

AUSTIN NO KILL COALITION
2014 City Council Candidate Questionnaire

Jeb Boyt, District 7

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?

Yes. Austin's "No Kill" policy is important to the citizens of Austin, to the character of our city, and to our reputation.

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?

The importance of having a central adoption center that is convenient to the public has been proven. And, I am committed to ensuring that APA and the City continue their partnership in providing such a center. At this time, though, I hesitate to commit in advance to the agreement that you propose only because we need to have a public discussion about the overall plans for the park land between Cesar Chavez and the railroad and between Lamar and Austin High. APA is one of the major stakeholders in this area, and needs to be a part of this community discussion.

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, balanced "No Kill" approach.

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?

As we have a high-energy, large dog, I am well aware of the challenges with having such animals in your home. I would be willing to explore ways to encourage landlords and building managers to easily evaluate whether an animal is suitable for an apartment or other multi-family housing based on individual behavior. As you are likely aware, in many cases, it is the behavior of the human that is more at issue than the behavior of the animal. Residential communities need to have ways to address conflicts between residents rather than simply scapegoating animals in any conflict.

I’m not familiar with the sort of neighborhood housing restrictions on animals that you describe, and I would be interested in learning more about how and where they have been applied. I would be willing to explore ways to relieve restrictions that apply to single-family homes and duplexes.

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

We have a male Weimaraner, who is about eight years old. We got him from Weimaraner Rescue of Texas.