

FIX AUSTIN: LEE LEFFINGWELL

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?

I supported the decision to move the shelter to the City Health Department campus, which allows for a larger facility to maintain more animals longer and will provide for a spay/neuter facility at that location. Bond money allocated for the new shelter was predicated on the assumption that the Levander site would be used – if it is not, the bond money allocated is not sufficient to expand, modernize, or reconstruct the facility at another location, including the present one.

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.

The Council resolution, which I sponsored, makes maintaining the adoption center on Lady Bird Lake a condition of moving the shelter.

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

I sponsored an amendment to maintain the adoption center on Lady Bird Lake, and so obviously support 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?

I won’t let it happen.

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 Lady Bird Lake center will be located in an existing on-site structure. Hours of operation are yet to be determined, and I would solicit your advice on this. The budget should be sufficient to provide first class operations and accommodate volunteer’s needs.

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?

Yes. As noted above, the City has already committed to an off-site adoption center on Lady Bird Lake when the current shelter is moved. Obviously, funds will have to be committed for operations.

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?

I agree with the premise of your question that the City's performance with regard to the euthanasia rate is simply unacceptable, and must be improved. I believe the new animal shelter will have a positive impact on this travesty.

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

I would be supportive, but in our form Council-Manager of government this kind of personnel decision would be within the purview of the City Manager.

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.

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?

Certainly, on a philosophical level, I would support mandatory spay/neuter – and would work to achieve that objective. With proper vetting of a resolution to this effect to ensure there are no legal problems, I would expect to vote “for”.

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?

My appointment to the Animal Advisory Commission is Babette Ellis, who has served on this commission for many years. I believe she is very committed to the cause of improving

the quality of life for animals in Austin, and has done a good job on the commission.

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

We have one cat, adopted as a stranger that came upon us. She is much loved and appreciated.