

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 will be the balance between affordability and the rising costs of the energy market. Recent solar contracts are encouraging in that we can still accomplish our renewable goals without having to subsidize it on the backs of low-income ratepayers. But we need to remain cognizant of the impact of electric rates, which for many Austinites have a greater impact on affordability than their city property tax bill.

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

We need to stop treating this billion-dollar business as if it were the same as any other city department. However this does not mean implementing a fully independent commission, as Austinites own the utility and deserve input on its governance. We also need more transparency on how we spend the transfers from AE to the general fund.

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

It's happening, but more than that, the impacts of pollution from "dirty" energy sources are more direct than long-term climate change. We don't need a climate change focus to know that coal and natural gas harm the environment.

- 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?**

Generally speaking, yes. I have concerns about defining solar as the primary generation resource when AE needs a mix of sources to efficiently respond to customer demand. I also have doubts about blanket ordinances requiring on-site solutions when large-scale infrastructure solutions may be more cost-effective.

- 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?**

Put simply, ensuring that the owners of AE (Austin residents) have their investment managed wisely and that the profits of that business are used responsibly.

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

All options should be evaluated as technology improves and energy market forces dictate.

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

Just as efficiency and conservation efforts need to be a bigger part of Austin Water's approach, so is the same for Austin Energy. It's far cheaper to address pollution and dirty energy by using less energy than investing in new generation resources.

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?

We need to evaluate the fiscal impact and the impact on having reliable energy for the grid. Furthermore, just as with Fayette, if they are relicensed and sold to another utility, Austin will have accomplished no change in the overall use of the resource. However, my instinct is that after another decade of technological innovation, that nuclear energy will be an even less attractive option than it is today.