestimated by a factor of 1,000."

He said the report "also assumes that existing conditions of the creek and springs to be acceptable when there are times that they are not suitable for swimming."

Beal said Riddell's allegations were overstated, but he did agree that computational errors were made in the report and will need to be corrected.

Espey, Huston has recommended that the council adopt an ordinance dividing the creek into three zones: a "critical water quality zone" 400

feet on both sides of the creek's center line, where development would basically be prohibited; a "lowlands water quality zone" 300 feet from the outer boundary of the critical water quality zone, where only minimal development would be permitted; and a less-restrictive "uplands water quality zone," defined as all other areas within the Barton Creek watershed.

Before taking up Barton Creek Thursday night, the council held a public hearing on a set of "low-density" street standards that would permit developers to use narrow, uncurbed streets in the environmentally-sensitive Barton Creek and Lake Austin watersheds.

Present urban standards require Austin residential streets to be 30 feet wide and have curbs, gutters and storm drainage systems. Collector streets must be 44 feet wide and have curbs, gutters and storm drainage systems.

Under the proposed standards, developers in the Barton Creek and Lake Austin watersheds would have the option of installing narrower streets without curbs, gutters and drainage systems.

John German, director of public works, said narrow streets without curbs and gutters would allow storm-water runoff to drain naturally across the land and be "filtered" before washing into creeks and waterways. Narrow streets would also decrease the amount of impervious cover in the watersheds — such as concrete and asphalt — and reduce the number of trees that have to be cleared for street right-of-way.

Only one speaker complained about the proposed standards and urged the council to reject them.

"Otherwise, you'll have future generations cursing your decision," Robert Hale told the council.

Hale said narrow, uncurbed streets would cause flooding of adjoining property during heavy rains and would be hazardous to drive on.

The public hearing was continued until next Thursday's council meeting.