

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?

Recognizing that providing clean reliable energy and customer service are priority number one for Austin Energy (AE) and not as an additional revenue stream. AE Has provided tremendous resources that are reinvested back into the city. This has been beneficial for the city, but we have to recognize that pulling revenues out of Austin Energy can negatively impact ratepayers.

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

We have to work on achieving better customer service. Lately we've seen a lot of billing issues within AE. Software systems needs to be improved which goes hand in hand with having a better every-day customer service experience for ratepayers. This should be expected from a municipally owned utility with elected officials as its board of directors.

3. What is your position on climate change?

It is real. It is happening. In 2007, the City was seen as taking a bold step in acting where state and national leaders had not. We made a lot of progress between 2007 and today, particularly within the city's own operations. To be successful in addressing the needs of tomorrow, however, we need to not only continue that work but also extend those standards and behaviors to the city at large. It's not an easy task before us, but the community has to work together on a dozen fronts in order to achieve net zero climate impact by 2050 – which is the resolution I was proud to co-sponsor with Council Members Riley and Spelman. I hope that these actions taken by Austin in defense of the environment will be a catalyst for the region's citizens and leadership that will multiply our impact.

- 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 was a co-sponsor of several recent items that seek to advance our Austin Climate Protection Plan and take the recommendations of the Generation Task Force into implementation by aggressively pursuing a greener generation mix and an expanded low-income weatherization program, and to that end we recently adopted a goal of 50% renewables by 2020 and 65% by 2025, I was a co-sponsor on a recent resolution calling for 100% renewable energy by 2030.

- 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?**

The AE Board of Directors must continue to look after the best interests of the utility in maintaining its bond rating and energy efficiency goals while providing reliable and affordable power. AE is 1/3 of our entire city budget and it presents a real opportunity for Austin's community values to be implemented within the utility.

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

We need to continue pushing for distributed generation. By encouraging solar on rooftops already in place we avoid adding impervious cover in what could be sensitive environmental areas, and provide an affordable source of self-generated energy for consumers. I'm looking forward to the day when we look at solar generation as an appliance and I feel that we can get there by truly encouraging solar distribution.

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

The conservation of energy is the cheapest and easiest strategy to avoid building new power generation. When energy rebates and weatherization accomplish that conservation, they are highly effective. One of the lessons learned during the 2012 Austin Energy Rate case is that consumption patterns and household income patterns are not aligned, so efforts that focus on reducing energy use and their associated costs for lower income households can be particularly effective.

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 still don't know how to safely store waste generated by nuclear energy, despite the federal government searching for a solution for many years. The cooling reservoir for the South Texas Project is huge, the operation is water intensive, and has resulted in a super-heated lake. If a disaster happens we are subjecting many thousands of people to harmful material. With rising sea levels, this plant will need to shut down eventually. San Antonio has already gone the direction of not investing further, Austin should consider doing the same.