

City Council Weighs Noise Ordinance Crackdown as Austin's Homelessness Strategy Enters New Phase

by Villager staff

(AUSTIN, TX) — The Austin City Council is preparing for a pivotal week as members take up two issues that have shaped neighborhood tensions and citywide policy debates for years: a proposed crackdown on loud vehicle noise and a newly unveiled strategic plan to guide the city's homelessness response through 2027.

Noise Ordinance:

Council Moves Faster Than Expected

The Council is expected to vote Thursday on amendments that would give officers clearer authority to cite drivers for excessively loud engine noise — a response to years of complaints from residents across the city. The proposal, which had originally been slated for late March, was moved up after a surge in reports from neighborhoods along RM 2222 and other corridors where residents say chronic racing and “unrelenting engine revving” have disrupted daily life.

City staff say the ordinance would close gaps in the current code, which bans intentionally creating loud vehicle noise but lacks explicit enforcement mechanisms. The updated language would allow officers to issue citations for loud engine noise, including from motorcycles and modified cars, and would phase in enforcement over time. The city has received a high volume of complaints from residents in recent months, particularly in dense residential areas.

The discussion comes as Austin continues to refine broader noise management policies, including rules governing amplified sound and temporary events. A separate ordinance revision — unrelated to vehicle noise — would update definitions, permitting structures, and enforcement responsibilities for outdoor music and sound amplification activities.

Homelessness Strategy:

A New Roadmap Through 2027

In the same week, the city's Homeless Strategy Office (HSO) presented its first comprehensive strategic plan outlining how Austin intends to coordinate, scale, and measure its homelessness re-



sponse through fiscal year 2027. The plan, introduced during a Council work session, emphasizes targeted investments, data driven accountability, and deeper collaboration across service providers.

HSO Director David Gray said the plan is designed to “build on what's working, scale what's proven, and stay accountable to measurable results,” noting that the city's homelessness response has expanded significantly in recent years but still lacks the unified structure needed to meet demand. The strategy outlines priorities such as expanding permanent supportive housing, strengthening crisis response systems, and improving reporting and transparency.

The plan marks the first time Austin has consolidated its homelessness goals into a single, multi-year framework. It arrives as the city continues to navigate rising housing costs, limited shelter capac-

ity, and ongoing public pressure for visible progress.

A Converging Debate About Quality of Life

Though the noise ordinance amendments and homelessness strategy address different policy arenas, both reflect a broader tension in Austin's rapid growth: how to balance neighborhood livability with equitable, long term solutions to systemic challenges.

For some residents, loud vehicle enforcement represents a long overdue quality of life fix. For others, the homelessness plan signals a shift toward more coordinated, accountable governance after years of fragmented efforts.

Council members are expected to continue discussions throughout the week, with votes on the noise ordinance likely Thursday and further deliberation on homelessness investments unfolding over the coming months.

Rep. Tony Gonzales Faces Mounting Pressure to Resign Over Scandal Involving Former Staffer's Suicide

by Villager staff

(AUSTIN, TX) — Republican Congressman Tony Gonzales is under intensifying scrutiny following revelations about his relationship with a former staffer who died by suicide — a scandal that has shaken Texas' 23rd Congressional District and triggered bipartisan calls for his resignation.

The controversy erupted after *San Antonio Express-News* obtained text messages showing Gonzales repeatedly pressed Regina Ann Santos-Aviles, a former aide, to send him inappropriate photos and meet privately. Santos-Aviles died in September 2025 after reportedly setting herself on fire outside her home in Uvalde.

Gonzales has denied wrongdoing, claiming he is the target of “coordinated political attacks” and alleging that Santos-Aviles' husband attempted to blackmail him. “I will not be blackmailed,” Gonzales posted on social media, prompting backlash from critics who accused him of deflecting responsibility.

Political Fallout and GOP Tensions

The scandal has triggered a wave of condemnation from both parties. Several House Republicans have called for Gonzales to step down or abandon his reelection bid. However, House Speaker Mike Johnson has declined to demand a resignation, stating, “We must allow the process to play out”.

Democratic challengers and immigrant-rights



Credit : Tom Williams/CQ-Roll Call, Inc via Getty; Regina Santos Aviles/Facebook

advocates have seized on the moment. Ruben Garcia, director of the Annunciation House in El Paso, said the case reflects “a culture of impunity that surrounds power,” and called for deeper accountability.

Gonzales' district — which spans from El Paso to San Antonio and includes Uvalde — is one of the most contested in the country. The community, still reeling from the 2022 school shooting, now faces another tragedy tied to public trust.

Ethics and Accountability Questions Loom

The House Ethics Committee has not yet announced a formal investigation, but watchdog groups say the case warrants immediate scrutiny. “This is a test of whether Congress takes staffer safety seriously,” said a representative from the Congressional Accountability Project.

New details continue to emerge, including admissions from Santos-Aviles about the affair and the emotional toll it took. Advocates say the case highlights the need for stronger protections for congressional staffers and clearer boundaries around power dynamics.

Gonzales Resists Resignation

Despite the mounting pressure, Gonzales has not indicated any plans to withdraw from the race. His campaign remains active, though internal GOP tensions are reportedly escalating. He has continued fundraising and outreach, even as calls for accountability grow louder.

As the March primary looms, voters in Texas' 23rd District are left to weigh not only the facts of the case but the broader implications for leadership, transparency, and justice.

Victim Identified in Homicide Investigation at 1400 E. Rundberg Lane

by Villager staff

(AUSTIN, TX) - On Saturday, February 21, 2026, at 3:05 a.m., Austin Police (APD) officers responded to the call of a shooting at 1400 E. Rundberg Lane. When officers arrived on the scene, they located a male victim near a dumpster suffering from multiple gunshot wounds and immediately initiated life-



saving measures. The victim, described as a White male in his 40s, has been identified as Joshua Baker. Despite officers' efforts, he succumbed to his injuries and was pronounced deceased at 3:16 a.m.

Homicide detectives and crime scene special-

ists responded to the scene. Preliminary investigation indicates that the victim was shot and killed by an unknown suspect who then fled the area.

Anyone with information should contact the Austin Police at 512-974-TIPS. You may submit your tip anonymously through the Capital Area Crime Stoppers Program by visiting austincrimestoppers.org or calling 512-472-8477. A reward of up to \$1,000 may be available for any information that leads to an arrest.

This case is being investigated as Austin's 10th homicide of 2026.