

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?

The most important challenge for the new City Council is overcoming the ignorant decisions of the past city councils, righting the ship, and driving forward with a more realistic overall real world strategy. This includes the decision to invest in the wood chip burning plant, and the decision to go 100% solar.

First I would look into and research with the help of Austin Electric and the Council, then feasibility, legality, and economics behind a re-tooling of the wood chip burning plant in east Texas from burning wood chips, to burning natural gas. I am firmly aware that coal and oil burning plants can be re-tooled to run on natural gas, and I would like the opportunity to take a look at re-tooling a currently high operational/operational cost prohibitive large capital asset back into a productive asset.

Second, just like in a variety of situations in life, diversity can often be very beneficial. The diversity that I am speaking about here in point two is diversity of energy supply production facilities. While I like solar, and am interested in and support green generating production facilities, it is not prudent supplier management, or operational management to leverage yourself into one supplier. Further, prudent entity risk management practices would justify multiple production sources.

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

My vision for improving Austin Energy is a more realistic and real world strategy has to be, not just a story about generation, but also conservation. In association with Austin Energies current solar rebate program we would initiate an additional program for real efficiency improvements to structures. We would like to analyze and promote a program to include in new construction for both single family, multi-family, and remodels; the introduction of spray foam insulation to the aforementioned structures for its better R-value and its air leakage prohibition with in the structure. This will serve to make these homes more sustainable and slow the need for new power plants for the city of Austin. This technology has become a best practice in new construction and as a result should be studied for potential inclusion in Austin Energy rebate programs.

Also, reduce Austin Energies and the City of Austin's utilization of coal fired power plants in favor of natural gas. We are cognizant of potential cost implications here which is why we are more interested in becoming a more natural gas based city as opposed to coal because of natural gases superior performance with respect to carbon emissions over coal, while at the same time, natural gases relative cheap price compared to other sources of clean energy such as solar. We also understand that prices on fuels can change, but it appears at present and for the foreseeable future that as a result of the new fracking technology, nat gas will be cheap for years to come.

Finally, work to reduce Austin's carbon footprint while being mindful of the economics of the situation, as these economic concerns at the aggregate can affect Austin's most economically disadvantaged.

3. What is your position on climate change?

It is a simple truth of physics and chemistry. While the sun, may very well have natural cycles, whereby the earth receives greater solar radiation in some periods, than in other periods, it seems clear through empirical evidence that the various green house gasses serve to exacerbate the problem of climate change and warming of our atmosphere.

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 generally agree with the findings with the caveats and differences of opinion being outlined previously and hereafter in this questionnaire.

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?

I believe that the council should serve as any board at a for profit entity might serve. The council/board should serve to provide prudent financial management, risk reduction, and guide Austin Energy with a long term strategic vision for the power production of the city.

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

Solar, Wind, Hydro, and any other production methods that serve to provide economically generated, reliable power that serves to reduce the carbon footprint of Austin Energy.

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

Austin Energy should provide energy efficiency programs to all owners of property where appropriate and affordable to the City of Austin Energy, in accordance with Austin Energy's goals of reducing Austin's carbon footprint in an economic manner. In such situations both Austin Energy and the property owner should have to have salt in the game, that is to say, both the owner and Austin Energy would spend money on the improvement.

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?

I believe like I have said previously in this questionnaire in the diversity of supplier sources/production facilities, which includes diversity in fuel types.