

Candidate Questionnaire on Austin Energy Issues

Participating Organizations:

- Public Citizen
- SEED Coalition
- Sierra Club
- Solar Austin
- Texas ROSE (Ratepayers' Organization to Save Energy)
- Clean Water Action
- Austin Climate Action Network
- Texas Drought Project
- First Unitarian Universalist Green Sanctuary Ministry
- Wildflower Unitarian Universalist Church

Candidate Name: Ora Houston

District: 1

Point of Contact: Jonathan Panzer,
Campaign Manager

Email: Jonathan@oraatx.com

Phone: 512-825-2846

- 1. The mission of the Austin Energy Department is to deliver clean, affordable reliable energy and excellent customer service. During your term, what will be the most important challenge for the city in regard to Austin Energy?**

What a gracious statement. The most important challenge facing Austin Energy is making the transition from traditional forms of energy to renewable/clean energy in a dependable, predictable manner. For people who live in District #1, the challenge is how to deliver reliable energy at cost people with low resources can afford.

- 2. From a citywide and district perspective, briefly describe your vision for managing and improving Austin Energy?**

I am a member of the community not an energy policy or planning expert. I expect to learn as I go as I listen to experts on many sides of the issue to craft a common sense, realistic vision for managing and improving Austin Energy, including looking at the business model that actually penalized people for conservation.

- 3. What is your position on climate change?**

For many the answer to this question is a strong YES. And yet some say that it may be based on solar radiation, sun theory, volcanic dust, continents that are drifting. I know that climate change is the new normal in my life, so climate change may be caused by a combination of all of the above. It is important to know that I believe that the climate is changing and humans bear some of the responsibility. It doesn't matter what it is called, the reality is something is happening and we must be intentional about addressing the issue.

- 4. Do you support implementation of the recommendations in the report developed by the [Austin Generation Resource Planning Task Force](#) and are there any other specific changes you would like made to the [Austin Energy Resource, Generation and Climate Protection Plan to 2020](#)? What would you change and how?**

First I want to acknowledge the time and energy (no pun intended) that members of the committee put into drafting the report. I must be honest with you the report is very dense and requires a lot more time for me to fully comprehend. The recommendations look like a list of options. Would need to see supporting data before I will be able to make any suggestions.

5. City Council serves as the board of directors for Austin Energy. As a council member, what do you consider your role to be in regard to Austin Energy's governance?

It is my commitment that the body elected by the people continues to serve as the board of directors of Austin Energy.

6. What renewable energy resources and programs should be incorporated into the Austin Energy generation resource mix?

Solar energy that has the potential to be centralized, decentralized or community delivered, based on the needs of a particular area; continued use of wind; and base energy until we get closer to the end of the contact. In District #1 there must be a focus on education regarding conservation and the availability of and appropriateness of rebate programs. Partnership with housing rehab organizations to upgrade homes prior to or in conjunction with determining the appropriateness of a particular program. To make energy programs cost efficient perhaps rather than one home is a location, determine if there are multiple properties in an area that can be worked on at the same time. Again, I must stress that conservation must not penalize low resourced people by increasing rates or the upgrades increasing property taxes.

7. How and to what extent should Austin Energy provide customer energy efficiency programs?

More specific kind of outreach which focuses on the diverse demographics found in the district. One size does not fit all in this district – the diversity of the district is amazing. Language, educational, technology and income just to name a few. Telling some of my neighbors to look on line is not going to cut it, especially those who need the programs the most.

8. What are your thoughts on whether Austin Energy should invest in more nuclear reactors and whether the utility should remain involved in the existing South Texas Project reactors after their currently scheduled retirement dates of 2027 and 2028 if they get relicensed for 20 additional years?

Don't think that new nuclear reactors should be built. As the use of clean energy increases, it seems reasonable that the traditional forms of energy will decrease. Not sure when that tipping point will be reached. (see response in #1) Need more information about the options. What is the role of the Biomass plant in the scheme of things? I am all for affordable, reliable energy. But need a thorough financial analysis and then need to give that information to the voters before a very important decision is made dealing with our publicly-owned utility