

Instructions

This document is a fill-in form. Tab through the document to type in your answers in the fields below. Don't worry about space, the text fields will expand if needed. When you're done, email the completed form to [REDACTED]. Thank you for your time.

Type Candidate Name Bill Spelman

1. **In October 2007, the City Council voted to relocate Austin's animal shelter to the eastern edge of the City, but only if the newest building at the current shelter were kept open as an adoption center. Shelter staff, who did not support the adoption center, have not developed a plan for the center or allocated any bond money to prepare the building, currently used for administration, to house animals.**

- A. **What steps, if any, will you take to ensure that shelter management fulfills Council's mandate for a downtown adoption center?**

The key to ensuring that Council directives are followed is to develop performance measures for shelter and departmental performance that are reported back to the Council at regular intervals, perhaps monthly or quarterly. City staff must be accountable for their decisions.

- B. **Will you commit to supporting a downtown adoption center that is open the same hours as the main shelter, and where adoptable animals can stay full-time until they are adopted?**

I am not clear if it is necessary for the adoption facility to be open the same hours as the main shelter to operate a successfully. It may be helpful for the adoption program to be open longer than the main shelter. Whichever hours work best for accessibility and convenience of the adopters would seem key. I would assume the adoption center would be able to keep the animals until they are adopted.

- C. **Would you support an expansion of the proposed adoption center to include more of the existing shelter buildings, such as the adoption dog kennels?**

If the shelter is to focus its attention on adoption, it will almost certainly need to expand the adoption center. My understanding is the current center has fewer kennels, but larger ones that hold more dogs. I need more information to determine the details of this situation.

2. **While there was a significant decline in the number of cats entering the shelter in 2008, the number of adoptions from Austin's pound has not seen a significant increase. The number of animals leaving through placement partner groups would have actually decreased last year if it were not for the work of a single new nonprofit group. Would you commit to demanding the**

implementation of proven programs that have increased positive outcomes at other shelters---such as off-site adoptions and a large-scale foster program? If so, would you be willing to direct budgetary expenditures towards those programs?

I support expanding off-site adoptions and foster programs. We can't afford large expansion at this time, but I would support small expansions for these programs.

3. Since 2000 when the current shelter director took over, Austin's pound has killed an average of 52.4 percent of impounded animals (about 12,000 animals each year). During the same period, the annual budget has increased from below \$3 million to nearly \$6 million. Other communities across the country have implemented common sense and innovative methods to reduce their shelter kill rate to under 10% of all impounded animals, often in just one or two years.

A. Would you commit to making “no kill”—defined as killing less than 10% of pets sheltered at the community’s open-admission shelter—the official policy of Austin and support any laws or policy changes necessary to achieve this goal?

I support "no kill" as the official policy of the City of Austin. Based on the experience of other cities, a 10% kill rate is achievable. Nevertheless, I cannot commit to "any laws or policy changes" until I know the specifics of the proposals.

B. Given the track record of shelter management, do you believe it's time for a new direction? If yes, would you consider hiring a consultant with demonstrated experience in achieving “no kill” to evaluate Austin’s shelter?

I think we need to set a clear policy direction and establish performance measures first, then give staff a chance to work with the community to see if they can meet them. If they can't, I will consider hiring a consultant with a proven track record who can help us figure out how to meet them.

C. Would you support the implementation of performance standards that tie management performance to salary increments or bonuses or continued employment? If not, please explain why not.

No, I can't do that. Some people are good at some things, others are good at other things. If someone can't do a particular job, we should find a job they can do.

4. Two audits by the State of Texas, plus multiple independent checks, have

revealed that on most days, Austin's shelter keeps more than 100 cages empty and unused while it continues killing healthy, non-aggressive animals.

- A. Would you require TLAC to explain this policy? Please explain why or why not.**

Accountability requires that the Council understand why City staff make the decisions they do. Of course it needs an explanation for what's going on here.

- B. Would you commit to supporting a moratorium on convenience killing at Austin's shelter---i.e., the killing of animals that are neither suffering nor aggressive while dozens of cages sit empty? Please explain why or why not.**

I require more information to determine why this may be occurring but on principle I do not believe it is ethical to kill animals for "convenience."

- 5. Shelter management has discretion to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars in annual donations to the shelter, yet public documents do not make clear how that money is spent. Would you support an audit of the City's animal-services budget—including all discretionary funds? If not, please explain why not.**

I believe it should be required for public entities and associated funds to report how expenditures are being spent.

- 6. No city in America has achieved "no kill" success by implementing a mandatory spay/neuter ordinance. Some cities, like Los Angeles, have even seen an increase in shelter killing after introducing mandatory spay/neuter. In addition, such ordinances require increased enforcement costs, money that could be used for life-saving programs that are correlated with reduced shelter killing. As a council member, would you support mandatory spay/neuter, or would you support additional funding to increase access to low cost or free spay/neuter services?**

With a lead-in like that, who could agree with a mandatory program? Seriously, we need to adopt that program that is most likely to lead to success at achieving our policy. If a mandatory program doesn't work anywhere else, it probably won't work here, either.

- 7. What, if anything, do you envision as the role of the Austin Animal Advisory Commission? What kind of person will you appoint to the commission?**

I'll look for a person who cares about the subject and knows a lot about it, understands the controversies, and can work with the public and city staff in getting the job done.

8. Have you ever rescued or adopted a pet? If you currently have pets, where did you get them?

I am allergic to dogs and cats and as a result have never tried to rescue or adopt a pet.

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