

Erica Schwartz confirmed as new CDC leader after Senate vote on Wednesday

By Villager staff

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) - The Senate has confirmed **Dr. Erica Schwartz** as the new director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approving her appointment in a 51–44 vote that fell largely along party lines. Senator **Tim Kaine** was the only Democrat to support her nomination. Schwartz becomes the first Senate confirmed **CDC** director in nearly a year, following a period of interim leadership triggered by the firing of **Susan Monarez** after a clash with Health and Human Services Secretary **Robert F. Kennedy Jr.** over childhood vaccine policy.

Schwartz inherits an agency in deep turmoil. Since President Trump took office, CDC morale has plummeted and more than a quarter of its workforce has departed through layoffs and resignations. The agency is simultaneously confronting major public health threats, including an ongoing measles outbreak driven by misinformation among unvaccinated communities and the largest cyclosporiasis outbreak ever recorded in the United States.



Dr. Erica Schwartz

A former deputy surgeon general and senior Coast Guard health official, Schwartz has publicly supported childhood vaccination and was viewed by many as a stabilizing, mainstream choice for the role. Yet her confirmation hearing raised concerns among Democrats—and even among Republican committee chair **Bill Cassidy**—about her willingness to push back against Kennedy’s vaccine skeptical positions. Schwartz pledged to “never compromise on the science,” but Cassidy described her answers as insufficiently direct. He ultimately backed her nomination after the CDC modified a webpage on vaccines and autism to address his objections.

Senator **Bernie Sanders** opposed the nomination, arguing that the central question was whether administration officials would “stand up to people who are anti-science and into conspiracy theories”. Schwartz is the administration’s third attempt to fill the CDC leadership post; the first nominee, former Representative **Dave Weldon**, withdrew amid doubts about his preparedness and vaccine views.

New Bond Proposal Will Be On The Ballot In November

By Thomas Wyatt | EIC, The Villager

(AUSTIN, TX) - The City Council’s approval of a \$295 million bond package for parks and libraries is a referendum on whether the city is willing to reinvest in neighborhoods that have carried Austin’s cultural identity while absorbing decades of inequitable infrastructure decisions.

The bulk of the bond, \$260 million for parks, arrives at a moment when East Austin communities continue to experience the sharpest gaps in tree canopy, trail connectivity, and safe public gathering spaces. Long promised improvements to neighborhood parks — from Rosewood to Givens to Parque Zaragoza — have often been delayed or delivered in partial phases, even as West Austin facilities receive consistent upgrades. For families in East Austin, where parks double as cooling centers, youth hubs, and intergenerational gathering spaces, the bond represents a chance to correct long standing disparities in basic public amenities.

The \$35 million allocated for libraries carries similar weight. Branches serving East Austin have historically been smaller, older, and more strained by demand than their counterparts west of I 35. In



neighborhoods where digital access gaps persist and where libraries function as civic anchors — offering job resources, youth programming, and safe public spaces — investment is not simply about buildings but about maintaining the infrastructure of opportunity.

The political split on the Council reflects a familiar tension: affordability concerns versus the cost of continued underinvestment. But for East Austin residents, affordability is not only about tax bills. It is about whether public dollars return to the communities that have been asked to bear the brunt of displacement, rising land values, and the erosion of cultural space. Bond investments in parks and libraries are among the few tools the city can use to stabilize neighborhoods without accelerating gentrification.

If voters approve the bond in November, the measure will test whether Austin can deliver improvements equitably. For East Austinites, the stakes are clear: this bond is an opportunity to restore public spaces that strengthen community resilience, preserve cultural identity, and ensure that the city’s growth includes the neighborhoods that shaped it.



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