



Edited by Naomi Richard
VILLAGER Entertainment

A Look to the Future with A.J. Bingham



A J Bingham

Photo courtesy of The Long Center.

(VILLAGER) - A.J. Bingham is the newly appointed **Chairman** of the Long Center's Board of Trustees. He grew up in Austin by way of his father, an Air Force officer who was stationed at the then Bergstrom Air Force Base. Professionally he is an entrepreneur and lobbyist, founding his firm, **The Bingham Group**, nearly four years ago. He has been in Austin for over 29 years and absolutely loves this city.

This is his sixth year as a board member of the Long Center. Although 2020 has been one of the most challenging years for the Long Center and the entertainment industry as a whole, he is honored to accept the role of **Board Chair**, working alongside the staff and Board as they find new ways to serve their mission and Austin's creative community.

Bingham is inspired by the Long Center's earnest prioritization of community engagement in the arts. While the Long Center will always be the permanent per-

formance home of Ballet Austin, Austin Opera, and Austin Symphony Orchestra, **the staff and board understand the future is in making the Long Center a hub and home for Austin's diverse creative community.**

Speaking of creativity, the **City of Austin's Economic Development Department** launched the **Austin Live Music Venue Preservation Fund**. The Austin City Council established the \$15 million **Save Austin's Vital Economic Sectors (SAVES) Fund**

through Ordinance No. 20201001-052. Austin City Council adopted the final guidelines for the \$5 million Austin Live Music Venue Preservation Fund on December 3, 2020 via Resolution No. 20200103-013. As part of a partnership with the City of Austin, the **Long Center for the Performing Arts** now provides application assistance, the processing of applications, and they are the administrator of the funds.

According to Bingham, "Austin can't be the **Live Mu-**

sic Capital of the World without our live music venues. They are the foundation of our growing economy, cultural hubs and incubators for the creative industry, not to mention the thousands of jobs they provide for Austinites. This newly formed partnership with the City's **SAVES** initiative is allowing the Long Center to extend their mission and serve Austin's arts community beyond their own walls."

Be assured, this is just the start of the future they are building for Austin's artists and performers. This grant program is the first of a long-term strategy to support the sector and create a stable foundation for Austin's artistic performers.

This COVID crisis is revealing the true fragility of Austin's creative economy and this next year will continue to present challenges for artists. **As we enter 2021, we hope you will join us by supporting the work being done for Austin's creatives with a donation to the Arts at** <https://my.thelongcenter.org/donate/q/donate>.

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PROPERTY OWNERS ENCOURAGED TO FILE FOR THEIR HOMESTEAD EXEMPTIONS IN THIS NEW YEAR

Helpline and Webinar Series Now Available for Travis County Property Owners



(AUSTIN, TX) – The Travis Central Appraisal District (TCAD) is encouraging property owners to file for a homestead exemption on property they own and live in as of Jan. 1. TCAD is also launching an exemption helpline and webinar series aimed at helping Travis County property owners complete their applications and navigate the property tax system.

"Eighty-one percent of single-family residences in Travis County currently use exemptions to lower the taxable value of the property," said Chief Appraiser Marya Crigler. "On average, a homestead exemption saves a Travis County property owner \$814 on their property tax bill."

Several types of homestead exemptions exist including a general residence homestead exemption and exemptions for people over the age of 65, people and veterans with disabilities, and the surviving spouses of service members or first responders killed in the line of duty. In order to be eligible for a homestead exemption, a property owner must own and occupy the property as of Jan. 1. The deadline to submit an exemption application is April 30.

This year, TCAD has established a new exemption helpline to help property owners with their applications. By calling 512-873-1560, Travis County residents can speak with a customer service repre-

sentative who can answer their questions about eligibility and documentation, walk them through their application, and help with submitting a completed application. The helpline is staffed Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Additionally, TCAD has launched a new webinar series aimed at helping property owners understand the property tax system. Topics that will be covered include types of homestead exemptions, understanding Notices of Appraised Value, and the protest process. The first webinar is scheduled for Thursday, Jan. 14 at 11 a.m. and will cover property tax bills, payment options, and appraisal remedies.

Added Crigler, "Travis County residents who have questions about the property tax system or need help with their exemption applications will have several new options to connect with us in a socially-distant way in 2021."

Travis County property owners can view the current exemptions on their property, review a list of available homestead exemptions, and download or complete exemption application forms online at www.traviscad.org. The TCAD Homestead Helpline can be reached at 512-873-1560. Property owners can register for the 2021 Property Owner Webinar Series at www.traviscad.org/webinars.