

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 challenging issue will be the governance of Austin Energy (AE). While it is clear that the citizens of Austin want and expect that the Council will retain direct oversight of AE. From our experience during the 2013 rate case, it is clear that the Council needs to be more involved in overseeing the management of AE. So, there is a question as to what form the Council's oversight of AE might take. Will the Council as a whole oversee AE? Will it be a committee of the Council? If a committee – while retaining a majority of Council members on the committee – should the committee include experts on finances and/or utility operations? Should the committee include a representative from the ratepayers from outside of the city, allowing us to do away with the discount that they were granted in the 2013 rate case? All of these are questions that will need to be considered and decided next year.

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

Above, I've described some of my thoughts on the managing AE. I think that a greater oversight by the Council is needed to ensure that the public has faith in AE's operations. We need to ensure that AE's finances are managed so as to minimize future rate increases and fuel charges. We need to make sure that AE's management is committed to a renewable energy portfolio that includes distributed solar.

3. What is your position on climate change?

It's here. And it seems to be coming much faster than we thought, even ten years ago. We need to prepare Austin to be as resilient as possible to the effects of climate change and recognize that we will need to be flexible to adapt to changing conditions.

- 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?**

Yes, I support the recommendations of the Austin Generation Resource Planning Task Force, particularly that solar should become the default new generation resource and that AE should not invest in new natural gas generation facilities. I do not support Austin pursuing retirement of its share of the Fayette Plant independent of LCRA. I support ramping down use of Fayette as much as possible, and I favor that Austin retain its ownership interest and control in Fayette in order to make that happen.

- 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 would consider myself accountable to the residents of District 7 and Austin as a whole for the prudent management of AE. Please see my answer to No. 1 above for my further thoughts on a potential management structure for AE.

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

Given current prices, new investments for AE's renewable portfolio should be directed toward solar – both large scale and distributed generation. AE should maintain a diversified generation portfolio, and wind generation should remain a significant part of that portfolio.

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

I support the recommendations in the Austin Generation Resource Planning Task Force for increasing our goal for energy efficiency to 1200 MWs by 2024 with 200 MW of the goal being met by demand response. This should be done in concert with the City's ongoing support for weatherization programs that have been useful for both reducing the utility bills for senior and for keeping seniors in their homes.

- 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?**

No! Austin's investment in the South Texas Nuclear Project was a mistake to begin with, and we should not compound the mistake with further investments. If the reactors are relicensed for an additional 20 years, Austin should then consider whether it would be better to retain its ownership or sell its interest.