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Animal Welfare Report Card
2008 Austin City Council Candidate Questionnaire
Cid Galindo

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?

My family adopted a three-year-old rat terrier mix a few months ago. While we ended up adopting from an acquaintance, we made several trips to the shelter during our search. The location of the shelter was never a factor, although I found it somewhat hard to find the first time. I think we have lost the focus on the welfare of the animals we are trying to help. I would vote to relocate the shelter if I were convinced that it would further our “no kill” objective.

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?

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?

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?

The location of the shelter/adoption center had no bearing on our process of adopting a pet. I would prefer to save the dollars that would be required to run two facilities and use those funds to promote “no kill” and spay/neuter incentive programs instead.

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?

I am committed to seeing reductions in our kill numbers, but like in every other city program, resources are limited and we have to work with what we have. I am not familiar with the budget numbers, but if we can save dollars by having only one facility, and that frees up resources for increasing adoptions through education and outreach efforts, strong volunteer recruitment and development, off-sites, and fostering programs, then that is what we ought to do.

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?

Obviously change is needed. Austin is a model community by so many other standards, we should be a model in this aspect as well, and management should be held accountable for better results.

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

Yes. Saving animal lives is easily measurable and productivity should be managed with performance standards, rewards, and accountability.

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, transparency is the key to better management and governance.

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 would not be in favor a mandatory spay/neuter ordinance because I think responsible pet owners should be able to breed their pets if they would like to. However, we should offer

incentives for pet owners who have no interest in breeding, to have their pets spayed/neutered.

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?

I will appoint people with a passion for animal welfare, that have experience with animal shelter programs, and have lots of common sense.

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

See question #1