

Mayoral Race
Candidate Questionnaire Responses

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Responses from Lee Leffingwell

Better Austin Today - May 2009 Election

CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

ENVIRONMENT

1. Postponing the construction of the \$500 million “Water Treatment Plant #4” for at least three years

If elected to City Council, will you support the Sierra Club, National Wildlife Federation, Clean Water Action, Save Our Springs Alliance and others by voting to postpone construction of the \$500 million “Water Treatment Plant #4” for at least three years while the City focuses efforts on water conservation and reuse and comprehensive planning? This would include expenditures for site preparation.

Lee Leffingwell: I cannot commit to that at this time. While I am prepared to work collaboratively with the Sierra Club, NWF, Clean Water Action, SOS and others to further review the assumptions that have led the City to conclude that Water Treatment Plant 4 should come online as soon as feasible to meet our future water needs, based on the facts as I understand them now I cannot commit to postpone construction for three years.

2. Protecting East Austin from the dumping of trash and toxic waste

Many in the Austin community have championed environmental causes, yet the areas to the east have been and are continuing to be dumping grounds for trash and waste not only from Travis county but surrounding areas. If you are elected to the City Council, will you set as a priority ensuring a safe and healthy quality of life especially for those in East Austin by working with all citizens and city staff to learn about threats and to ensure better protection of all citizens.

Lee Leffingwell: Yes. Zip code should be a meaningless distinction when it comes to ensuring environmental protection and promoting quality of life.

3. Eliminating environmentally destructive and hazardous energy sources

What measures would you take to help the City of Austin phase out coal as an energy option? Are you willing to commit to not only no further ownership investment in the South Texas Nuclear Project but not enter into future power purchase contracts from the STNP?

Lee Leffingwell: I voted against expanding Austin's ownership in the South Texas Nuclear Project. I am opposed to increasing our dependency on coal as an energy source. I support the continued expansion of Austin Energy's renewable portfolio, and will vote in favor of purchasing additional wind and solar-generated power whenever realistic.

4. Protecting the Barton Creek Watershed

If you are elected to the City Council, will you vote to oppose upzonings (increase in density and environmental impacts) in the Barton Springs water shed? Will you also oppose debt financing of toll roads in the city's Drinking Water Protection Zone that would encourage sprawl in the Hill Country and Edwards Aquifer recharge zone?

Lee Leffingwell: Yes and yes. I believe that protecting the Edwards Aquifer is fundamental to our community's quality of life. With regard to zoning issues, there may be instances of disagreement over what constitutes environmental superiority.

GENERAL

1. Honoring maximum height limits established in the 1986 Waterfront Overlay District

The Waterfront Overlay Task Force appointed by the City Council has recommended that the maximum height limits that were in the 1986 Waterfront Overlay ordinance, omitted in the 1999 "plain English" re-write of the land development code, be reinstated. Will you, if you are elected to the City Council, support reinstating these height limits in the Waterfront Overlay District and oppose any project now in the pipeline that would violate the intent of the 1986 ordinance?

Lee Leffingwell: Yes, I strongly support the height limits contained in the 1986 ordinance, and accordingly oppose the Grayco PUD proposal at Lakeshore and Riverside. While there are important reasons to accommodate additional density and population in our urban core, the uniqueness of Lady Bird Lake and the intrinsic value of the river corridor to our whole community shouldn't be compromised only to accommodate density or benefit a few projects.

2. Ensuring community involvement in the Comprehensive Planning process:

The City is about to hire a consultant to help in the development of the new comprehensive plan. However, there has been almost no community involvement in establishing the process and extent of community input that the planning process will use. If elected to the City Council, would you support establishing a community advisory committee, much as was used in developing the 1979 Comprehensive Plan, that includes a full range of community interests including neighborhood, environmental, local and small business, and social equity advocates?

Lee Leffingwell: Yes, and I am already taking steps in this direction in cooperation with Council Members Morrison and Shade. I believe we are currently on course to have consultant-driven process; instead, we need a citizen-driven process.

3. Alleviating the increasing economic burden of middle and low income community residents:

The cost of living continues to climb in our community and Austin is no longer seen as an affordable city for most people in the middle and lower income brackets. Property Taxes are a major factor in the escalating financial burden. While we are facing a financially difficult time, we need to address this problem now and therefore would you be willing to sponsor and actively support a homestead exemption for the City of Austin's portion of our property tax? If not what do you propose to do to reduce the growing economic burden on the middle and lower income residents of our community?

Lee Leffingwell: Yes, I support a homestead exemption for City of Austin taxpayers.

OPEN GOVERNMENT

1. Community participation in budget planning:

If you are elected to the City Council, will you support opening up the City budget process to allow for more community input into establishing budget priorities and support the ability of the City Council to set budget priorities and move funding between the various departments and programs to reflect the community's priorities?

Lee Leffingwell: Yes, and my platform includes several proposals directed at accomplishing this specific objective.

2. Establishing clear lines of authority and accountability of COA staff and elected and appointed officials

It is the experience of many Austin stakeholders that COA staff, across all departments, too often make changes to ordinances, regulations, and procedures at administrative decision levels, thus circumventing due legal process and public oversight of those changes. Do you agree with this statement, and if elected to the City Council, will you make it a priority to establish clear and transparent roles for elected/appointed officials and especially COA staff, and work to eliminate the de facto policy-making habits of COA staff?

Lee Leffingwell: I am aware of specific incidents that speak to this concern, but the statement above is too broad for me to agree with – I don't agree that staff across all COA departments is guilty of circumventing the law. Yes, if elected, I will work to help address this problem where it exists.

3. Involvement of Boards and Commissions with City Council decision-making:

The increase use of City Council sub-committees is viewed by many as an attempt to bypass the expertise of Board and Commission members. If elected to the City Council, will you make a commitment to reduce the number of Council subcommittees that duplicate Boards and Commissions, respond to the recommendations in the Austin Chronicle article that addresses Boards and Commissions efficiency, and re-integrate City Boards and Commissions in the decision-making process?

Lee Leffingwell: If elected, I will support further review and reform of the Board and Commission system to ensure maximum efficiency and more citizen input. I don't view City Council subcommittees as a device to subvert the expertise or input of Board and Commission members, but I am open to receiving more perspective from citizens and Board and Commission members about this.

NEIGHBORHOOD

1. Honoring valid petitions:

Valid petitions are one of the most important means that neighborhoods have to prevent inappropriate and intrusive zoning changes. Would you support a neighborhood's valid petition on a zoning case in all cases (with the possible exception of where public safety is concerned)?

Lee Leffingwell: I cannot commit to support valid petitions in all cases. However, I deeply value the valid petition as a critical expression of neighborhood will, and I can and will commit not to vote against a valid petition without a clear, compelling cause, including public safety.

2. Honoring zoning established in neighborhood plans:

Neighborhood Planning was supposed to help alleviate conflicts between neighborhoods and developers by defining what was and was not acceptable development in the neighborhood, and as such was a balanced compromise between competing interests. However, too often after a Neighborhood Plan is adopted by City Council, and almost before the ink is dry, there are requests to approve zoning changes that are in conflict with the adopted plans. And often these requests are looked at by staff and the boards and commissions in isolation and not in the context of the overall compromises already reached during the planning process. As a City Council member, would you pledge to oppose any change of zoning that is conflict with an adopted plan unless it is supported by the plan implementation or contact team?

Lee Leffingwell: I cannot commit to oppose any zoning change that is in conflict with an adopted plan, but I can and will commit to confer in every case with the plan implementation or contact team.

3. Establishing growth capacity in the Comprehensive Planning process:

The City is embarking on developing a new Comprehensive Plan. Do you believe we should examine the issue of what is the capacity of our current public infrastructure and available resources, in particularly water resources, with regard to how we manage future growth of our city?

Lee Leffingwell: Yes, absolutely.

LOCALLY OWNED BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC HEALTH

1. Keeping our hard earned dollars from exiting the community by stimulating local business opportunities.

Billions of dollars leave the Austin economy each year to buy goods and services that could eventually be produced locally. If elected to the City Council, will you authorize a comprehensive study to detail these opportunities to grow our local businesses?

Lee Leffingwell: Yes, I would like to see these issues considered as part of our Comprehensive Plan process. Locally-owned small businesses drive our economy, and we should be doing everything we can to help them succeed.

2. Committing to locally owned financial institutions for City of Austin banking relationships

The City of Austin's depository agreement (banking relationship), which includes deposits held, is with Bank of America. If elected to the City Council, will you direct the city manager to favor locally owned financial institutions like credit unions, small thrifts, and small commercial banks?

Lee Leffingwell: Without more information I cannot commit to directing the City Manager to change the City's financial institution, but I will commit to seek more information and make a judgment about this idea.

3. Directing the City of Austin Economic Growth and Redevelopment Services Office to focus on local businesses.

If elected to the City Council, will you direct the City Manager to instruct the Economic Growth and Redevelopment Services Office to concentrate its Business Retention and Expansion program to concentrate its efforts on locally owned businesses which, dollar for dollar, provide far greater economic and cultural impact for the city?

Lee Leffingwell: I believe the City's economic development strategy should be focused primarily on locally-owned businesses, but I don't believe we should discontinue our efforts to attract targeted, desirable new employers to Austin.

SOCIAL EQUITY

1. Ensuring that APD prioritizes and focuses on felony crimes over low-level misdemeanors.

The Austin Police Department spends significant resources on arrests and booking of misdemeanor crimes that could be dealt with through a citation process thus saving funds that either could be reallocated to more serious felony crimes or could result in having these funds available for other city priorities. If elected would you support a City Council resolution directing the City Manager and Chief of Police to vigorously implement the citation process for misdemeanor crimes and redirect those freed up funds to other city priorities?

Lee Leffingwell: Yes.

2. Supporting equal distribution of locally undesirable land uses (LULUS) versus encouraging concentration of such uses in “cheap dirt” areas with already deteriorating “quality of life.”

Often undesirable land uses, such as land fills, maintenance and industrial facilities are located in areas with lower land costs and these areas tend to be in lower income or in predominately minority neighborhoods, especially East Austin. If elected to the City Council will you support calling for the City Manager to direct City Staff to review the location of existing LULU's within our whole community and develop future LULU placement criteria that prioritizes the impact on the adjacent community instead of the relying solely on the cost of land to determine appropriate locations for LULU's?

Lee Leffingwell: Yes, however I believe environmental considerations must also be part of the criteria by which LULU decisions are made.

3. Maintaining city services to low and moderate income Austin citizens during economic downturns and proposed across the board city budget cuts.

In anticipation of a \$25 million shortfall during the fiscal year (2008-09 budget), if elected to the City Council, would you assure that any proposals you consider and support for budget cuts would not result in the elimination or reduction in funding for the most needy, underserved and poor in our community?

Lee Leffingwell: Yes, this is critical part of my platform. I've already publicly committed to maintaining current funding levels for all social services. We can't afford to balance our budget at the expense of those in our community who most need our help to get through these tough times.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to answering any of these or other questions in more detail at your upcoming candidate screening. For more information about me, my record, and my platform, please visit our website at AustinLeadership.com, or email me at Info@AustinLeadership.com. I appreciate your commitment to making Austin a better place.

Responses from Josiah Ingalls

Better Austin Today questionnaire

ENVIRONMENT

1. Postponing the construction of the \$500 million “Water Treatment Plant #4” for at least three years

Yes, I would postpone the construction of Water Treatment Plant #4 due to the current economy, also to ensure that we know the full possible environmental effects of the proposed plant.

2. Protecting East Austin from the dumping of trash and toxic waste

Yes.

3. Eliminating environmentally destructive and hazardous energy sources

In order to decrease Austin’s dependence on coal I would strive to promote incentives that would encourage homeowners and businesses to invest in solar and wind technology. Yes, I am willing to commit to not only no further ownership investment in the South Texas Nuclear Project and to not enter into future power purchase contracts from the STNP. I also feel that the City should sell its part of the nuclear power plant to show that we do not support nuclear power.

4. Protecting the Barton Creek Watershed

Yes, I will vote to oppose upzonings in the Barton Springs water shed. I will also oppose debt financing of toll roads in the city’s Drinking Water Protection Zone as I feel that there should be no development over Edwards Aquifer recharge zone in order to protect the Aquifer.

GENERAL

1. Honoring maximum height limits established in the 1986 Waterfront Overlay District

I would honor the height limits established in the 1986 Waterfront Overlay District because I believe that our society needs to set limits and standards in order to ensure the good of the people.

2. Ensuring community involvement in the Comprehensive Planning process

Yes I would support establishing a community advisory committee.

3. Alleviating the increasing economic burden of middle and low income community residents:

Yes, I would be willing to sponsor and promote a homestead exemption.

OPEN GOVERNMENT

1. Community participation in budget planning

Not only would I support community participation in budget planning but I would insist on it.

2. Establishing clear lines of authority and accountability of COA staff and elected and appointed officials

Not only would I support establishing clear lines of authority and accountability of COA staff and elected and appointed officials, but I would make it a priority because it helps to do away with corruption.

3. Involvement of Boards and Commissions with City Council decision-making

Yes I would.

NEIGHBORHOOD

1. Honoring valid petitions

Yes, I would honor valid petitions. I feel it is important that the citizens have as many tools as possible to help protect the best interest of the people.

2. Honoring zoning established in neighborhood plans

Yes, I would pledge to oppose any change of zoning that is in conflict with an adopted plan unless it is supported by the plan implementation or contact team.

3. Establishing growth capacity in the Comprehensive Planning process

I feel that these issues should be critical deciding factors with the decisions made for the development of Austin.

LOCALLY OWNED BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC HEALTH

1. Keeping our hard earned dollars from exiting the community by stimulating local business opportunities

Yes, I would authorize a comprehensive study to detail these opportunities to grow our local businesses because I feel that it is important that we do not outsource our economy.

2. Committing to locally owned financial institutions for City of Austin banking relationships

I would direct the city manager to favor locally owned financial institutions because I feel that the locally owned financial institutions are least likely to go under because they are not national and international stock based companies.

3. Directing the City of Austin Economic Growth and Redevelopment Services Office to focus on local businesses

Yes.

SOCIAL EQUITY

1. Ensuring that APD prioritizes and focuses on felony crimes over low-level misdemeanors

Yes I would support a City Council resolution directing the City Manager and Chief of Police to vigorously implement the citation process for misdemeanor crimes and redirect those freed up funds to other city priorities. This would also help the Police department

to work as efficiently as possible considering that they are already understaffed and under-funded.

2. Supporting equal distribution of locally undesirable land uses (LULUS) versus encouraging concentration of such uses in “cheap dirt” areas with already deteriorating “quality of life.”

Yes, I would support calling for the City Manager to direct City Staff to review the location of existing LULU's within our whole community and develop future LULU placement criteria that prioritizes the impact on the adjacent community instead of the relying solely on the cost of land to determine appropriate locations for LULU's.

3. Maintaining city services to low and moderate income Austin citizens during economic downturns and proposed across the board city budget cuts.

Yes, I would assure that any proposals I consider and support for budget cuts would not result in the elimination or reduction in funding for the most needy, underserved and poor in our community.

Responses from Jason Morales

Better Austin Today - May 2009 Election

CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

ENVIRONMENT

5. Postponing the construction of the \$500 million “Water Treatment Plant #4” for at least three years

If elected to City Council, will you support the Sierra Club, National Wildlife Federation, Clean Water Action, Save Our Springs Alliance and others by voting to postpone construction of the \$500 million “Water Treatment Plant #4” for at least three years while the City focuses efforts on water conservation and reuse and comprehensive planning? This would include expenditures for site preparation.

If you fail to plan, what you are really doing is planning to fail. I firmly believe a new comprehensive plan is needed in Austin. This new comprehensive plan should be a vision of what our community hopes to be in the future. The process of developing this plan should be a community-wide effort. In any major endeavor a successful leader understands the importance of first creating a vision (comprehensive plan) then planning the steps needed to achieve that vision. With out a clear vision one might as well close their eyes while trying to drive toward their desired destination. The construction of the 500 million dollar water treatment is major step but a major step in what direction? I strongly feel that the water treatment construction project implements older water treatment technologies anyway. Newer technologies exist that are extremely efficient and can transform wastewater into drinking water that is purer than our current city water. In any regard I strongly support postponing the Water Treatment construction project until a new comprehensive plan is created and approved by our citizens. We need to stop spending money on old technology and take steps to better Austin both today and in the future.

6. Protecting East Austin from the dumping of trash and toxic waste

Many in the Austin community have championed environmental causes, yet the areas to the east have been and are continuing to be dumping grounds for trash and waste not only from Travis county but surrounding areas. If you are elected to the City Council, will you set as a priority ensuring a safe and healthy quality of life especially for those in East Austin by working with all citizens and city staff to learn about threats and to ensure better protection of all citizens.

Yes, it is unfortunate to see how we as a city are addressing the issue of waste especially in areas such as East Austin. This city needs to redirect its focus and show more interest in bettering areas that truly need it. No longer can the problems of East Austin, and similar areas go on neglected and avoided. Waste dumping and associated problems can be combated and eradicated. Technology exists that can make waste storage a distant memory for Austin. Implementing this technology will eventually pay for itself, strengthen our economy, and immediately support the prosperity and quality of life of our citizens. By revolutionizing our approach to waste management and making it more accessible to all, especially those in areas such as East Austin, we can recreate a clean, efficient and sanitary city. If elected, I plan to revamp our approach to waste management in ALL areas of Austin. If this city intends to grow responsibly, then it must grow as one

7. Eliminating environmentally destructive and hazardous energy sources

What measures would you take to help the City of Austin phase out coal as an energy option? Are you willing to commit to not only no further ownership investment in the South Texas Nuclear Project but not enter into future power purchase contracts from the STNP?

Let me begin by spelling out how I feel on this matter. Coal is a dangerous energy source; oil is a dangerous energy source; uranium is a dangerous energy source. When I think of these energy sources and what they mean for Austin I get scared. Scared that the necessary changes will not be made. This city and this country need to phase out coal, oil, and uranium because they all have extremely detrimental and long-term effects on our air, water, and land. As a city leader, I will acknowledge that these environmental concerns directly affect our quality of life and will do all in my power to counter them.

Specifically, I plan to encourage, initiate and support clean energy options for the city of Austin. The technology exists to run Austin on completely clean energy and all it

needs is to be implemented. Austin is the prime place for this mass implementation of solely green energy sources. We have an environmentally conscious population, a stable ecosystem, and a need for change. No other major US cities have made this shift because they fear being the first to do so. We cannot wait for another city to make the necessary changes so that we have a plan to imitate. We need to act by analyzing the new energy options that are out there, initiate them in an efficient, effective and timely manner, and we need to commit to our decision towards green energy

STNP is not a solution. Let me repeat STNP is not a solution. Nuclear energy in general is not a solution; it is a hedge to a problem. Rather than shifting to clean energy, this city's leaders want to solve one problem by creating another. If we truly want to tackle the current energy problems then we must be creative. New technology in the field of energy is everywhere, we as a city must have the courage to use it. Clean energy will not happen on its own and why should Austin not be the first to make these necessary, but difficult changes. Also, I want to stress that I will conduct this process so it feeds our economy and not those who live outside our city limits.

I refuse to cower at the challenge of making Austin a completely clean energy city. It is a tremendously difficult task, but definitely a doable one.

8. Protecting the Barton Creek Watershed

If you are elected to the City Council, will you vote to oppose upzonings (increase in density and environmental impacts) in the Barton Springs watershed? Will you also oppose debt financing of toll roads in the city's Drinking Water Protection Zone that would encourage sprawl in the Hill Country and Edwards Aquifer recharge zone?

Yes, I will oppose upzoning. The current leaders of this city are concerned with growth, urbanization and tax revenue. Environmental concerns need to become more of a priority. If we are to truly better Austin, then we need to better the ground we stand on, the water we drink and the air we breathe. Upzonings increase environmental threats and encourage debt financing while providing little to the community. As for dept financing, that's an old idea to an old problem. I am and will always be opposed to debt spending. When elected I will maintain an environmental

approach to all zoning and I will bring new solutions to raising needed capital for city projects.

GENERAL

4. Honoring maximum height limits established in the 1986 Waterfront Overlay District

The Waterfront Overlay Task Force appointed by the City Council has recommended that the maximum height limits that were in the 1986 Waterfront Overlay ordinance, omitted in the 1999 “plain English” re-write of the land development code, be reinstated. Will you, if you are elected to the City Council, support reinstating these height limits in the Waterfront Overlay District and oppose any project now in the pipeline that would violate the intent of the 1986 ordinance?

Preservation of the Town Lake Corridor and the reinstatement of the height limits associated with the 1986 Waterfront Overlay ordinance seem obvious to me. I support the preservation and honoring of the 1986 ordinance for many reasons. The major reason for my support is that we need to preserve this city as much as possible while still promoting eco-friendly urbanization. It is far too easy for a city to grow and in the process lose its identity. I know very well that the people here do not want to lose Austin and have it become another skyscraper filled metropolis. The waterfront height limits and the “mistake on the lake” are prime example of our leaders blurred view of what Austin should become in the future. We need to refocus and redirect the growth of Austin to ensure that it remains, well, Austin.

5. Ensuring community involvement in the Comprehensive Planning process:

The City is about to hire a consultant to help in the development of the new comprehensive plan. However, there has been almost no community involvement in establishing the process and extent of community input that the planning process will use. If elected to the City Council, would you support establishing a community advisory committee, much as was used in developing the 1979 Comprehensive Plan, that includes a full range of community interests including neighborhood, environmental, local and small business, and social equity advocates?

City leadership is a position one must take with a complete understanding of the work and time needed to properly hear all voices and ensure that only the very best

solutions are used to address city issues. Unfortunately, it is impossible for the seven individuals whom hold council seats to hear every voice while performing other duties. A community advisory committee is not only necessary but it is deserved. The people of Austin deserve more say and more influence within their government. Currently, many city projects and policies are enacted without the average citizen knowing about it. Yes they have access to all of this information, but it is not presented in a citizen-friendly manner. I don't know too many Austinites who can take off work to attend 10am council meetings, flip through the 400+ page budget, or browse the illogical city website. The people would better from a community action committee that voices their opinions, promotes their concerns, empowers their influence, relays the facts and encourages their involvement all while remaining politically neutral and objective.

I know the people of this city well, and if given the chance, many of them will jump at and opportunity to be heard by an advisory committee.

6. Alleviating the increasing economic burden of middle and low income community residents:

The cost of living continues to climb in our community and Austin is no longer seen as an affordable city for most people in the middle and lower income brackets. Property Taxes are a major factor in the escalating financial burden. While we are facing a financially difficult time, we need to address this problem now and therefore would you be willing to sponsor and actively support a homestead exemption for the City of Austin's portion of our property tax? If not what do you propose to do to reduce the growing economic burden on the middle and lower income residents of our community?

Affordability is a MAJOR concern of mine and it is one of the reasons I have decided to run for office. When elected mayor, I will move to immediately cut property taxes. The current property tax system has become extremely unfair and places far too much burden on property owners. I don't know anyone whose salary regularly increases every year, but almost everyone I know has property taxes that do. This city has the attitude it can place the burden of new projects on the backs of property owners. This must change!

Cutting property taxes will not only fuel the economy it will relieve the coming foreclosure problem. I can cut taxes and still maintain all of our important government and social programs. I can do this because after looking at how our city administration spends our tax dollars I noticed reckless spending, fiscal policy, and poor project management. When elected I will go over the budget word for word eliminating thus programs that know longer serve us and re-invent those that do to make them much more efficient. When elected mayor I will put in place a work ethic, policy, and government that ensures the citizens of Austin get more of every tax dollar collected. It is time for our government to use alternative route to paying the bills, rather than relying on the old standby of increasing property taxes

I am also a strong advocate of local business. As a successful businessman that retired very early, I know how to help our businesses grow and bring in outside revenue into Austin. I will lead and support our business leaders in a way they have ever experienced. I plan to, at the very least, double their revenue with in 2 ½ years, which in turn doubles the city's sales tax revenue. By increasing our business productivity, I increase the cities prosperity. When I am elected mayor of Austin, I will encourage all responsible policies that work towards a budget surplus. The private sector has proven me capable of correcting this city's financial problems. By the time I leave office, Austin will enjoy a budget surplus, which will be set-aside for a rainy day. A surplus, like a savings account, is just good business sense.

OPEN GOVERNMENT

4. Community participation in budget planning:

If you are elected to the City Council, will you support opening up the City budget process to allow for more community input into establishing budget priorities and support the ability of the City Council to set budget priorities and move funding between the various departments and programs to reflect the community's priorities?

I do and always will advocate direct citizens involvement in all forms of government. Our city belongs to all of us. All information on all issues will be made public record for those that live in Austin and beyond. Anything that I know, the people will know. Any voice that steps up to be heard, will be heard

5. Establishing clear lines of authority and accountability of COA staff and elected and appointed officials

It is the experience of many Austin stakeholders that COA staff, across all departments, too often make changes to ordinances, regulations, and procedures at administrative decision levels, thus circumventing due legal process and public oversight of those changes. Do you agree with this statement, and if elected to the City Council, will you make it a priority to establish clear and transparent roles for elected/appointed officials and especially COA staff, and work to eliminate the de facto policy-making habits of COA staff?

In recent years, I have learned that our administration heavily relies on the actions and decisions of their staff. I believe the city staff reflects the city leadership. As mentioned earlier I plan to invest more time bettering Austin than those who have held the mayors seat in the past. Again, I will go over the city budget word for word and I will also go over all city department's staff, structure, and policy. If there is any problem, then it will be address immediately. Departmental overhaul and budget analysis will be one of the two things I address first in my administration. Within 75 days of my start in office, Austin can expect a revamped department, policy, and budget plan that truly looks out for the greater good of our Austinites.

- 6. Involvement of Boards and Commissions with City Council decision-making: The increase use of City Council sub-committees is viewed by many as an attempt to bypass the expertise of Board and Commission members. If elected to the City Council, will you make a commitment to reduce the number of Council subcommittees that duplicate Boards and Commissions, respond to the recommendations in the Austin Chronicle article that addresses Boards and Commissions efficiency, and re-integrate City Boards and Commissions in the decision-making process?**

It is no secret that this city's government needs to revamp its decision making process. This includes its approach to sub-committees, board members and commission members. We need to change the system to ensure that it is efficient and effective. No longer can city resources and energy be used inappropriately and inefficiently.

NEIGHBORHOOD

4. Honoring valid petitions:

Valid petitions are one of the most important means that neighborhoods have to prevent inappropriate and intrusive zoning changes. Would you support a neighborhood's valid petition on a zoning case in all cases (with the possible exception of where public safety is concerned)?

In general, yes I support petitions in terms of zoning, but do not believe in an "all cases" scenario. Having personally been affected by a zoning change in the past (A small strip mall was built in the middle of my scenic view) I understand the concern neighborhoods have in terms of zoning changes. Too easily can a simple zoning change remake the face of a neighborhood. While I remain sensitive to the problems that can come with similar zoning changes, I do not 100% discourage them.

5. Honoring zoning established in neighborhood plans:

Neighborhood Planning was supposed to help alleviate conflicts between neighborhoods and developers by defining what was and was not acceptable development in the neighborhood, and as such was a balanced compromise between competing interests. However, too often after a Neighborhood Plan is adopted by City Council, and almost before the ink is dry, there are requests to approve zoning changes that are in conflict with the adopted plans. And often these requests are looked at by staff and the boards and commissions in isolation and not in the context of the overall compromises already reached during the planning process. As a City Council member, would you pledge to oppose any change of zoning that is conflict with an adopted plan unless it is supported by the plan implementation or contact team?

Protecting Austin neighborhoods and residential areas is crucial. Too many strip malls, commercial buildings and offices like the idea of being nestled in a quiet neighborhood. Unfortunately, I am not alone in noticing a trend in which our government sides with the highly taxable development that comes with these buildings. If the contact team for a neighborhood plan disagrees with a zoning change and offers valid arguments against a zoning change, then I pledge support them. The time of Austin's government siding with developers over citizens will end once I hold the mayors seat.

Also, on a side note, I advocate a "cluster" building approach to Austin's residential areas. This approach encourages neighborhood remain intact and free from commercial development while providing small commercial zones nearby the residential areas.

6. Establishing growth capacity in the Comprehensive Planning process:

The City is embarking on developing a new Comprehensive Plan. Do you believe we should examine the issue of what is the capacity of our current public infrastructure and available resources, in particularly water resources, with regard to how we manage future growth of our city?

I will do more than favor the transfer of city deposits into responsible locally owned institutions because I will advocate it to no end until it is done.

Let me take a moment to briefly make a bold statement. I will always promote, support, and see to it that our local businesses are favored over outside corporate interest. I will never waver from that principle. If there is a strong demand for a good and/or service that we do not already manufacture, then I will see to it that such opportunity is harnessed locally. Budget deficits and allowing revenue to leave our city limits is bad business and makes no economic sense, period. We should only allow such policy if the demand for such goods and/or services is low and not advantageous to production here in our city, which is rarely the case.

LOCALLY OWNED BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC HEALTH

4. Keeping our hard earned dollars from exiting the community by stimulating local business opportunities.

Billions of dollars leave the Austin economy each year to buy goods and services that could eventually be produced locally. If elected to the City Council, will you authorize a comprehensive study to detail these opportunities to grow our local businesses?

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In life one is better judged by his or her actions than by his or her words. Two of my competitors, Brewster McCracken and Lee Leffingwell, currently have helped pass public policy that has encouraged projects and policies that have been a direct cause of our hard earned dollars leaving our city limits. In the harder times that are to come we cannot afford more of the same.

I strongly believe in the power of entrepreneurship and that it part of the solution to the current economic crisis. Personal experience as an entrepreneur has proven effective in crisis situations and I feel strongly that by strengthening local business we can strengthen the economy. On January 29, 2009, I was quoted in an interview "We need to harness the power of entrepreneurship and innovation to develop our economy and improve human interests".

One way of achieving this is by opening the eyes of the youth. By conveying the possibilities that come with entrepreneurship, promoting entrepreneurship education, creating business-friendly policies, and finding alternative pathways for the commercialization of new knowledge and technologies we can empower the youth of Austin. My goal is to make entrepreneurship as esteemed as it once was in this country. We must encourage our young people to want to be business owners over corporate employees. I will also work with local educators to prepare our students to be innovators, entrepreneurs and respected workers. In this 21st century economy, we need to implement various initiatives in order to encourage excellence in math, engineering, science and technology.

5. Committing to locally owned financial institutions for City of Austin banking relationships

The City of Austin's depository agreement (banking relationship), which includes deposits held, is with Bank of America. If elected to the City Council, will you direct the city manager to favor locally owned financial institutions like credit unions, small thrifts, and small commercial banks?

I will do more than favor the transfer of city deposits into responsible locally owned institutions because I will advocate it to no end until it is done.

Let me take a moment to briefly make a bold statement. I will always promote, support, and see to it that our local businesses are favored over outside corporate interest. I will never waver from that principle. If there is a strong demand for a good

and/or service that we do not already manufacture then I will see to it that such opportunity is locally harnessed. Budget deficits and allowing revenue to leave our city limits is bad business and makes no economic sense, period. We should only allow such policy if the demand for such goods and/or services is low and not advantageous to production here in our city, which is rarely the case.

6. Directing the City of Austin Economic Growth and Redevelopment Services Office to focus on local businesses.

Efficiently investing in local business growth and development is neither expensive nor bad policy. Supporting local business directly supports local circulation of currency thus strengthening our local economy. Supporting locally owned businesses has another benefit. This benefit is that by supporting local business we directly create an environment where each of us can pursue our individual economic interest. Encouraging local business growth is thus promoting quality of life. Our current small business growth and expansion policy is a terrible disappointment and a sad attempt at best, at supporting our local businesses. When elected I will reinvent the Economic Growth and Redevelopment Services Offices. This office will provide concrete advice, solutions, and support to local entrepreneurs and business owners. This office will be well staffed with actual business achievers, provide broad and technical assistance to businesses, perform local business retention visits and surveys, and provide appropriate financial support for those well thought out, citizen based, business endeavors that provide a strong case for support. These are just some of the changes I will make to the department.

SOCIAL EQUITY

4. Ensuring that APD prioritizes and focuses on felony crimes over low-level misdemeanors.

The Austin Police Department spends significant resources on arrests and booking of misdemeanor crimes that could be dealt with through a citation process thus saving funds that either could be reallocated to more serious felony crimes or could result in having these funds available for other city priorities. If elected would you support a City Council resolution directing the City Manager and Chief of Police to vigorously implement the citation process for misdemeanor crimes and redirect those freed up funds to other city priorities?

In general I feel that while a “cite an release” program does free up funds for use in more violent and criminal acts, I feel that it could also lead to a more lackadaisical attitude towards certain misdemeanors that would only warrant a citation. Spending time in jail sends a much harsher message to offenders and encourages remorse. This “slap on the wrist” policy does not promote betterment or improvement within our community. That pretty much sums up how I feel on the matter, but I still remain conflicted on the details if elected would need to delve further into the issue. And no matter what I find out about this issue I feel that to better Austin, we need not only focus on the large pressing matters, but the small and minor ones as well.

5. Supporting equal distribution of locally undesirable land uses (LULUS) versus encouraging concentration of such uses in “cheap dirt” areas with already deteriorating “quality of life.”

Often undesirable land uses, such as landfills, maintenance and industrial facilities are located in areas with lower land costs and these areas tend to be in lower income or in predominately minority neighborhoods, especially East Austin. If elected to the City Council will you support calling for the City Manager to direct City Staff to review the location of existing LULU's within our whole community and develop future LULU placement criteria that prioritizes the impact on the adjacent community instead of the relying solely on the cost of land to determine appropriate locations for LULU's?

This problem extends beyond LULUS. Our city's current spending practices encourage the “nice” areas to flourish and the “poor” areas to flounder. We need to reevaluate this approach and change the way we look at certain areas of Austin. Again, if we plan to grow as a city, then we must grow as one.

Also, I will tackle this problem from a different angle by implementing new strategies and technologies that eliminate the need for most LULUS thus doing away from this issues all together.

6. Maintaining city services to low and moderate income Austin citizens during economic downturns and proposed across the board city budget cuts.

In anticipation of a \$25 million shortfall during the fiscal year (2008-09 budget), if elected to the City Council, would you assure that any proposals you consider and support for budget cuts would not result in the elimination or reduction in funding for the most needy, underserved and poor in our community?

With proper economic and social leadership budget shortcomings will not be an issue. As Austin currently stands its government and leaders do not exercise proper budgeting. Reckless spending habits have led this city to a point where budget cuts must be Austin's governmental priorities are

As a business owner if I had budgeted as our current government leaders have then I would not be retired, I would be in financial ruin.

Hard working individuals and families will be able to afford a good standard of living. Responsible leadership addresses these issues with social and economic solutions that go beyond just handing out money.