

# 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?**

Providing reliable service at an affordable rate would be the top priority. The cost of living in Austin relative to income levels has gone up considerably, and utility rates have certainly been listed by many as contributing to an overall affordability issue. Finding the means and methods to keep utility rates down would be my focus as a City Council member.

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

Any vision I would have would in large part be based upon input from Austin Energy's customers – the residents of the district and city as a whole. A task force including community leaders and accepted experts in the field of energy generation could be convened to draw up a vision statement that defines what the future direction of the utility should be. As a part of this vision or plan, I would like to see more opportunities for voter approval of projects where the estimated cost exceeds a given threshold.

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

Climate change is a reality and is at least in part a result of human interaction with 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?**

I have done a preliminary review of these and spoken with others that are highly respected for their work in the areas covered by the report and plan. At the current time, there appears to be some differences in opinion as to the strength of the assumptions made within the respective bodies of work. I would like to have an opportunity to bring together those who hold these differing points of view and see where points of agreement exist while evaluating the strength of the cases made for the differences before supporting either or making recommendations for change.

**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 support continuing having the City Council serving as the board of directors for Austin Energy and would oppose moving that governance responsibility to an independent unelected board. Austin Energy is such a vital part of our financial health as a local governmental body that those making the highest level decisions should be directly accountable to the voters.

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

Clearly solar and wind power generation should be part of the resource mix. There appears to be a number of next generation options being studied at the current time. Should those prove to be commercially viable on a scale that makes them cost effective they would be candidates for inclusion in the mix.

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

At the root of the efficiency programs there must be some credible research done to determine the precise level of results that can be obtained by them. Where there is evidence that the programs offer a positive return on investment, they should be continued or expanded. Those that fail this test should be eliminated or replaced.

**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?**

Austin Energy should not be investing in more nuclear reactors and should not continue its involvement with the South Texas Nuclear Project. There are a number of reasons for discontinuing involvement not the least of which is the availability of affordable and more environmentally responsible alternatives.