

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

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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?

Recently the Austin City Council passed resolutions with the aspirational goal of having energy from plants with zero greenhouse emissions by 2030. I believe the most important challenge we will face in the coming years is finding a business model that is sustainable for Austin Energy as we balance our efforts to conserve energy and move towards zero emissions. I believe our energy policies must reflect our community values, and our community values finding and using renewable energy resources. I support efforts to expand Austin Energy's use of renewable energy, but I believe we have to balance our environmental priorities with our affordability priorities.

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

As stated above, I think the Council must, as board members of Austin Energy, direct management to develop a business model that makes a profit while keeping rates low and moving more and more to renewables. That will benefit all districts in the City.

3. What is your position on climate change?

Unlike some elected officials, I believe it exists. Climate change is the variation of weather which is the result of the emission of greenhouse gases. I believe we should do what we can in our personal lives, as well as a city to decrease the emission of greenhouse gases.

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?

I support the recommendation of the Austin Generation Resource Planning Task Force. I also commend Austin Energy for meeting the 35 percent goal set in the Climate Protection Plan six years before the deadline. I would like to see the addition of an awareness campaign to assist energy consumers in finding opportunities to reduce their carbon emissions. The City of Austin has taken great strides in ensuring Municipal facilities are run on energy that is 100 percent greenhouse free. We can do more with small businesses and homeowners to reduce their daily emissions. I also believe finding mass transportation alternatives to reduce our dependency on vehicles will help us in reducing emissions.

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?

Having sat on numerous boards and commissions for the City of Austin, I believe it is a council member's job to work with and listen to the city staff and experts who run the daily operations of the various departments and utilities. I also believe it is a city council member's job to listen to the community interests and concerns regarding their utility rates and desire for more green energy. It is my goal to bring concerns and input from the community before the staff managing Austin Energy to find a balanced approach to providing exceptional service to the taxpayers and consumers of Austin.

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

I would like to work with Austin Energy to pursue the already explored and voted on the West Texas solar plant.

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

We must continue to find more ways to conserve energy in Central Texas. I would like to see the City of Austin bring together experts from the private sector together with Austin Energy management to find opportunities to expand our energy efficiency programs. I think that providing home insulation for low income customers is one program that could be expanded.

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?

Both the pros and cons of nuclear energy are compelling, but I am not currently in favor of future investment in it or Austin remaining in STNP. I realize that the relatively low cost, stable base load of energy and low pollution are terrific benefits, but questionable safety and the problems of radioactive waste have kept me from being persuaded. If future technology can greatly improve safety then I would certainly be willing to reconsider it.