



Dear City Council Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in the welfare of Austin's companion animals and the Austin "No Kill" movement. The Austin No Kill Coalition is a joint effort of non-profit Austin animal-welfare organizations who aim to save the lives of all healthy and treatable adoptable animals that enter the City's open-admission animal shelter each year (a number that we believe is at or over 90% of all impounded animals).

The Coalition includes:

- Austin Pets Alive! (www.AustinPetsAlive.org), Austin's largest "No Kill" shelter by a large margin, which has saved more animals from Austin's shelter in the past year than all other shelters and rescue groups combined;
- FixAustin (www.FixAustin.org), Austin's No Kill advocacy group that inspired the current No Kill movement in Austin and led the 2007 citizen initiative to keep open the current shelter as an Adoption Center; and
- Love-a-Bull, Inc. (www.Love-a-Bull.org), Austin's "pit bull" advocacy, education, and awareness group.
- Tens of thousands of Austin's voters.

Combined, these groups, along with Austin's animal-loving public, have been at the forefront of Austin's effort to become a "No Kill" City. We collectively have over 20,000 supporters, and represent the Austin public's overwhelming support for saving lives at Austin's shelter.

On Sunday, May 1st at 3:15pm, we will host an hour-long City Council Candidate forum at Ventana del Soul, which is located at 1834 East Oltorf Street. We will start on the dot at 3:15pm, so we ask that you please arrive early if you intend to participate. We also ask that you please answer the questions below, the answers to which will be posted on some or all of our websites, and also will be "rated" in as part of an awareness campaign by FixAustin.org. We ask that you please provide your answers to us at info@nokillaustin.org by Saturday, April 30th, 3pm. Participation in the forum is contingent on answering the questionnaire. Organizational fact sheets will follow shortly for your information.

Thank you and kindest regards,

The Austin No Kill Coalition

**AUSTIN NO KILL COALITION
CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATE FORUM QUESTIONNAIRE**

1. In February and March, Austin saved 90% of the impounded animals at Town Lake Animal Center (now called Austin Animal Center), making Austin the largest “No Kill” City in the United States. There is still much work to be done to keep and maintain this status, however, such as increasing adoptions from our City Shelter, Austin Animal Shelter. How important is this 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 City?

Over the past two years, as I’ve heard from countless Austinites who care deeply about animals, I’ve come to appreciate how important No Kill is to this city. I’m proud that we’re now the largest No Kill City in the U.S., and I’m committed to maintaining our resolve to be a No Kill City.

2. The City Shelter is moving to a smaller facility in November 2011. In 2007, the City Council voted to keep part of the existing facility open to serve as an Adoption Center (the Davenport Building only); and in 2010, the Council voted to keep all of the existing facility open for at least 6 months as a safety net when the shelter moves. Knowing that the current TLAC facility is the only one of its kind in the whole of Austin and that Austin Pets Alive is proposing to run it at little cost to the City, would you support keeping the whole facility open beyond 6 months as both a safety net for the new, smaller facility, and also to significantly increase shelter adoptions?

I’d like to be able to keep the TLAC facility open beyond 6 months as a safety net and to increase adoptions. We’ll need to be sure the buildings are safe, and consider any long-term plans for the property.

3. Maintaining Austin’s status as a “No Kill” City requires an unhesitating commitment to “live outcomes”--- keeping high the percentage of impounded animals that leave the shelter alive through rescue groups, other shelters, and direct adoptions to the public. The largest percentage of live outcomes at any time is direct adoptions, which will remain essential to the City’s “No Kill” goals when the main shelter is relocated to the new, smaller facility. When determining which nonprofit should inhabit the existing Austin Animal Center facility after the main shelter relocates, would you commit to prioritizing a non-profit that focuses exclusively on saving those animals who are slated to die at the City facility, thereby directly reducing the City’s “kill rate”? Or, would you be willing to have the City facility be run by a non-profit that instead focuses on animals brought in from other communities or from sources other than the City’s municipal shelter? How specifically will you determine which non-profit will be housed in the old facility?

I’d expect that any future use of the existing TLAC facility would be subject to an RFP or RFQ process to decide on an entity to occupy the building. I’d also expect any RFP or RFQ process to give some priority to the goal of reducing the City’s kill rate.

4. Recognizing that No Kill is an ongoing project and that the City Animal Services is the only City department where lives are lost on a daily basis, would you vote for or against moderate increased expenditures that are directly associated with more lives saved?

This will likely be a difficult budget year, and I can't promise any increases at this point. We'll need to consider all of the city's needs and hear from the community before making significant changes. I would like to see moderate increases to save more lives if we can get there.

5. The City of Austin returns about 8% of stray cats and 37% of stray dogs to their rightful owners. Other successful "No Kill" cities, however, are able to reduce the strain on the shelter and rescue groups by returning upwards of 65% of dogs to their owners. Would you support an internal review, and if necessary, restructuring of the City's Return to Owner Program at Austin Animal Center in order to gain more live outcomes and ease strain on the City and non-profit resources?

Yes.

6. Would you support the implementation of performance standards that tie management performance to salary increments or bonuses? If not, why not?

Salary bonuses can be a helpful way of setting expectations for top management and rewarding solid performance; I supported a performance-based salary structure for the new CEO at Capital Metro. The bonus should be based on matters within the official's control.

7. As many as 15 different dog breeds are being restricted in 99% of the rental housing market in Austin, which makes finding appropriate housing very difficult for owners of these dogs, despite high levels of owner responsibility and great dog temperaments and training. This is significantly slowing adoptions of these breeds from the shelter and causing many owners to surrender their pets or dump them into the community. What steps would you take to find solutions to this problem, in working with the apartment associations and property managers in Austin?

I'd be glad to work with apartment associations and property managers to explore ways of making more housing available for owners of breeds that are currently restricted.

8. Pit bull type dogs are the highest at-risk population for "euthanasia" at the shelter. Love-A-Bull, the City's Pit Bull Working Group, mixed breed rescue groups, shelter staff, and the Animal Advisory Commission all recognize that there is a great need to address public perception and reverse media stereotypes that paint a negative picture of these dogs, in order to increase adoptions and acceptance of pit bulls as wonderful family companions, and maintain a commitment to No-Kill. Would you support the work of these groups and the message that they are sending to the community, through City support of pit bull-focused education and awareness events and initiatives?

I have supported the work of Love-a-Bull by co-sponsoring Council actions supporting Love-A-Bull events.

9. Austin is a No Kill City because it embraced new concepts that proved old rhetoric, sheltering ideology, and traditional excuses for killing wrong and outdated. Rather than relying on disproved excuses for killing, the City Council in March 2010 embraced the successful No Kill Implementation Plan, which aims to both increase live outcomes (through off-site adoptions, marketing, enhanced customer service, fostering, etc.) and decreasing shelter intake (through owner-surrender counseling, low-cost and free spay-neuter programs, etc.). Prior to March 2010, the City's animal-welfare policy focused almost exclusively on decreasing intake while largely ignoring the plight of the animals who were entering the shelter annually. Due to the more balanced approach in the 2010 plan, there have been dramatic reductions in shelter killing through significantly increasing "live outcomes" while maintaining the City's previous commitment to free and low-cost spay/neuter programs. Given the now proven success of the "No Kill" methodology compared to the high rates of killing resulting from the old model of animal sheltering, what vision do you have for the future of Austin's animal services?

I envision an ongoing community-based process for making continual progress in the way we carry out animal services. As long as Austin's animal community remains engaged, Austin's animals will be in good hands.

10. As you likely know, the No Kill Implementation Plan passed by the Council in March 2010 has had a dramatic, measurable, and positive effect in reducing the number of animals killed at Austin Animal Center. The shelter's save rate has been almost or over 90% for all impounded dogs and cats from December 2010 to March 2011. However, some persons in town who oppose No Kill programs want the City to instead pass a mandatory pet alteration law or an intentionally exorbitant tax on unaltered pets that, when implemented in other cities, has never proven effective and has on multiple occasions resulted in a dramatic increase in shelter intake and killing. We believe that the passage of such a law could turn back the clock on Austin's lifesaving movement, resulting in higher intake and significantly more killing with no benefit at all. Do you support the current No Kill direction embraced by the Council and No Kill advocates? Or, are you willing to place at risk all of the progress Austin has made in the last year by imposing a regressive, punitive, and disproven mandatory alteration law?

Given the progress we're making on No Kill, I don't see any reason to depart from the Implementation Plan at this point. Going forward, I expect that discussions about Spay and Neuter ordinance will continue, especially if we fall short of No Kill goals. I am open to considering a spay and neuter ordinance at some point; I know there are differing opinions on their efficacy, but I suspect one could be drafted to minimize the risks.