

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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Mayoral

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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?

I believe our most important priority for Austin Energy must be to address climate change while maintaining affordability standards. We made a significant stride forward this week by adopting a resolution I co-sponsored to update our Generation Plan goals while protecting affordability, but we must remain vigilant to ensure that we reach our goals and update the plan as needed. We're fortunate to have many engaged organizations dedicated to helping us make the best policy decisions possible for our utility, and we must continue to work closely with them as we work to improve our energy policies and practices.

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

Austin Energy is the City's most valuable asset. Our utility provides revenue for the community and allows us the ability to lead the state, nation and world in renewable energy policy, energy efficiency, weatherization, and green building programs. By serving as the Board of Austin Energy, the new Council will be charged with ensuring the utility balances financial responsibilities with our community's values of supporting green energy while maintaining affordability. If our utility leaders are not willing to enact Council policy initiatives, then we must do all that we can to ensure compliance with our city charter, including replacing those leaders through our legal options via the City Manager. I realize the charter works both ways, but as the board of directors of Austin Energy, we must have support for Council adopted policies.

3. What is your position on climate change?

Climate change is a real crisis, and we must do everything in within our authority to address it. By setting strong renewable goals today, we are setting the tone for future Councils to uphold our standards for conservation and renewable energy while fighting climate change on the local level.

- 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 support the recommendations of the Austin Generation Resource Planning Task Force (AGRPTF) and was proud to be a co-sponsor of the resolution adopting these recommendations on August 28th. I believe they are reasonable, attainable and necessary. If we need to make further changes to address the conditions of climate change or strengthen our goals further, I will do everything I can to achieve consensus on the new Council to update the plan.

- 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 the board of Austin Energy, the Council will be charged with ensuring the utility balances the financial responsibilities with our community's values. This body should enlist the expertise of our community advocates and experts to make thorough and thoughtful decisions about policies moving forward. I supported keeping Austin Energy under the direction of Council because I believe that anyone making decisions for our utility should be accountable to the public.

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

I support all the resources and programs as proposed by the AGRPTF. Should new technologies or findings cause the need to amend our plan, I will request support and input from our stakeholders to find the best way to integrate them that will uphold or strengthen our existing goals.

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

I have been frustrated by AEs performance with our weatherization programs and the outreach and education to low income customers regarding our energy efficiency rebate programs. I applaud my AGRPTF appointee's efforts to incorporate recommendations to target this population for rebate outreach and will work during the current budget process to highlight the deficiencies of AE's weatherization program. These programs meet two of our highest priorities by helping achieve higher levels of conservation while making Austin more affordable for our most vulnerable populations.

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?

Until there is a viable, safe, and effective way to eliminate the waste from nuclear power generation, I do not support further investment or the continued participation in the South Texas Project beyond our current commitment. With improvements in technology, we've seen drastic reductions in the cost of other forms of renewable energy such as solar, and we should focus our efforts in these areas that provide a safer way to expand our use of renewable energy.