



Better Austin Today
Political Action Committee
P.O. Box 91041
Austin, Texas 78709-1041
www.BetterAustinToday.org

Lee Leffingwell

City Council May 2008 Election, Candidate Questions

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The following premise statements highlight some of BETTER AUSTIN TODAY's issues and are followed by the specific questions for the candidates.

General Questions

BETTER AUSTIN TODAY Political Action Committee is a broad based and community wide organization that has come together to further a shared vision for Austin's future. BETTER AUSTIN TODAY recognizes the connectivity of the many important issues facing our community and is committed to working to improve the lives of everyone in our community.

- 1. Do you want the endorsement of BETTER AUSTIN TODAY and if so why?**

I am asking for the endorsement of the Better Austin Today Political Action Committee because I am a committed and, I believe, effective representative of the goals for which this organization advocates: open government, sound municipal planning, a healthy environment, economic success that includes local businesses, and social services that help us reach our fullest potential.

To lead you must have a direction. To achieve you must have cooperation.

- 2. What is your vision for Austin's future, what do you think is unique about Austin and how do you propose to preserve and enhance what is special about Austin and how will you work with the other City Council members to get this accomplished?**

In many neighborhood zoning cases, the community does not know of the proposed project until very late in the process. Often developers have met with not only city staff but also City Council members to advance their position when the community has not even had a chance to know that the City Council is being lobbied on a zoning case. While I am fortunate enough to have been born in Austin, I recognized early on that Austin's amazing culture is built not just by its native population but also by the incredibly talented and interesting people who

choose to move here. There are other places with great natural beauty; there are other great universities; there are other cities with strong and diverse economies; and there are other centers of great culture. Yet, there are very, very few spots in this world that combine these qualities as well as Austin. As we know, Austin's great blessing is also its great challenge. Just as many of us came to Austin, fell in love with the place and its people, and chose to build the rest of our lives here, many, many others will do so also. And in order to meet this continuing arrival of new hope and skill, those of us who are here now must agree on enough basic facts so that we can work together to create a sound plan for managing this growth. Further, we must constantly strive to build and fund new social alliances to serve the needs that this growth generates. There is no way that city government alone, with limited tax base and regulatory authority, can adequately meet these challenges. I look forward to the opportunity to partner with you over the coming years as we take on the work necessary to keep Austin a place where we and our children, and anybody who seeks a better life, will want to be.

- 3. Would you as a City Council member be willing to post your calendar online so that the community knows when and whom you are meeting with and the purpose of the meeting?**

Yes, I support establishing a policy to require council members and senior city administrative staff to keep public calendars that document meetings with lobbyists and citizen group representatives.

Our City Council may have over 100 items to consider at each City Council Meeting. Over the course of a year, the Council can act on the community's behalf on thousands of issues.

- 4. What actions of the current City Council within the last year would you consider to be major positive accomplishments and what actions would you consider to be the worst actions taken by the City Council?**

I would feel presumptuous in speaking for or about the city council as a whole. So, I will confine my comments about best and worst legislative actions to my own accomplishments and failures. I regret most my lack of success in convincing a majority of council to support the placement of an item on the May ballot to amend the city charter to permit the council to appoint the city attorney. I am most pleased with two legislative initiatives. The first has to do with creating meaningful incentives for installation of water quality infrastructure in areas of the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone that were built prior to the passage of the S.O.S. Ordinance. The second relates to the reformulation of the process and selection criteria employed in the final designation of a site for the construction of Water Treatment Plant 4.

Often the City Council takes actions as recommended by the City Manager and supported by the City Legal department. At times, this legal advice limits the

options that the City Council considers in a situation. While that legal advice may be supportive of the City Manager's position, it may not be reflective of all the options available to the City and as such prevents the City Council from acting in the community's best interest.

- 5. Would you pledge to support changing the city charter to allow the City Council to hire either the City Attorney directly accountable to the council, or give the City Council the ability to hire an outside attorney for recommendations independent of the City Manager?**

I will continue to support amending the city charter to permit the city council to appoint the city attorney. The fact that the majority of major Texas cities appoint the city attorney in this way bolsters my belief that the citizens should make this appointment through their representatives elected to council.

Title 18 requires all public elected officials to act in their capacity as an elected official to initiate an investigation of any violation of the law that is reported to them. Recently there have been many allegations of misconduct of City staff such as with the Convention Center, City Hall Store, Housing Bonds, and the delay in the Big Box retail ordinance.

- 6. As a City Council member, if information is presented to you concerning a potentially unlawful action by City Staff or the City Administration, what specific actions will you take to execute your sworn obligations under Title 18?**

I firmly believe that all city officials, whether elected or appointed, have an obligation to report any concerns that they may have regarding the conduct of city business. If someone believes that there is intentional misuse of city resources or authority, the best option for handling the matter is to contact the integrity office of the city auditor. The integrity office will investigate the allegation and, if criminal activity appears to be an element in the situation, the auditors working the case will turn the matter over to the police department for further investigation. Maintaining the integrity of city operations is a vital function of the city auditor's office, and this is one of the reasons that I sponsored the successful effort to permit Austin voters to amend their city charter in order to provide a fixed term for the city auditor. A fixed term, which can be abrogated only by a super-majority vote of the city council, will further insulate the auditor from any pressures that could deter full and complete investigations and performance audits.

Our current City Charter dictates a City Council and City Manager form of government with the City Manager reporting to the full Council and with each City Council member elected at large. Our City Council is the only jurisdictional body in Travis County that elects its officials with a total at large system. Nationally most peer cities of Austin's size elect their City Council with some form of geographical districts.

7. Do you believe that Austin's current City Council representational system is appropriate for a city of over 700,000 and please explain your reasons for this position?

I believe that Austin has reached a point in its history where there should be some form of district representation on city council. We are simply too large in terms of total population and land area to continue counting on at-large representation to address the many and diverse needs of our community. While some have raised legitimate concerns about whether or not district representation would dilute minority representation, I am confident that Austin voters will -- whether by district demographics or through some new set of "gentleman's' agreements" -- continue to elect diverse representation to their city council.

Currently, the City of Austin uses the turnkey services of the Travis County Elections Department for conducting its elections which uses electronic voting machines that many concerned citizens have likened to officials taking a ballot box into a back room to count the votes with no public oversight. Several states (CA, OH, and CO) have had computer experts study the same machines that Travis County uses and have discovered that they "...contain serious design flaws that have led directly to specific vulnerabilities, which attackers could exploit to affect election outcomes," so, as a result, they were decertified in these three states.

8. Do you think that the citizens of Austin have the right to observe the counting of their votes and have oversight in every step of the election process? Would you be willing to go on the record in support of a return to hand-counted paper ballot elections with enhanced security protocols and with precinct totals posted at the precinct level immediately after the counting?

I certainly believe that citizens have the right to a transparent and well-documented counting of their ballots. Citizen faith in the tally of votes is essential to the health of representative democracy. I am, however, not expert enough in the technical matters of vote counting to say at this point that I favor the return to hand-counted ballots. I welcome any information that you can provide regarding ballot counting and look forward to discussing the matter with you further.

The following questions are grouped by BETTER AUSTIN TODAY's interest area.

Neighborhoods

We often hear that Austin will double in population every 10 to 20 years and that we have to accept that premise and plan accordingly. This assumption influences many decisions of our City Council from transit planning to zoning

changes to accommodate increased density. However, others suggest that we need to take a broader approach and assess what is a reasonable growth management strategy for our city.

9. Would you as a City Council member support developing an inclusive community-based process to create a comprehensive growth management policy for our community? How would you organize this process, what staffing and funding would you support for the process and what is your estimate of how long such a process would take?

Yes, I support the development of a comprehensive planning process for Austin, and I intend to make this effort a focus of my coming years on the city council. First of all, I believe that we must first agree on the challenges to resolve and the strengths to emphasize in the planning process. In essence, if we are going to conduct a community-wide conversation about how to manage growth, the first step in such a process should be to make sure that we understand the terms of the discussion. For instance, if we can't agree on regional transportation needs or basic population projections for the area, then we don't really have anything to talk about productively. Defining challenges to resolve and strengths to emphasize is the first and most strategic step in this important process. Once we have identified the elements of what we are attempting to plan for, city government should make staff and funding available to the area planning groups that will drive the process of resolving challenges and emphasizing strengths. It is important to note that, at this point in the planning process, the professional staff will be serving the citizen planners. While city personnel should play a key role in identifying and defining the general challenges and strengths to be addressed in the planning process, it will be citizen planners who determine the specific means for addressing these issues in their particular planning areas. Finally, once an area has completed a plan that meets the basic terms set forth in the first stage of the planning process--where we identified challenges to be resolved and strengths to be emphasized--city council will review the plan for compliance with the strategic goals and either request further effort or pass the plan as an ordinance that will translate the document into zoning law. In other words, good plans will become good law. The city will meet its planning needs, and citizen effort will be recognized and honored with the creation of ordinances.

Neighborhood planning was intended to provide our neighborhoods with a means to create a shared vision for their future within the context of an overall comprehensive plan and the actions needed to accomplish that vision. However, there is much debate as to whether neighborhood planning has met this goal.

10. What do you believe has worked and not worked in neighborhood planning with regards to the following issues and what actions you would take as a city Council member to address any shortcomings in this process?

- A) Notification of all impacted parties to ensure an inclusive process.**
- B) Providing pertinent demographic, economic and infrastructure information needed to make informed planning decisions.**
- C) Educating the community of the implications of land use decisions with regard to the impact to the density, character and quality of life of the neighborhood.**
- D) Providing adequate city resources devoted to support and staffing of the planning process.**
- E) Decision-making within the planning process that reflects the community will.**
- F) Council respecting the adopted neighborhood plans in subsequent zoning cases.**

I think my concerns about the current planning process are evident in my answer to the previous question. But to be clear, I will state them separately here. First, I am troubled that the planning effort does not have clearly stated strategic objectives. This means that there are not clear standards for conducting the planning process or evaluating its results. Second, I would like to see the planning process produce a more durable and defining product. Currently, the neighborhood plans only have the force of recommendations, and I would like to see them codify specific efforts at meeting general strategic objectives. When citizens work many hours to help our city meet serious challenges, their efforts should be treated seriously.

One of the major problems of neighborhoods is the imposition of intrusive developments that are not compatible with maintaining the neighborhood's character. The use of a valid petition to prevent inappropriate zoning changes is an important tool in neighborhood efforts to protect their quality of life.

- 11. Will you pledge to support a neighborhood's valid petition on zoning cases and if not, why not? Do you consider the City Council adoption of Vertical Mixed Use a zoning change and if not do you support City Staff's position that it requires a super majority of the Council to override a single property owner's valid petition against being opted out of VMU?**

I believe neighborhood groups are usually best-positioned to decide whether zoning changes fit within their plans and vision for how the neighborhood should look. On many occasions, when I learn a valid petition has been submitted, I ask for delays in hearing the case at a Council meeting to allow the neighborhood to spend more time working out solutions tenable to all sides. Likewise, I carefully consider the review of the Vertical Mixed Use overlay on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis, and I am inclined to support neighborhood preferences for what they decide to "opt in" or "opt out" of that overlay. I believe VMU zoning is most appropriate on core transit corridors and not within neighborhoods.

One of the biggest problems in many of our lower and middle-income neighborhoods is the rising cost of living and the resultant gentrification that is pushing many long time residents out of our neighborhoods.

12. What do you see as the causes of this problem and what specifically will you do as a City Council member to address this problem?

I am supportive of pending efforts to create a Tax Increment Financing reinvestment zone within a Homestead Preservation District. The aim of that effort is to promote and expand opportunities for affordable housing and to prevent the involuntary loss of homesteads by people living in low and middle-income neighborhoods. The revenue from the Tax Increment fund would go towards development, construction, and preservation of affordable housing as well as construction of infrastructure needed to construct or rehabilitate affordable housing.

The basic regulations that define what can and can not be built in our community are in our Land Development and Building Codes. These regulations are essential for an orderly and community supported development process.

13. With regards to the following code issues what do you believe needs to be changed to ensure a positive successful development process?

- A) Code enforcement**
- B) Consistent interpretation of the codes**
- C) Updating our codes to reflect best practices**

I have previously directed staff to update rules governing construction phase pollution across the City, which will encompass redevelopment projects in the Barton Springs Zone. We are evaluating and updating the City's practices, capabilities, and available resources for review and inspection of construction phase erosion and sedimentation controls, inspection of water quality ponds, and enforcement of maintenance requirements. I think that effort will help us update our rules and policies to reflect best practices for new construction. I am also working on a policy to ensure consistent interpretation of rules related to subsurface parking garages. It is important that we clarify the role that subsurface parking can play in allowing for central city density with more limited impacts on watersheds. Furthermore, I believe we need to restore and step up our funding commitment to code enforcement. Right now, code enforcement is still inadequate. We need to add funding for code enforcement to keep our streets and neighborhoods clean and safe, in all parts of the city. I will support an increase in the budget to provide more inspectors, and work to implement a proactive (rather than complaint-driven) approach to inspections as soon as is feasible. I want additional funds used to add new enforcement officers and improve the process of receiving and responding to reported violations. I also think that we need to consider restructuring the enforcement and penalty process

to ensure that violations are processed on a timelier basis and that penalties for violations are an effective deterrent.

Environment

The “un-adopted” city policy appears to capture more development within the existing city footprint as a means to reduce sprawl. However, quite often it seems that at the same time we are both encouraging and facilitating sprawl development and also approving redevelopment that needlessly impinges on central city neighborhoods, affordability and other community values.

14. How will you address this contradiction in the City’s actions and provide a consistent growth management policy?

As you may know, I initiated an amendment to the Land Development Code that is **safe** for the environment, **small** in its scale so that we can effectively manage our growth, and **anti-sprawl** since it will make it easier to connect Austin residents with needed services closer to where they live. Under my proposal, redevelopment projects on existing commercial tracts in the Barton Springs Zone could only proceed if developers, at their own expense, added water quality controls like sedimentation-filtration or non-degradation systems. In many cases, developers would also have to set aside land or funding to acquire land as permanent open space. If developers meet these conditions, they could be eligible to redevelop property at existing levels of impervious cover. I believe very strongly in the importance of our directing growth away from the Barton Springs Zone and into areas like our Desired Development Zone and our Core Transit Corridors. As stated earlier, I intend to make work towards a comprehensive planning process for Austin the primary focus of my next term on the council. The plan needs clearly stated objectives and citizen leadership to ensure we create a product that works for all of us.

Austin has long recognized that Barton Springs Pool and the springs that feed it as major community assets. However, increased development over the Barton Springs zone of the Edwards aquifer continues to threaten this precious water resource.

15. Do you believe that the city should continue to purchase more acreage in the drinking Water Protection Zone, especially in the aquifer recharge zone by establishing a long range funding strategy focused on buying the most important environmentally significant properties? If so, how much do you estimate it will cost to buy sufficient land to protect the Barton Springs Zone?

I have strongly supported the purchase of additional lands in the Drinking Water Protection Zone and the aquifer recharge zone. Part of my amendment to the Land Development Code (see answer #14) will require that developers in the Barton Springs Zone either set aside land or contribute \$15,000 per acre

required to mitigate development on grandfathered tracts with impervious cover exceeding the code. That base fee will increase by seven percent each year for the next three years, after which time we will re-evaluate the real estate market and amend the formula as needed. Our existing formula reflects a thorough analysis of current market trends. My hope is that this mechanism, along with bonds for open space purchases and other redevelopment projects, will all contribute to a long-range funding strategy focused on buying the most important environmentally significant properties. I am particularly pleased by the city's purchase of a tract totaling more than 3,000 acres southwest of the city in Hays County, which is designed to help us complete a trail from central Austin into Hays County. I have worked aggressively on efforts to acquire easements to allow citizen groups to complete trail projects; we are also taking an inventory of all existing city easements to allow for greater connectivity within our trails system.

While Austin prides itself in being a leader in Green Building practices and has indicated support of a climate change initiative, we often, however, do not take the lead on our own city projects to be environmental advocates.

16. As a City Council member, what is your position on the following issues and what specific innovative programs will you support to ensure that Austin is a leader in environmental stewardship in these areas?

- A) Reducing our water usage by emphasizing water conservation and reducing wastewater usage by effective gray water reuse rather than the construction of a new water treatment plant.**
- B) Do you recognize the problem with Peak Oil projections and its impact on our ability to reduce our "Carbon Footprint" by energy conservation strategies and the related need to develop safe and sustainable energy resources?**
- C) Requiring comprehensive project impact analysis that includes water, energy, air, social and economic factors as part of development review process.**
- D) Coordinating our water, wastewater and electric utility service areas with an annexation strategy as part of our comprehensive planning.**

As you may know, I proudly co-sponsored all efforts connected to the Mayor's Climate Protection Plan, and many of its sections address the challenges posed by your question. In numerous Council actions, I have worked to ensure that all of our projects include stringent environmental review, and I have resisted efforts to have projects removed from our extra-territorial jurisdiction and, by extension, outside our environmental control. I also led an initiative to pursue aggressive conservation measures to meet a goal of reducing peak day water consumption by 1% annually over 10 years. The initiative resulted in the formation of the Water Conservation Task Force, which concluded with the adoption of extensive

water conservation measures for the City itself, its regional wholesale customers, and the citizens of Austin on May 3, 2007. The recommendations amount to peak-day water savings of nearly 33 million gallons per day (MGD) at an average cost that is approximately 1/3 the cost of new water treatment infrastructure. The Task Force recommendations represent a significant cost savings for the City of Austin. Task Force meetings included work sessions to explore each category of conservation measures (outdoor, indoor, and City-oriented). During every phase of the project, the latest information was made publicly available via the web, and most Task Force meetings were televised live. Representatives of various City departments were called on for input, as were industry and community stakeholders. As a result, the Task Force solved the extraordinary problem of bridging the City's environmental goals and industry interests. The Task Force recommendations ultimately included measures that affected stakeholders with radically different interests – such the Austin Board of Realtors and the Irrigation Association – and were backed by justifiable savings and executable implementation plans. By achieving our water conservation goals, we delay the need for a water treatment plant, and we stay within the limits set by our agreement with our water providers. That all means significant cost savings to Austin residents.

As Austin grows, if we do not reduce our demand for energy through conservation and switch to renewable energy supplies, it is suggested that we will need to build a new power plant based on either nuclear or coal technologies.

17. Will you commit to voting against any proposal that would result in Austin constructing or participating in the construction of a new nuclear or coal fired power plant, yes or no?

I am opposed to the current proposal for participation in a nuclear power plant because I believe there are too many safety and economic risks involved. I do, however, believe that the city must continue to examine all options for energy generation in order to ensure we can deliver the safest, most affordable, and most environmentally sound options to our citizens. Before considering new generation options, we must maximize our conservation and renewable energy options.

The current development approval process is structured in favor of developer interests rather than community interests. This is reflected in the compartmentalization of the city review process and the lack of community input into the process at critical decision points. Often projects are approved without any evaluation on a whole range of concerns from the impact on local traffic to the regional impact of additional drainage requirements. The current system encourages conflict, not collaboration, and favors piecemeal approvals that do not serve larger community needs.

18. What will you do to change the current development review process to encourage collaboration and greater respect for neighborhood

and other community and regional stakeholder interests?

Since I became a member of the Austin City Council, I have convened several stakeholder groups and task forces designed to encourage collaboration and greater respect for community stakeholders. I have also been working aggressively on several "open government" initiatives, designed to ensure that we respect the right of our residents to be able to access information pertinent to policy decisions that will affect their community and neighborhood. Among my initiatives is a lobbying reform measure designed to ensure that once we have issued a request for proposals on projects like the Green Water Treatment Plant and Seaholm redevelopments, lobbyists will not be able to meet with Council members to discuss those projects outside of public view. I hope that our open government efforts, coupled with our development of a comprehensive growth strategy led by neighborhood groups, will engender greater respect for neighborhood and other community and regional stakeholder interests.

Over and over, City decisions appear to be made behind closed doors, with little or no public input, with public involvement only coming in after-the-fact. The result is that the ideas, wisdom and intelligence of the community is relegated to a purely cosmetic or backseat role. Recent examples of this include City Council approval of a 100-year water deal with the LCRA; the hiring of the new city manager; the proposed move of the animal shelter; the authorization of \$6.2 million in Barton Springs pool improvements, the proposed privatization of Seaholm and Green and the redevelopment amendment to the SOS ordinance.

19. As a City Council member what steps would you take to ensure meaningful community participation in important City decisions?

Please refer to my answer #18 for more information on my open government efforts. But to re-emphasize, I have worked to make our decisions on economic development more transparent, I am working to enhance our city website to provide more information in a more accessible way, and I have continued to convene stakeholder groups and task forces on nearly all of my major initiatives to ensure that we produce policy that satisfies the largest cross-section of our residents.

Social Equity

The City budget contains cost drivers, such as the Police contract, that take an ever increasing share of our tax revenue leaving less and less funds to address other community needs.

20. What will you do as a City Council Member to pull back the demand on our city budget of the Public Service contracts to allow other priorities of the City to be met?

My plan to consolidate all of our law enforcement agencies will, within a short time, result in major cost savings to the city. While some existing officers will be absorbed into the Austin Police Department and earn more than they might otherwise, their training will cost the city much less than it would for a new trainee. We also will be eliminating positions and shifting some “sworn officers” (who carry guns) to non-sworn security personnel, whose salaries will be lower. In the long run, besides making our city safer by ensuring single standards of training and protocol, it will also help us balance all of our budget priorities.

Currently in Austin, African-American and Latino’s mean income for a family of four is approximately half of that of Whites and Asian-Americans. This disparity has led to a diminished quality of life in the areas of Health, Education, Affordable housing, Public Safety and environment for a large segment of our community.

21. What specific actions will you take as a City Council member to address this disparity and what effect do you believe your actions will have in addressing this problem?

I participate in regular meetings of the Community Action Network, where these disparities are discussed and solutions are developed. In addition, I am working to find ways for the city to assist social service agencies affected by recent funding cuts made by the United Way. I have supported the African-American Quality of Life initiative and various measures that have arisen from that work, and I will continue to do so. I have also taken a very active role in helping Capital Metro resolve its ongoing labor issues—which affect a large number of African-American and Hispanic families. In general, I will work to ensure that policies adopted by the City of Austin are designed to improve the quality of life for all Austinites.

The newly created Health Care District cannot provide adequate care for our community at the current funding levels and will need significant more resources as the economic disparity continues to grow in our community, forcing even more people to depend on public assistance.

22. What role do you see the City of Austin playing in assuring that the Health Care District is adequately funded while recognizing the difficulty of increasing the tax burden on the lower and middle-income members of our community?

I have been part of the Austin Association of Human Services Agencies, I am chair of the Public Health and Human Services Subcommittee, and I sit on the Hospital District’s mental health task force. I am acutely aware of our mounting funding needs in these areas, and I am working aggressively to address those needs. Specifically, I initiated an effort for the city to secure a county facility as a psychiatric hospital. I am committed to accomplishing a complete restoration of health and human services funding as soon as possible. I believe that health and human services should be considered a top community priority alongside

public safety functions. We need to more fully leverage our health and human services dollars through our partnerships with non-profit agencies.

The lack of affordable housing in Austin is a crisis for many residents. The community has recognized this growing problem and has approved a \$55 million bond package for affordable housing. However, serious questions have arisen about the accountability of this bond program and its impact on affordability. It is also recognized that even with appropriate use of these funds, this level of funding will not provide much relief to the affordable housing crisis.

23. How many additional housing units or rehabilitated existing units do you expect the affordable housing bond program to provide? What percent of the \$55 million should go to modest and low-income housing? How do you define modest and low-income housing? What can you do as a City Council member to ensure that the \$55 million in bond funding will actually go to providing more affordable housing and what other specific actions can the City Council take to place more affordable housing in our community?

I wholeheartedly supported the bond funding for affordable housing, and I believe it will help us make significant progress in addressing those challenges. I have supported and will continue to support the city's SMART Housing Program (Safe, Mixed Income, Accessible, Reasonably Priced, and Transit-Oriented). I will work to ensure that affordable housing options become a part of Transit-Oriented Development districts and city redevelopment projects. I have actively worked to help incorporate "density bonuses" into city policy, which allow for greater density than the code allows in appropriate places while ensuring funding for affordable housing throughout the city. As Austin continues to grow, utilizing the density bonus program within the Central Business District and along Core Transit Corridors will likely provide an important stream of revenue for affordable housing. Additionally, I support tax increment financing generated by redevelopment projects like the Green Water Treatment Plant that could contribute hundreds of thousands of dollars for affordable housing each year for several decades.

We are told by the City Administration that the City can no longer afford to purchase land for community facilities downtown, yet land the city already owns downtown is being proposed for sale for private development. Moreover, we are told that we must relocate essential city services away from the populations they serve without adequate transportation services. Basic living expenses for our teachers, nurses, police officers and many other working class residents have not kept pace with the cost of living and so many can no longer afford to live in our city. However, we continue to subsidize big corporations and developers.

24. What city policy changes would you enact to address the following Concerns?

- A) Promotion of living wage scale for all of Austin’s employers**
- B) Putting Health and Human services at the same budget priority as Public Safety**
- C) An economic development strategy that focuses on providing jobs first for current residents that are either unemployed or underemployed.**

I don’t know if establishing a local minimum wage tied to the cost of local housing is possible or practical, but I do very strongly support increasing the national minimum wage to help ensure a good quality of life for working men and women. We should be especially concerned with achieving an increase the national minimum wage in Austin, as our housing costs are among the highest anywhere. As indicated elsewhere, I am committed to accomplishing a complete restoration of health and human services funding as soon as possible. I believe that health and human services should be considered a top community priority alongside public safety functions. As indicated elsewhere, I support economic development agreements aimed at providing new jobs for unemployed and underemployed residents. I also have consistently supported funding for nonprofit organizations like Capital IDEA who are working to help empower unemployed and underemployed local residents to find jobs in the Austin area.

Business

Small locally owned businesses often outperform their “Big Box” competition, both in outright profitability and the value they bring to consumers, workers, and the community.

- 25. What specifically can you do as a City Council member to encourage the city administration to better support locally owned businesses? Please describe any programs or initiatives that you would lead in this effort.**

As stated elsewhere in this questionnaire, I initiated a resolution, passed unanimously by Council, to reform the city’s approach to economic development agreements. My resolution disallows economic incentives for future retail projects in Austin, but re-affirms the City’s commitment to honor existing economic development agreements. It also ensures that the process for validating economic development agreement performance requirements is transparent. Performance will be reviewed by an independent party, and the results of that review would be made public. I believe that resolution will help further city goals towards supporting locally owned businesses, rather than pitting them directly against national retailers. In a second term, I will be particularly focused on helping our small local businesses prosper, and on continuing to bring good new employers to the area from specific, targeted industries, like renewable energy. The City should actively recruit renewable energy equipment manufacturing companies and Health Sciences companies as a top priority for new businesses locating in Austin. If any new industry/employer should be

considered for Chapter 380 rebates, renewable energy companies should be at the head of the line. I also believe that supporting the success of small local businesses should be at the top of the city's economic development priority list. As a Council Member, I would advocate for all reasonable regulatory reforms supported by small local business-owners. I think we can help our small businesses prosper by providing good infrastructure; delivering reliable basic services; maintaining a reasonable, stable regulatory environment; and, most importantly, by listening to small business owners when they tell us what their problems really are.

26. Do you support the halting of subsidies for retail development as proposed by the Stop Domain Subsidies initiative? If not, why not?

I testified against the Domain subsidies as a private citizen, before being elected to the City Council. And as a Council member, I sponsored a successful amendment to city economic-development policy that eliminated future "project-based" incentive packages, such as the Domain. I continue to support economic development that creates new, well-paying jobs for Austin.

While the unemployment rate for the most disadvantaged in our community continues to grow, our job recruitment efforts seem to be focused on mainly higher end businesses with promises that an expanded tax base benefits us all. The current strategy of our economic development relies on the concept of "trickle down economics" to be successful.

27. Why hasn't a larger tax base solved our economic problems and the supposed benefit of recruiting high end businesses "trickle down" to the rest of us?

The creation of property wealth will not, in and of itself, meet all of the Austin's needs. With regard to the health of Austin's general fund, we have to consider not only revenue, but also expenditures and allocation of resources. I am committed to working with the citizens of Austin and my colleagues on city council to develop a long-range strategic plan for improving the stability of the general fund. As for needs not directly addressed by municipal services, I will continue to support the development of alliances between the City and private-sector non-profit organizations.

The city has spent millions on economic development; City Council members have traveled to far off countries to promote Austin. The City has a whole department in City Hall focused on Economic Growth and Redevelopment Services whose main focus is on large, corporate non-local business recruitment. Austin is already recognized as a great city for business with a highly educated and skilled labor pool making us a favored destination city for business development. However, the majority of job growth in Austin is coming from small businesses.

- 28. What specific changes in our economic development strategies would you make to focus on maintaining our current businesses and establishing clear performance measures that ensure that our business retention and recruitment will be a positive benefit to the community?**

In many cases, I feel that most businesses simply want city government to be an efficient and cost-effective provider of essential services. This means that they want responsive public safety, reliable and affordable water and electric service, and well-maintained streets and right-of-way. Further, they want necessary projects, such as street repairs, to be done in a way that respects their particular business. Having said this, I think that some of the money best spent to support local business is spent when we strengthen the delivery of essential municipal services and do so at the best cost possible. With regard to economic development--when public money is used to stimulate our city's economy--I require two things: 1.) the money must create real and lasting jobs; and 2.) we must be able to verify the creation, endurance, and pay scale of the jobs. I do not favor the subsidy of projects that are in some sense zero-sum, where new development occurs, but the wealth created is drawn from existing economic activity.

Austin has developed a reputation as the Music Capital of the World and the music business has grown to be a major economic engine for our city. However, Austin's growth is creating problems for the music industry. Downtown new residential units are being built adjacent to longstanding music venues, while the development of many new live music venues outside of the central business district has begun to negatively impact many of our residential neighborhoods.

- 29. As a City Council member what would you do to resolve this conflict in such a way so as to support both live music and maintaining the quality of life in our neighborhoods?**

The question is preceded by a statement calling Austin the "Music Capital of the World"; in fact we have worked hard to promote ourselves as the "Live Music Capital of the World". Whether or not the title is a creation of our own pride, Austin does have a significant Live Music scene that has become interwoven with our quality of life. While downtown Austin has two designated Entertainment Districts that allow late night outdoor live music to play late into the evening - but not to exceed 85 Decibels - the rest of the city has restricted to outdoor music to end at more reasonable times. City Parks are even more restrictive; ending any performance any night of the week before the nightly news airs. Currently, there is a discussion from the Planning Commission to reduce the decibel level to 75 in the Entertainment Districts and 70 throughout the rest of the city. While I find this approach a good discussion to have, I believe the Planning Commission should hear community input before making a final recommendation. I am also excited to hear about the policies the Planning Commission is discussing on Soundproofing. The Planning Commission has discussed the policy as both a

requirement and as an incentive. Again, I would like to hear the community feedback before they make their final recommendation. What is clear is that our Music Economy generates nearly One Billion Dollars a year in direct and indirect economic impact. Our Music Economy employs thousands of Austinites at various levels. An example of one creative solution to a live music venue next door to residential units was the legal partnership between the 360 Condominiums and their neighboring Austin Music Hall; their agreement resulted in the soundproofing of the Music Hall. What is clear is we will have to support innovative ideas to find the solutions to supporting our Live Music scene while maintaining our quality of life.

Closing Question

Austin will face many opportunities and challenges over the next few years. It is critical that our community has effective leadership on the City Council and that leadership reflects the will of the whole community, not just special interests. Nevertheless, any successful candidate needs to have broad support of the community to be elected and to be effective.

- 30. Why do you think you deserve the endorsement of BETTER AUSTIN TODAY? And if elected will you commit to meeting with representatives of BETTER AUSTIN TODAY on a regular basis to discuss our organization's perspective on important city issues?**

There is no other place like Austin. It is a state of mind as much as it is a city. For our community to deal with the issues revolving around growth and our need to address issues that have been long avoided, we need to work together, and we need to get along. We also need to make tough decisions to address the core issues that have been weakened through political debate and personal ambitions. I have worked hard to keep an open door policy, and I look forward to meeting with BAT PAC representatives and gaining your perspectives on the issues facing Austin and our region. I believe that my record on the issues that matter most to you is solid. I have not taken the politically safe routes when it was possible to do so, and I have not "gone along" with my colleagues when it was clear how an issue would be addressed. If I have ever been faced with overwhelming facts that have provided me with a better alternative, I have made my decision well known and made it clear. My hope is that my community leadership and public service can best be seen in the difficult cases and not just the celebratory ones. One example I would point to is my handling of Water Treatment Plant #4. I look forward to having a continued productive relationship with Better Austin Tomorrow and hope you will share your questions, concerns and constructive criticism with me and with my council colleagues.

End of questionnaire

Note to incumbent candidates:

If in your capacity as City Council member you have asked city staff to provide any research or assistance in answering any of these questions, please so note in your responses. We would also appreciate being provided with any information provided by the city staff to you so that we may share that information with the other candidates to ensure an equitable questionnaire process.

Thank you for your time in addressing the many important topics of this questionnaire.