

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?

I am committed to keeping Austin a "No Kill" community because it is the right thing to do.

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 allowing Austin Pets Alive to remain at the Lamar Beach location, and I will support a long-term agreement with APA to build and operate a new shelter and headquarters on the site. It is a real win-win for the City and the animals in Austin. It will save both the lives of animals and City dollars.

2. 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 do not support mandatory spay/neuter policies or imposing a tax on pet owners who choose not to alter their pets. I strongly encourage owners to do so, but I don’t want to penalize those who don’t. A balanced “No Kill” approach is a better policy.

3. 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 would be willing to explore alternative ways to change the current housing restrictions to focus on an individual animal's behavior, rather than its size and breed. It does not make sense to me, nor do I think it is right, to deny an animal a loving home merely based on their particular size and/or breed. I have a proven track record of listening to everyone and collaborating to find solutions that work. As council member, I will respect the positions of folks from all across Austin and always look out for the best interests of our city and Austin families, including our four-legged friends

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

I have two dogs, both rescues.