

## Austin No Kill Coalition 2012 City Council Candidate Questionnaire



Answers from Laura Pressley,  
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*1. In 2011, based on the work of Austin Animal Center, its placement partners, and the City Council's mandated No Kill Implementation Plan passed in March 2010, Austin's open-admission shelter saved 91% of all impounded dogs and cats, giving Austin the status as the largest "No Kill" city in the United States. Do you support (or continue to support) Austin's mandated No Kill Implementation Plan, and do you commit (or remain committed) to maintaining Austin's status as a 90% save-rate "No Kill" community? And, would you support increasing the save-rate target beyond 90%? Why or why not?*

I fully support the "No Kill" Implementation Plan and am really proud of our city for these nothing less than heroic efforts at saving our dogs and cats and finding appropriate homes for them. With regard to increasing above 90%, I would like to learn more about the 10% that we would need to save to increase above 90%. What are the reasons why we are not higher than 90% and how can we effectively address those issues?

*2. In 2007, the City Council voted to relocate Austin's animal shelter to a mostly industrial area off of East 7th Street near 183, against the advice of Austin No Kill organizations and the wishes of the overwhelming majority of Austinites. So far, it appears that the No Kill advocates' concerns were right: the new shelter has 60 fewer kennels for large dogs, early data indicate a drop-off in adoptions since the move, and at least two reports of gun shots near the shelter have caused shelter management to warn volunteers to stay in groups and avoid volunteering after dark. Given the harmful effects of the shelter relocation on resources, staff, and animals, what will you do to make sure Austin doesn't lose its "No Kill" status due to the shelter relocation?*

This is a common theme with the incumbents of the Austin City Council. They DO NOT listen to Austinites on this topic or on a myriad of topics. My main goal for running for Council is to represent citizens and vote and work for what they want. I really regret that the new shelter poses severe safety concerns for volunteers and for maintaining the effectiveness of the 90% "No Kill"

status. We must work with what we have and address all concerns one by one. I commit to helping with these issues.

*3. In the same 2007 vote to relocate Austin's animal shelter, the City Council also voted to keep open at least the Davenport Building at the current Town Lake Animal Center as a permanent downtown adoption center. That decision was reconfirmed in the 2010 No Kill Implementation Plan vote by the City Council, and again in subsequent votes. Yet the YMCA released plans this year to build a swimming pool project that would require demolishing Town Lake Animal Center, and the YMCA appears to have committed only to a very small adoption center near the current TLAC site. What is your position on the YMCA swimming pool proposal? Do you support demolishing Town Lake Animal Center? If so, do you commit to replacing it with an at-least 5,000 square feet adoption center (the approximate size of the Davenport Building) with cages and kennels for cats and dogs?*

I do commit to evaluating what options are available for potentially replacing the Davenport facility with a comparable building with similar infrastructure and support systems for cats and dogs.

*4. Austin Pets Alive has saved more than 12% of the city shelter's intake each of the last two years, which is approximately as many animals as all other partner shelters and rescue groups combined. Specifically, Austin Pets Alive saves the kittens less than 8 weeks old, the puppies with parvo, the small dogs, and the sick and injured dogs and cats who have been placed on the "at risk" list at Austin Animal Center (as well as about half of the large dogs needing additional behavior training who have been placed on the same list). To continue its present rate of lifesaving, Austin Pets Alive will need a building in Austin. Meanwhile, about 75% of the old Town Lake Animal Center site sits empty and unused. Do you support Austin Pets Alive's expanded use of part of the empty cages and kennels at Town Lake Animal Center for the foreseeable future?*

I think that the Austin Pets Alive organization does a phenomenal job at saving at risk and ill cats and dogs. They are miracle workers, for sure. I would like to learn more about the options that are available for them to occupy the old Town Lake Animal Center. It will most likely need serious renovations and I'm open to understanding what that would entail.

5. *The extremely successful No Kill Implementation Plan passed by City Council in March 2010 was originally drafted in a collaborative effort with city staff and the Austin Animal Advisory Commission. As you know, each Council Member selects one person to serve on the Commission. What qualities will you look for in selecting an appointee for the commission? And will you ensure that your appointee is committed to Austin's 90% save-rate goal? If you are currently on Council, do you stand by the votes and positions of your current appointee?*

As a Council Member, I would accept resumes of qualified individuals recommended by Austin Pets' Alive and the Austin Animal Center. My goal would be to appoint a member of the Commission that is committed to Austin's 90% No Kill policy. I need to do more research on what the current appointee, David Lundstedt, has done on the Commission and evaluate his votes and positions with regard to our policies and what our citizens want.

6. *More than 20 different dog breeds are banned in the overwhelming majority of Austin's apartment-housing market, making finding appropriate housing very difficult for owners of these dogs despite high levels of owner responsibility and great dog temperaments and training. In turn, the difficulty in finding housing negatively and significantly impacts adoptions of these breeds from the shelter and forces some owners to surrender their pets, making maintaining No Kill more challenging. Indeed, breed discrimination is even included in the neighborhood rules for the Mueller Development, which began as a public-private partnership between the City and the developer. Would you support an ordinance that would prohibit breed discrimination by apartment complexes, homeowners' associations and other housing authorities in Austin? Would you at least support a rule eliminating breed discrimination in developments paid for in part by public funding or otherwise assisted by the public, such as those receiving zoning changes or other variances?*

I am open to reviewing a proposal for an ordinance that prohibits breed discrimination and getting citizen feedback on that proposal.

7. *Pit bull type dogs, like other large dogs, are the highest at-risk population for "euthanasia" at the shelter. Love-A-Bull, mixed breed rescue groups, shelter staff, and the Animal Advisory Commission all recognize that there is a great need to address public misperception 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. Do 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?*

Absolutely. Before my husband and I got married, he adopted a Pit-Bull Great Dane that was to be euthanized and we are huge fans of Pit-Bulls. More education is needed and I fully support the City of Austin doing awareness

campaigns and engaging Love-A-Bull on how we can best do that.

*8. In 2011, Austin became the largest “No Kill” City in the United States due to the City shelter and placement partners’ implementation of proven programs and policies that had already successfully ended shelter killing in other communities such as Reno, NV, Charlottesville, VA, and Ithaca, NY, among dozens of others. Nonetheless, some activists in Austin are against these lifesaving programs and policies, and instead favor a regressive and punitive “mandatory spay-neuter” ordinance that would impose severe monetary penalties (or worse) on the small percentage of Austinites who either cannot afford to, have no access to, or have elected not to alter their pets. Given that such punitive laws have been proven in an extensive study by the ASPCA to have failed---in every community in which they have been implemented---to either reduce shelter intake or increase community spay/neuter rates, and in fact have increased killing, intake, and spending in multiple communities, are you willing to risk Austin’s success by enacting such a punitive law?*

I am not supportive of a mandatory ordinance for spaying and neutering pets. I think we can serve the community better by partnering with private, public, and neighborhood groups to work together and have yearly goals for spaying and neutering cats and dogs. I'd like to see a coordinated effort associated with a strategy, goals and metrics to increase spaying and neutering before entertaining the idea of an ordinance.