

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

Candidate Name: Melissa Zone

District: 7

Email: Melissa@zoneforaustin.com

Phone: 512-567-4098

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?

Converting to clean energy, continuing innovations in energy management, and incentivizing conservation, all while maintaining affordability, are equally important measures to achieve the Austin Energy Department's mission. Also, development of charging infrastructure and incentivizing sales of electric vehicles (EV) is critical to improving air quality. I would support a wide range of measures to make our community less dependent on coal or petroleum products for energy production.

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

Systems thinking should be applied to maximize quality service and clean energy while minimizing costs. This means looking at Austin Energy in the broader context of other city and district operations and finding synergies where ever possible. Ultimately, all power in Austin should be affordably produced from city-owned renewable, clean sources and efficiently distributed. Austin should collaborate regionally and with county, state and federal programs and leverage public-private partnerships to meet these goals, including development of EV charging infrastructure, which could be an effective avenue for both revenue expansion for Austin Energy and greenhouse gas reduction.

3. What is your position on climate change?

The preponderance of scientific evidence overwhelmingly supports the conclusion that climate change is real. The adoption of Austin's Climate Protection Program in concert with Austin Energy's renewable energy initiatives is a major step toward significantly reducing greenhouse gasses. These types of programs must continue to be emphasized until we reach net zero emissions.

- 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 these recommendations. I would seek to reduce emissions more rapidly, and place a high emphasis on supporting economically disadvantaged citizens with conservation incentives. I would also expand the plan's Energy Efficiency objectives related to residential properties to address commercial properties as well.

- 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?**

As a council member, it is my role to insure that Austin Energy operates in a fiscally sound manner and fulfills its mission to provide high quality utility service at the lowest possible cost to Austin residents while operating in accordance with policy set by council, including clean energy and conservation goals. Long-range planning for growth in the city as well as synergy with other city operations are critical areas for council to direct.

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

Wind, solar, and biomass should all be in the mix. I would like to see Austin eventually stop using fossil and nuclear fuel altogether for our energy production. Texas has ample sunshine and wind which can help us provide healthier alternatives for energy production. Rapidly transitioning to renewable resources will enable us to conserve our water and reduce pollution from power plants, and ultimately we can save money by reducing the amount of energy we have to purchase.

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

Energy efficiency programs should be highly emphasized as it will both reduce demand and save our citizens money. Both utility-administered and partner programs, leveraging external funding and resources whenever possible, should be used. Energy efficiency standards should be an area of emphasis for both residential and commercial development in the CodeNEXT land development code rewrite process. I would like to see Austin Energy identify ways to simplify their incentive programs. For example, the utility could offer results-based rebates based on kilowatt-hours reduced without relating incentives to specific structural upgrades or equipment replacements. AE should increase voluntary retrofits through public outreach and education and provide assistance to property owners. The utility could also continue to exempt property owners from energy audits before real estate sales for voluntary adoption of certain energy efficiency measures.

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?

Nuclear power in its present form is far too dangerous and should not be a part of Austin's energy portfolio.