

Place 6 Race
Candidate Questionnaire Responses

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Response by Sheryl Cole

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.

I have been amazed at the resourcefulness of Austin residents and the commitment the community has shown to water conservation. Our Austin Water Utility customers have been able to conserve millions of gallons of water in this past year and I want to encourage the City to take on even more stringent conservation efforts. However, the AWU and the City must plan for the future of Austin and our water needs as water becomes more precious. This means I must continue to plan for Water Treatment Plan #4 as I recognize delay will mean an even greater cost of construction or the potential to not have enough water to meet the needs of all our citizens.

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.

In office, I have stated my opposition to a new landfill in eastern Travis County and would continue to ensure the health and quality of life of our residents throughout the

City. I also want to further educate our residents as what they can do to keep the City from having to buy more landfill capacity including recycling and participating in a zero-waste plan.

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?

First of all, I am very committed to our generation goals for the future, which call for a diversified generation mix including solar, biomass, waste to energy, and more wind power. While in office, I have supported biomass and the solar field in Webberville to help us meet these goals and I cannot support efforts to postpone our investment in carbon neutral generation. I also hope to encourage more energy conservation from our citizens and during my first term brought H-E-B as a partner in our CFL rebate program through Austin Energy. We have sold thousands of CFL bulbs now that shows how small things can mean savings for customers and less demand on our energy grid. I am committed to continue to pursue conservation measures, more solar, wind, and biomass generation and hope to diminish the need to pursue more nuclear power. So far, I have been able to support no further investment in the STNP and hope that we are not required to consider the purchase of more nuclear power to meet our energy needs.

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?

In my decisions on the Oak Hill neighborhood plan, I hope that I have shown that I am committed to protecting the environment in our sensitive aquifer recharge zones and water sheds by limiting the commercial areas to key nodes and encouraging less dense development in others. I also remain committed to directing growth east towards the SH-130 corridor. I hope to continue balancing the needs of the neighborhood residents and property owners, which may require more roadways and commercial services, with the delicate and fragile environment.

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?

Lady Bird Lake continues to be the central feature in our urban core and I want to preserve this amenity for the entire community. I sponsored the recent Waterfront Overlay Task force to have the community take a look at the districts and see if we needed to strengthen the code and look forward to the ordinance that staff brings to us. I hope to be able to support the revised language while not limiting the ability of future councils to make decisions about individual projects and plan for our growth as I recognize that Austin is growing and needs to be even more vibrant urban city to keep our quality of life.

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?

I believe that once we have hired the consultant, the consultant and the City will work together with the community in establishing the planning process. A critical element will be listening to all the voices in the community so we can create a plan that is inclusive and establishes a plan that has the support of Austin so we can come together and grow as a community.

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?

These are challenging times financially and the City is feeling the burden just like the citizens of Austin. The City of Austin has the lowest property value rate of all the taxing entities and if we provide a homestead exemption, we will take millions of dollars out of the general fund that funds public safety, parks, roads, animal control, social services, that especially serve low and middle income residents. I support more public-private partnerships, especially for our under-funded parks department, more affordable housing built by the City in partnership with the non-market rate development community, and I would encourage trying to lobby the state legislature to create a school finance plan that does not put the burden of public school funding on the backs of property owners.

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?

I believe that the City Manager opened the process to include the community and support additional efforts to make sure that community priorities are addressed in our budget decisions. I also want to make sure we meet the needs of the entire community including public safety and transportation and we are adequately funding all departments and all areas of the City.

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?

I would like to clarify that the City Council does not manage the City of Austin staff directly and that the City Council only makes one hiring decision: the City Manager. I believe that the COA staff is a dedicated work force that contribute a public service to the citizens of Austin and for the most part, make every effort to do the will of the City Council. I support establishing clear and more transparent roles for the City Council, the City Manager, and the City of Austin staff so we can have effective and efficient city government that meets the community's needs.

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?

I truly rely on the input of my citizen appointees that serve on our Boards and Commissions, especially those that work with our enterprise departments. I will continue to make sure they are included in the decision-making process and get the relevant information they need to make sound recommendations.

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)?

As City Council Member, I have made it a point to make balanced and thoughtful decisions that weigh the interests of the property owner in the context of the larger neighborhood. I will continue to make thoughtful decisions and hope that they are the best way to balance the concerns of residents with the rights of individual property owners.

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?

With the Comprehensive Plan, I hope that we will be able to make sure that specific neighborhood plans meet the values and goals established in the larger plan. I thank all the people who spend so much time on their neighborhood plans and zoning issues in their community and know that you know what is best for your neighborhood; it is my responsibility to see how the individual neighborhood plan affects the larger city and I know that this can cause conflict. I also know that neighborhoods, just like the City, change and I have to support the ability of a landowner to appeal to council if they feel they need a zoning change.

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?

I definitely would like to see the new Comprehensive Plan to examine the capacity of our current public infrastructure and how we manage future growth. With the modeling that is available today, I believe we can make even better decisions on how to manage the growth of Austin, which historically has doubled every twenty years.

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?

I am fully committed to making sure that we continue to grow our local economy and encourage the City of Austin to shop locally just like we ask our residents. However, the City of Austin has a fiduciary responsibility to make sure we take the lowest bid in most of our purchasing decisions and our COA Contract and Land Management Department has a very well calibrated matrix that evaluates the impact to the local community including the minority contractors. Furthermore, there are times that the City of Austin is prohibited from favoring local businesses as it violates state and federal interstate commerce laws.

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?

As the 14th largest city in America with a budget over \$2 billion dollars, I cannot support giving the City Manager direction to use a local financial institution if he or she does not see this as the best fit for our city.

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?

In my first term I asked EGRSO to develop an interactive small business map, which can be seen at <http://www.explorelocalaustin.org>. I am deeply committed to further serving and developing greater resources for our local small businesses as I know the impact they have on our economy. In addition, I want to increase our Minority and Women Owned Business opportunities both with City of Austin work and throughout the economy.

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?

I agree that given our limited resources and the growing costs of public safety, we need to prioritize the time our uniformed officers take with misdemeanors and use that time to address felony and other more serious offences. Austin has the lowest crime rate of cities our size and I want to make sure that we continue to have a very safe city. I support Chief Acevedo's implementation of the citation and release program that has started this past Sunday and hope that it will be an effective use of our public safety resources.

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?

As a long time resident of East Austin, I firmly believe in equal distribution of LULUS and this includes the dispersal of affordable housing, social service providers, and facilities that care for the most vulnerable in our City. I hope that the Comprehensive Plan will take a serious look at this issue and provide a process for the equitable placement of these land uses. As I want to encourage development east towards SH-130 and away from the environmentally sensitive land to our South and West, I do recognize the challenges that the City faces in making these decisions.

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?

As we try to prepare for this economic downturn, I am very concerned that we do not cut services that benefit the most underserved in our community and as chair of the Audit and Finance Committee I will work on protecting the most needy. For example, I cannot support across the board cuts by percentage precisely because it takes a greater amount away from our already under funded social services. We are asking everybody in the City, including City of Austin Staff who will not see pay raises or the full cost of living benefit this year, to help us remain fiscally sound and not drastically cut services.

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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.

One of the reasons many residents of this city are frustrated with the City Council is that Council Members do not listen to the people. The essence of governance is the ability to listen to the wishes of the people and not the people listening to the wishes of elected officials. Yes, I will support delaying the project. I will partner with these groups to produce a comprehensive plan to solving the water treatment issue. The City Council has not given the cost benefit analysis of this project. We need to know the impact on the environment, the community and local businesses. I'm a candidate for Place 6 because my opponent is on the side of big businesses. She does not represent what Austin residents want. She works for Special Interest and this is the time to stop the damage. This Project is a good example of how Special Interest groups have taken over the City Hall. Three years ago, Austin residents gave her a blank check to the City Hall. Today, the account is overdrawn and we cannot afford three more years of irresponsible and incomprehensible voting records.

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.

Yes. I absolutely agree with the residents of these neighborhoods that East Austin has become the experimental zone for big businesses. It is wrong to pick one part of the city as a dumping ground for waste products. Ms Cole voted in favor of extending the BFI dump site to 70 feet. The residents of these neighborhoods are worried about the human health hazards and the environmental consequences. They took their concerns to the City Hall only to be ignored by Council Members. On this important issue, Ms Cole sided with big businesses. We have seen this type of arrogance many times and this is the time to stop it. The BFI dump site is a disgrace. I will bring the common sense approach of Laura Morrison ,the maturity and steadiness of Lee Leffingwell and the energy of Randi Shade to the City Hall. We must preserve Austin's character. We cannot continue to watch lobbyists run our city down. Enough is enough.

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?

I will propose a committee to partner with the community in finding a reasonable way to address this issue. On the issue of Nuclear energy, I absolutely oppose it. There are many reasons for my opposition. One is the cost of this project. The City of Austin cannot afford this type of project. We must not cut human and social services in order to pay for this irresponsible project. Another important question is where to dump the nuclear waste. Is the City Council looking for a site in East Austin as usual? The nuclear waste will harm our environment. This Project poses a security risk to the residents of this city. We must not ignore human errors and the threat of terrorism when making this type of decision. If this Project continues as being proposed, Austin will become a target of terrorist and some disgruntled group may target this facility. We cannot afford this insane Project. This is where leadership is needed. Ms Cole is in support of this Nuclear Project. We must say no to her and the Nuclear Project. Those Lobbyists funding her campaign are pushing for this project. We must tell Ms Cole and these lobbyists, thanks ,but no thanks.

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?

I will oppose any development along the Barton Creek Watershed. We need to protect our natural environment. On the issue of toll roads in the city's Drinking Water Protection Zone, I'm against toll roads. I have attended many of the CAMPO meetings and spoken up against this big business venture in our city. On 12/2/2008, there was a CAMPO meeting at the Thompson Conference Center at the University of Texas. Council Member Cole voted against public hearing on this important matter. She was the chairperson at the meeting when Kirk Watson left and she decided not to allow well meaning Austin residents to be heard on this issue. She single handedly said no to public hearing . Many people were outraged and disappointed. This is not leadership. This is arrogance and working against the people .

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?

Yes.

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?

Yes. The Council is known for not getting the community involved when needed and this is one of those situations. Decision are made behind close doors and when it becomes public, people are upset. A good example is the Wal-Mart debacle with the Allendale Neighborhood Association. The best way to lead is to get the people involve in any developmental plan. The problem is that the City Council is willing to sit down with big businesses and not with the people. These consultants are the same lobbyists that will write the Ordinance the way they want and Council Members will then approve it. Ms Cole has shown us she represents Big Businesses.

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?

Absolutely. Homestead exemption will help those on SSI, middle and lower income brackets. It is unconscionable to live in a city where those that needed the most help are not getting it. One of the ways to solve this problem is to look at the cost benefit analysis of developmental growth in the city. Many people, especially the elderly are being displaced from their homes because of these irresponsible growth. Many people are loosing their homes because they cannot afford to pay the taxes. I proposed a freeze on these taxes and a grandfather clause. Today, many families are finding it hard to make a living. The cost of living has gone up and their standard of living has gone down .People cannot afford a decent housing. Every year we hear Council Members talk about affordable housing for the people without actually meaning it. When you hear them talk about affordable housing again, the next question would be affordable to whom. How many Austin residents can afford to live in the Downtown area or the Old Robert Mueller Airport!. We need a higher standard and we can do better than what we have now at the City Hall. Where has Ms Cole been all these years. These issues did not just come up today. They have been there for the past three years. What has she done to address these issues! She sided with developers and big businesses. We need to take Austin back.

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?

Yes.

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?

Yes.

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?

Yes. The idea that multiple people are working on the same issue is waste of taxpayers money. . Who are the members of these Sub-committees?. Are they lobbyists?. These are the questions we need answers.

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)?

Yes. Those that live in a neighborhood know what they need in the neighborhood.

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?

Yes

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?

Yes. This is where we need to do a cost benefit analysis of any comprehensive plan the city may have. We have to look at the resources we have to see if they would sustain future growth or not.

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?

Yes. Currently, the City of Austin buys auto parts from Auto Zone and office supplies from Office Depot. I think it makes more sense to award these contracts to local businesses. We have many local businesses that are willing and capable of supplying the city these products. Local businesses are the backbones of our economy . I worked with Brian Rogers and Linda Curtis on Pro-2 domain subsidies because we believed corporate subsidies have not been good for Austin. Ms Cole did not support our effort. She sided with Big Businesses on this important issue again. She made this clear in an interview with the Austin Chronicle 9/15/2008 pg 18. I will support economic incentives for local businesses.

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?

Absolutely. One of my platforms is championing local businesses. I support changing this agreement to local financial institutions because the money will be invested in the local economy. These local businesses will be able to make loans to Austin residents.

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?

Absolutely. I urge you to visit my website- OSEMENESAM.COM to see my economic platform. We should not be subsidizing big businesses at the expense of local businesses.

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?

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?

Absolutely. This will help in eliminating the current practice of using East Austin as a dumping ground for what others in the community don't want in their neighborhoods. We have to be our brothers and sisters keepers. We have to enforce the environmental laws. Many of these companies in East Austin are not environmentally friendly as they should be. As a Council Member, I will make sure the City Code is enforced vigorously and those that violate them will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

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, under-served and poor in our community?

We have to understand how we got here in the first place. We have a budget shortfall because of the irresponsible policies of the City Council. Somebody drove this bus into a ditch and those that drove this bus into a ditch are not the ones that will drive it out of the ditch. Ms Cole is one of the drivers of this bus . Today , she is asking Austin residents to give her the bus key again . Austin cannot afford to be on the same road again. We need a new driver and a new direction. It is not a secret that when it comes to budget cuts, Council Members always target the poor and the most needy. We need someone that will fight for the poor and the needy. I'm the candidate for the people. Recently, the City Manager called on city employees to sacrifice by either taking a pay cut or working less hours. This is where leadership by example is needed. I argue we should start from the top. Council Members should take the lead by taking a pay cut . One of the ways to avoid this shortfall is to stop the corporate subsidies. We are now paying the price of this irresponsible policy that is supported by Ms Cole. As a Council Member, I will not support cutting services for the poor and the needy. The best way to control wasteful spending is to start from the top. The 2009 City Budget has already cut library hours, road maintenance budget and other social services. This is the type of city we get when we allow big businesses run our city. Those Council Members that are detrimental and dangerous to our city's interests and aspirations, this is the time to send them home. We must not be afraid to take a stand and say enough is enough. We have to clean the City Hall. The poor and the needy, who speaks for them. This is where Better Austin Today is needed. Thanks.