



FixAustin.org

Dear City Council Candidate,

As you are likely aware, FixAustin.org is Austin's only non-profit organization dedicated to ending the killing of Austin's lost and homeless pets through the use of proven, cost-effective policies that have ended shelter-killing in communities across the country. In less than two years, FixAustin.org has garnered the support of more than seven thousand Austinites, hundreds of donors, and roughly five hundred subscribers to our animal-welfare e-mail alerts.

To educate the community on the animal-welfare preferences and records of candidates for the upcoming City Council Election, we have put together and attached a short questionnaire for each candidate to answer. After reviewing the answers and animal-welfare records (where available) of each candidate, we will be distributing an Animal Welfare Report Card to our supporters, the Austin community, and the local press.

We understand your time is valuable and have therefore kept our questionnaire very brief. Please return the answers to Ryan Clinton at ryan@fixaustin.org by Wednesday, April 23rd. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Ryan at the above e-mail address or by phone at (512) 294-5003.

Thank you and warmest regards,

The FixAustin.org Team

[Attachment]

1. **In October 2007, the City Council voted to relocate Austin’s animal shelter from the shores of Town Lake to a mostly industrial area on the eastern edge of the City. Do you support the decision to relocate the shelter? And if the issue comes before the Council again, how will you vote?**

No, I do not support the decision. I think the Animal Center got a lot of foot traffic, which greatly affected its ability to find homes for pets in a positive way. However, the center does need to be improved and expanded. I would prefer this be done in the current location. I would vote to NOT move the shelter if it came up again. In addition, the shelter was moved to a location that asked for affordable housing. This shows that the city council does not do a very good job at bringing all stakeholders to the table early on to find out what is the best solution for everyone.

2. **When the Council voted to relocate the shelter, the Council purported to adopt a “compromise” that would keep part of the current shelter on Town Lake open as an adoption center. But the shelter’s management has expressed great confidence that an adoption center on Town Lake will not actually materialize once the shelter is moved.**

- A. **Assuming the shelter is relocated, what is your position on whether an adoption center should remain on Town Lake?**

I absolutely think that an adoption center should remain on Town Lake for the reasons mentioned in 1. The Town Lake shelter is a well known and visible location, and it is important to keep an adoption center there so people will not forget about it.

- B. **What steps, if any, will you take to stop shelter management from thwarting the Council’s decision to keep open an adoption center at the current site?**

Councilmember Leffingwell has mentioned previously that part of the plan to move the shelter to East Austin was dependent on the opening of an adoption center. Putting real monetary numbers at stake to make sure this occurs is one way to guarantee that the management does not decide to close the adoption center.

- C. **What do you envision the Town Lake adoption center to look like? Would it be open during all regular shelter hours? And what percentage of the animal-services budget do you believe should be allocated to the adoption center?**

I believe the Town Lake adoption center should be a major part of the shelter operations because of the benefits it adds to increased animal adoption. More traffic (foot and otherwise) go through that area than the future shelter location, so it has the potential to get more animals to homes. Because of this I certainly think that it should be open during regular shelter hours. I'm not completely sure what the budget for the animal shelter looks like, so I can't make a judgement on what percentage should go to the adoption center, but it should be enough to keep the center fully staffed with adequate facilities.

3. **Each successful “no kill” community in the United States— San Francisco, CA; Ithaca, NY; Reno, NV; Charlottesville, VA; Ivans County, UT; and Orange County, VA—has become “no kill” by implementing shelter expert Nathan Winograd’s No Kill Equation, which, unlike Austin’s “Mission Orange” plan, places focus on getting animals out of the shelter alive through increased adoptions. Would you commit to demanding the implementation of shelter practices that increase adoptions—like off-site adoptions and volunteer foster programs? If so, would you be willing to direct budgetary expenditures towards these programs?**

If Mr. Winograd's No Kill Equation has a better success rate than other solutions, then I think that it is an obvious choice that we should model our program after his. Using scientific data to make our determination on the best way to proceed with a "no kill" policy will provide us with the best chance for success.

4. **Since 2000, Austin’s pound has sheltered roughly the same number of animals (around 24,000) and killed roughly the same number of animals (around 12,000) each year. During the same period, the pound’s annual budget has nearly doubled to nearly \$5 million. Do you believe that killing roughly half of Austin’s lost and homeless pets—while other communities kill less than 10%—is evidence of effective government and strong shelter leadership? If not, what will you do to change the management of the pound?**

In my opinion that shows that we are not managing our shelter effectively. If we are increasing the amount of money the shelter receives, we should also be increasing the number of animals that are sheltered. Essentially we have to link performance incentives to the number animals that are being sheltered. We can do that by partnering with foster agencies, increasing education, working with local pet stores that do not sell cats and/or dogs, etc.

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

Yes

6. **The shelter management has discretion to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars in annual donations to the shelter, yet it is unclear—in public documents—where that money is spent. Would you support an audit of the City’s animal-services budget—including all discretionary funds? If not, why not?**

Yes, when people donate money to the shelter, they deserve to know how that money is spent. We should make that public knowledge so that we can build trust in the community that the shelter is spending money on the right things.

7. **No City in America has achieved “no kill” success—defined as killing less than 10% of pets sheltered at the community’s open-admission pound—by implementing a mandatory spay/neuter ordinance. In addition, such ordinances require increased enforcement costs, taking money away from life-saving programs that are correlated with reducing shelter killing. Would you vote for or against a mandatory spay/neuter ordinance for Austin? And why?**

I am not familiar with the exact number of cities that have implemented mandatory spay/neuter ordinances or those that have implemented "no kill" policies. I would make my decision based upon input from those members of the community who are involved in these areas, as well as scientific studies and commission input.

8. **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?**

The role is to propose policy concerning the animal shelter. I would appoint someone that has been an animal activist for a long time, and who can make informed decisions regarding how to run the animal shelter as well as other city policies concerning stray, homeless or abandoned animals.

9. **Do you have pets? If so, where did you get them?**

Yes, my roommate and I have a cat. She was a stray that my roommate took in.