

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 important challenge for Austin Energy is moving forward with a sustainable business plan that doesn't rely on selling more and more energy. As a community, we need to encourage distributed, renewable generation and move our utility toward being a provider of distribution, connectivity, grid services and the sale or lease (financing) of distributed power equipment, as opposed to relying so much on selling power. Technology surrounding renewable generation and grid management is poised to change the way we think about and use energy, and AE needs to be at the forefront of this changing power generation ethos. Old utility models are based on providing dispatchability. But the future will have us focusing instead on predictability. (Our portfolio will respond in different ways to a variety of conditions and seasons and times. We'll have the tools to predict to ever increasing confidence where we will be in in terms of production seven days, or 72 hours, or 12 hours in advance.) Our risk models need to change and with them the ability to have an ever greater balance of renewable green energy.

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

Our electric utility is a tremendous asset for the city. Council management of that asset is a critical tool for furthering the values of the community and managing affordability. My vision is of a utility that evolves its business plan and doesn't focus primarily on selling power, but rather on access to distributed generation and the tools to manage our power grid in a way that benefits everyone in the community and the environment. We can use our utility to apply progressive rate structures and fees, and we can further implement our environmental values to make it the model of what a municipal utility ought to be in the 21st century. We have significant challenges and we have to be forward-looking here. We just can't afford to continue to be reactive instead of proactive.

3. What is your position on climate change?

I'm against it.

But really, in today's world, it's shame that we can't even get agreement on something that is very real and is happening all around us, risking our prosperity and our continued quality of life. Climate adaption is crucial to our survival as a city. We must be prepared to face and lead on these challenges moving forward.

From a city standpoint, we need to do our part to move toward a carbon-neutral or carbon-free future. We need to prepare to face the threats brought about by climate change, such as increased wildfire risk and flash flooding. Adaptation is an important part of our energy and environmental strategy moving forward.

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.

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?

Austin Energy belongs to the people of Austin and it should be run that way. It's a tremendous asset to the city, and we are able to apply our values to the utility in a way that we wouldn't be able to if we didn't maintain governance.

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

Wind and solar appear to be the most cost-effective and abundant renewable sources for central Texas. However, I'm open to any renewable resource that is cost-effective.

We need a business plan and programs that encourage distributed, renewable generation and move our utility toward being a provider of distribution, connectivity, grid services and the sale or lease (financing) of distributed power equipment, as opposed to relying so much on selling power. Technology surrounding renewable generation and grid management is poised to change the way we think about and use energy, and AE needs to be at the forefront of this changing power generation ethos. Old utility models are based on providing dispatchability. But the future will have us focusing instead on predictability. (Our portfolio will respond in different ways to a variety of conditions and seasons and times. We'll have the tools to predict to ever increasing confidence where we will be in in terms of production seven days, or 72 hours, or 12 hours in advance.) Our risk models need to change and with them the ability to have an ever greater balance of renewable green energy.

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

The current PowerSaver program is a great tool for encouraging energy efficiency in our city and I support its continuation. We need to make barriers for access as low as possible, and, where possible, increase the availability of incentives.

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?

I do not support future investment in nuclear power, although we may be faced with tough choices in the next fifteen years. Changes in technology and cost are providing us a path forward. Old utility models are based on providing dispatchability. But the future will have us focusing instead on predictability. We will have a portfolio that responds in different ways in a variety of conditions and seasons and times, and with the tools to predict to ever increasing confidence where we will be in in terms of production seven days, or 72 hours, or 12 hours later. Our risk models need to change and with them the balance in our portfolios.