

**AUSTIN NO KILL COALITION**  
**2014 City Council Candidate Questionnaire**

Answers from Sheri Gallo, Candidate Austin City Council, District 10

- 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?*

The City's "No Kill" status is VERY important to me.

I believe that this status makes Austin a leader and encourages other cities look to us for ideas to help them solve their problems. So we're not only solving problems here in Austin, but also demonstrating to other cities that this can be done successfully and addressing the hesitation that other cities may have in implementing a No Kill policy.

Yes, I would commit to maintaining the City's resolve to be a "No Kill" community.

It is working and successful here and I even believe that we can raise our initial starting point of 90% success, aim higher and be closer to 95%!

- 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?*

Yes

The location of our current site near Lady Bird Lake is valuable to the success of saving Austin animals. When rescue animals are available at a centrally located spot in the city which is familiar to people, more rescue animals find their "forever homes". Adoption rates have been affected by the location of the new shelter in East Austin. As a long time Austin resident I know that the Austin Shelter has been at the Town Lake location for at least 40 years, and that's where people have always gone to get their rescue pet.

In addition, because people already know to go to that location, it can easily serve as an educational and training center and can direct people to all of the other resources and services which exist in Austin such as Austin Animal Center, Emancipet, Austin Animal Trustees, and other rescue groups.

Finding a new location would be difficult because of the "no kennels" overlay in our current land development code. Then there would have to be funding for a new location which would need city tax dollars. On the other hand, because APA is willing to build a new shelter at their cost at the current location, it is a win, win situation for Austin taxpayers.

- 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?*

Yes, I support the current balanced “No Kill” approach embraced by the Council and “No Kill” advocates.

It has been shown that the mandatory spay/neuter laws do not work. In addition, if a city has to add additional staff to enforce an ordinance like this, it will divert resources from programs that do work. It has been shown that mandatory spay/neuter laws do not increase spay/neuter rates or reduce shelter intake rates. It has the opposite effect when low income pet owners cannot afford to alter their pets and are then forced to surrender their pet to be in compliance with the law. The better approach is to spend our resources on providing these mandatory spay/neuter services and training citizens to be more responsible pet owners.

- 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?*

This is a multidimensional issue. One of the underlying issues regarding breed and size discrimination is related to liability insurance regulations. If a property owner or management company is only able to obtain a liability insurance policy which prohibits certain breeds or sizes of pets, then the owner of the property will carry those same restrictions forward to prospective tenants. It would be extremely helpful if animal groups would join together to lobby the insurance industry to rethink their policies on restricting certain breeds or sizes. This issue will resolve much faster with the availability of more insurance carriers who have no animal breed or size restrictions. At the same time, we should encourage individual animal assessments instead of blanket policies. However when promoting this method, we should understand that tenant applications which are approved or denied based on a subjective pet evaluations could possibly subject that owner to fair housing discrimination lawsuits. Unfortunately federal housing legislation has removed the ability for property owners to make decisions which are not based on very definite qualification guidelines. This is a difficult issue that will require the collaboration of many different groups who understand each other’s constraints and strive to work together for the best outcome.

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

At the present, I have one wonderful rescue dog, Allie who I got from Forgotten Friends, a mixed breed rescue group. She is the star of some of my campaign material and often block walks with me! I have always grown up with animals starting with my first dog, Pixie, a miniature dachshund and including 4 mixed breed rescue dogs, 2 bloodhounds, a blue tick coonhound, a beagle, along with 6 cats along the way. I also trained horses and rescued several horses off the track which were headed to the slaughter house.

Both of my kids went to Texas Tech in Lubbock. While they were there I purchased rental houses close to campus and occupied by students. I have found there is a huge feral cat problem in this area unfortunately due to the students abandoning their cats when they leave Lubbock. As a result I have become involved with the West Texas Humane Society and their “cat” person and assist in trapping the feral cats and kittens living in the alley near the house where I stay. I take these older cats to be neuter/spayed and the kittens to the “cat lady” to be fostered until adopted. Each time I make sure that I have made a donation to cover the medical cost of improving this feral cat family, and each time I see one of the cats with a clipped ear near my house, I smile!

In addition my step-daughter, Ann Hudspeth is a part of Austin Humane Society's Behavior Re-Homing Assessment Training Team (a Blue BRATT), and also helps AHS with off-site adoptions and special events. She has four rescue dogs, including two Classic Canines from Austin Animal Center.

Not only are pets important to me, they are important to my constituents in District 10. When I was walking neighborhoods and knocking on doors these past 6 months, I found that over 90% of the homes had dogs that greeted me. Austin loves its animals!!

Thank you for the amazing things you are doing as an organization to help us take care of the animals in Austin.