

AUSTIN NO KILL COALITION
2014 City Council Candidate Questionnaire

1. Since February 2011, Austin's open-admission municipal animal shelter has saved 90% or more of all impounded animals, making Austin the largest "No Kill" City in the United States. But success in the past does not guarantee success in the future, and there is always room for improvement. How important is the City's "No Kill" status to you? If the issue were to come before the Council again, will you commit to maintaining the City's resolve to be a "No Kill" community? Why or why not?

Maintaining the City's "No Kill" status is a huge priority for me – whether or not elected council. I am a huge proponent of rescue and adoption. I have long been involved in Austin's animal community and anticipate becoming much more involved in the future. When and if the issue were to come before council I would not hesitate to insist that we maintain our "No Kill" status.

2. In 2007, the City Council voted to build a new animal shelter in East Austin but only upon the condition that an adoption center remain on the old Town Lake Animal Center site. The Council has repeatedly voted that it wishes the current tenant of the site, Austin Pets Alive, to remain on the site, but the building is old and deteriorating. Given that APA saves three to four thousand animals from Austin Animal Center each year (15-20% of AAC intake), and given that APA is willing to build a new, state-of-the-art shelter on the site at no cost to city taxpayers, will you commit to supporting APA signing a long-term agreement with the city to build and operate a new, streamlined shelter as its headquarters on the site with a two-acre footprint (cutting in half its current footprint of four acres)? Why or why not?

I fully support APA staying in its current location and will do everything I can to make this happen as soon as possible. APA being in this location is perfect for both the organization as well as the community. Not only are animals adopted from the facility, but APA has been an awesome community partner by allowing others to use space – feral cat recovery and House Rabbit Resource Network Spa Days. These are all events that make APA such a great community partner and make this space ideal.

3. In 2010, the City Council passed a “No Kill” plan for the City of Austin that has produced dramatic, measurable, and positive outcomes for Austin’s shelter pets. The “No Kill” plan took a balanced approach aimed at both increasing “live outcomes” and decreasing shelter intake through proven and cost-effective policies and programs. However, some persons in town who oppose Austin’s “No Kill” efforts want the City to instead pass a mandatory pet alteration law or a costly tax on owners of unaltered pets---even though such laws have proven ineffective across the country, are nearly uniformly opposed by national animal-welfare groups, and have frequently led to increases in shelter intake, killing, and animal-control costs. Do you support the current balanced “No Kill” approach embraced by the Council and “No Kill” advocates? Or, are you willing to risk the progress Austin has made by imposing a mandatory alteration law?

I support the current “No Kill” approach and do not support mandatory spay/neuter laws. I did not understand the impacts that mandatory spay/neuter laws had until I read further. If this were to be put in place, Austin would potentially be opening the door to more animals being abandoned- at the shelter or on the streets. Residents faced with a “fine” might instead chose to abandon their pets or residents faced with costly spay/neuter requirements might also chose to abandon their pets. I think Austin has a wonderful network of organizations that provide the vast majority of services a pet owner needs. There are many low cost/free spay/neuter programs as well as wellness. Instead of requiring residents to alter their pets we should be encouraging them to take care of their pets – adopt (not buy) and then make sure the pet has vet care.

4. The largest category of “savable” animals still not making it out of Austin Animal Center alive are high-energy large dogs in need of behavior training. These dogs often take the longest time to be adopted, and they are also often surrendered to the city shelter due to apartment or neighborhood housing restrictions that discriminate based on breed or size. Would you be willing to explore ways to change housing restrictions so that they are based on an individual animal’s behavior rather than on its size and apparent breed? At the least, would you be willing to condition city contributions (such as money or land) to residential developers on an agreement that they not discriminate based on an animal’s breed or size? Why or why not?

I do not and will never support breed discrimination. I would be happy to have conversations surrounding housing restrictions based on pet ownership. Discrimination based on breed alone is not a solution. The conversations must revolve around both the dog’s behavior and the dog’s owner. I add the owner into the equation because they have to be part of the solution. If someone sees a puppy/dog as rambunctious is the owner willing to have the puppy trained, “canine good citizenship”, do they understand the puppy/dog needs to be on a leash? These are common sense ideas, but still part of being a good pet parent.

5. What pets, if any, do you have? Where did you get them from?

Cat - Bella (KiKi) – Austin Pets Alive (2011)

Cat - Tommy – AHS (from someone who could not keep him) (2011)

Bunny – Harley – House Rabbit Resource Network (2014)

2 Feral cat colonies – Docs restaurant in Sunset Valley and in Jamaica