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The following are Mr. Weiss' answers to the Better Austin Today Candidate endorsement questions.

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

I believe in the principles and ideals that Better Austin Today embodies. I would be honored to represent Better Austin Today because those principles represent my own beliefs. The endorsement from this group will solidify my candidacy and make me a better contender in the contested place three race. Not only will this endorsement make my run for City Council very viable, but it will also open new doors to a vast resource of volunteers and potential donors. I have had the pleasure of speaking with many Austinites in the past several months and my views concur with many of theirs about the future of Austin and its neighborhoods. I am willing to work hard to ensure that Better Austin Today has a representative on the City Council.

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?*

My vision for Austin continues to keep Austin unique, fun, clean, beautiful, and a great place to work, live, play, and raise a family. I have lived in Austin over 38 years. During that time I have come to know the places and events that make Austin unique including: Zilker Park, Barton Springs and the green belts, Lake Travis, our other water resources and outdoor recreation areas, SXSW and live music, South Congress, 6th Street, the Warehouse District, and the Drag. But, small businesses are the heart of Austin. As a City Councilmember, I will do all I can to ensure that Austin will retain its charm. We need to have balance between what's right for the city and it's neighborhoods, not what big business, large contributors, or special interest groups want.

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, a public official's business should be public knowledge. I also believe that as a public official, the citizens of Austin have access to me. I will have one or two days a month specifically designated as Citizen's Days to discuss their concerns or problems. I believe that there should be no back room meeting where taxpayer dollars are concerned. I believe in full disclosure.

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?***

Why concentrate on the past when we should be looking towards the future. As a Councilmember, I will make the best, most informed decisions for the city and it's neighborhoods that I can. All I can say is that I will do things differently than my esteemed colleagues. There are so many items that need improvements in our city.

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 believe that the City Council should reserve the right to have the ability to hire an outside, independent attorney or consulting firm on special occasions. This would allow for information to be presented in a non bias form, independent of all parties involved. This may indeed give the Council an outside view from a party that has no general interest in the decision being made.

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?***

The oath I took as an Officer in the military, I held to the highest standards as I expected the soldiers I led to do the same. As a Councilmember, I too will hold accountable not only myself, but my staff and any city employee to up hold the law and be truthful. If information is presented to me about any alleged abuse or criminal activities, it will be investigated and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

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 see strengths and weaknesses with both systems of government. Several people have commented that Austin wants Single Member Districts (SMD). Currently, I have had the great pleasure of meeting the diverse population and hearing of the unique problems each area of the city has. However, if Austin were to go to SMD, I think it would be advantageous to those people who were interested in getting started in politics. The citizens of Austin would know exactly who their representation was on city council. But,

I also believe that each and every citizen has the right to hold accountable each Councilmember and make them responsible for his or her actions to the community.

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?***

Yes, within reason. I believe that it is every citizen's right to have their vote counted. It has already been an issue even in this year's Presidential race. Yes, I will go on record for returning to hand counted paper ballots. It worked in this country from some 200 years. It may cost a little more to hand count ballots, but every election needs to be fair and secure and the voting public needs that assurance.

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?***

I have mentioned this several times during these questions. I truly believe that the community should have some input into the types of development that occur within their neighborhoods. By utilizing existing groups such as Austin Neighborhood Council and local home owners associations, we could have a volunteer board. The process could be set up in a matter of weeks or months. Funding could also be kept to a minimum by using volunteers from these groups.

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.***

It has been pointed out many times about how the City has failed in it's responsibilities to involve the communities in the development process.

- A. Again, I believe that the City should try with all reasonable methods to involve those communities that are having major development regardless of any zoning changes.
- B. It is obvious that city should know whether or not it can provide the necessary services to any development being considered. We also need to know prior to development what the economical impacts are to property taxes and values in the area. In the consideration of VMU, will businesses be able to afford the newer rental rates for retail and office space. So the question is... How will this new development affect the community as a whole?
- C. Land usage will also be a catch 22. Someone will always be for or against a proposed land usage. For example, the Wal-Mart at Northcross mall. Some claim there will be an increase in traffic and crime to the area. While this might be true, what would the alternative be in not having Wal-Mart develop this property? Northcross mall could most likely close completely leaving an aging, vacant, and dilapidated building behind. Homelessness and crime could rise because the area had fallen into disrepair and property values start to decline from the eye-sore on the corner. However, with Wal-Mart coming, it will help revitalize an older neighborhood. Hopefully, Wal-Mart will employ most people from the surrounding neighborhoods, thus cutting down on commutes. The new Wal-Mart store will allow more people to walk or take shorter vehicular trips to the grocery store, thus saving fuel cost and the environment. Northcross has already reaped some benefits from this new development. For the record, I don't advocate big box business, but in this case, I believe that this may be the lesser of two evils.
- D. The city needs to make sure that everyone involved in the planning and development process is standardized. By standardizing the knowledge of city employees, the planning and development process would be more efficient as developers could make all needed plan adjustments in one or two visits. City employees should be required to attend training on the ordinances at least once per year or as ordinances are up dated.
- E. I have mentioned this before. I will make all reasonable attempts to make sure that neighborhoods have adequate time to review any major development projects planned within their neighborhoods.
- F. Citizens may also make an appointment with my office to discuss any questions, comments, or concerns they may have about proposed major development.

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?

We have learned a great lesson from the Wal-Mart development at Northcross. I hope that this lesson will be carried forward that communities need to be involved in issues and major development that affect they neighborhoods. I will, however, pledge to involve community leaders from communities that have major zoning issues arise in their neighborhoods. Currently, I do not have enough information to make an educated statement as to weather VMU is a zoning change or not. I do support the position that allows for neighborhoods to opt out certain or all properties in their neighborhood from VMU usage.

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?*

The older neighborhoods that were once affordable are becoming less and less affordable due to the ever increasing redevelopment of existing properties and homes in those neighborhoods. One way to possibly stop this is to not allow significant redevelopment of properties in certain neighborhoods, i.e. McMansions. By allowing the removal of an existing homes and allowing a home two or three times the size to be built, causes property taxes to increase thus making these areas less affordable to moderate and low income families.

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***

Recently, one of my constituents remodeled her home. She is a senior citizen with a fixed income, but her home is over 50 years old and in need of some renovations. The contractor told her that it would be four to five months to complete. It has been almost eight with several weeks to go! There have been several code enforcement inspectors that have visited the site to inspect various aspects of the construction. One item would be approved by one inspector but not another. For example, the home, being 50 years old, contained aluminum electrical wiring, when they added on to the home, they used copper wiring as required by the electrical code. One code inspector said nothing while another said the entire home had to be rewired to bring it all up to code. This cost this senior citizen untold tens of thousands of extra dollars in construction cost and delays to require the entire home.

After personally fighting the city development and zoning departments with several business related matters, I have noticed that there is a vast discrepancy in the knowledge of the ordinances that the code enforcement inspectors are suppose to enforce. How can someone write a citation for a violation of an ordinance yet not know what the ordinance means? Our business fought the city for over two and a half years and when one

ordinance was proven not valid, another violation would mysteriously be brought forward from the city.

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

I believe that the City has adopted ordinances pertaining to zoning and development and that these ordinances should be followed within the scope of the law. If everyone is held to the same ordinances, development is kept consistent. If not, the city council should adopt appropriate ordinances to reflect the current trends and needed changes in the development of the city.

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?*

Yes, I do. This land could be utilized as green space and parkland that is low impact to the environment. The City of Austin recently spent \$30 million dollars on green space. This seems like a reasonable amount to possible spend yearly on acquiring additional environmental significant property. How much acreage will depend on current market values.

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.***

A. By promoting the usage of zeroscaping and using native and drought resistant plants, the City of Austin and citizens could lower their water usage and utility bills. The city

- may consider having workshops perhaps in conjunction with the Home and Garden show.
- B. Again, I do realize the need for alternative power supplies. I will choose solar and wind generation whenever feasible.
 - C. I have always felt that major developments should contain items such as Light Emitting Diode (LED) lighting, solar and/or wind generation, extra insulation, and various other current energy efficient building technologies. This will help cut the cost of utility bills, reduce demand on our utility system, and helps save the environment.
 - D. I believe that the city should only annex neighborhoods when they are able to provide community services within a reasonable time. Austin should not be annexing neighborhoods strictly for five or six years only to collect property taxes while not supplying services to those areas.

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 believe that with the switch to the use of LED lighting in not only our overhead street lights but also in city owned buildings; we can eliminate the need for additional coal, petroleum, and nuclear power plants for the near future. I will push initiatives towards using more renewable resources such as solar and wind generation. However, as Austin continues to grow, I'm not certain that current technology in solar and wind generation will be able to keep up with growth in demand. I will always utilize solar and wind generation as a viable substitute for coal, petroleum, and nuclear whenever possible.

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?*

Developers generally don't live in or near the projects they build. They do not always realize the impact that their projects have on the surrounding neighborhoods. I will support community involvement on any major development in neighborhoods. No one wants to live in the shadow of a 40 story condominium building or have a big box store in the neighborhood either. I strongly believe that communities affected by these types of development have a say in what happens in their areas.

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

As a City Councilmember, I will make sure that communities are involved as much as possible when major development occurs as it will affect the entire neighborhood. Perhaps the city can utilize groups such as the Austin Neighborhood Council or Better

Austin Today and local home owners associations of affected neighborhoods to allow ample time for input from these citizens. Of course, this would not be possible for all development but developments of a certain size would automatically be given extra time to allow for input from the community.

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?*

There are always going to be fixed cost associated with the operations of the city. I agree that we need to provide Health and Human Services for Austinites who need them. However, I also believe that as Austin continues to grow, we need to make sure that our communities remain safe. I will examine Austin's budget far more closely to eliminate wasted tax dollars so that we may fund all necessary city services while maintaining the affordability of Austin. Let's run Austin like a business and not just another government tax dollar wasting machine.

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 am ready, as a City Councilman, to make it a priority to review as much of the city budget as possible before any vote. Budget items I determine there to be discrepancies or waste, I am prepared to vote against the matter until the problems are resolved to my own and the citizens satisfaction.

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?*

Some of the reasons that our tax burden on the middle and lower income families has not decreased is because of subsidies to big business and over budgeting by city government. Stop giving big business tax abatements and city services at reduced rates or even free as the case may be. Instead, support and help small businesses. The ones who actually help the community by providing jobs and taxes the city needs. These small businesses keep their profits here in Austin. There are also plenty of people in Austin who can not afford health care for themselves or their families. We need to make sure that we continue to help those that need help.

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?

Austin may never have truly affordable housing. You can't expect affordability when you refurbish older existing homes or demolish them to build McMansions or condominiums. One of Austin's more affordable areas used to be the east side of town. While this new development is a welcome sight to revitalize East Austin, at the same time takes away some truly affordable housing options. This additional development causes a rise in the property taxes for all homes in the area.

Currently, there is no definite way to calculate the number of units the affordable housing bond could provide. I believe the real estate market will determine that. However, I do believe that all \$55 million should be used in some fashion to provide affordable housing. This may simply include helping current owners update their homes with energy efficient appliances, adding extra insulation, and/or providing weather stripping and solar screens. It could also help provide down payment assistance to first time buyers who can't afford to raise the typical five to ten percent down. Perhaps some money could be used to educate new buyers about the types of home loans and mortgages available.

Section eight housing and government funded public housing should only be temporary stops to help citizens while they better themselves. IE pursuing an education, learning needed jobs skills, or actively looking for full time employment. Senior citizens would not fall under these guidelines as they are generally in their retirement years and need low income housing assistance because their fixed incomes. We need to continue to help those citizens in need to help themselves make a better life for them and their families. Then Austin can truly be better today.

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.***

- A. As everyone knows, Austin is not as affordable as it once was. We need to make sure that city employees make a livable wage. It's very hard for a family to live on minimum wage. We can look at specific jobs and determine if there are possible ways to either increase the wages earned or perhaps provide additional training opportunities so employees can move from entry level positions to better paying positions within their departments. Everyone deserves a chance to better themselves.
- B. There will always be a higher demand for the Public Safety budget than for the Health and Human Services budget. However, we should examine the need for such services and make sure that citizens who rely on them are not turned away.

C. Perhaps we could offer jobs to those citizens living in section eight house or government funded public housing and that are in the welfare system jobs first in order to help those individuals get back on their feet and become productive citizens rather than others who rely on social services as an excuse or crutch.

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.*

It's been the American dream to own a nice car, a home, and perhaps running your own business. There are already plenty of people who have the entrepreneurial spirit but may not know where to start. There are also lots of people who have started small businesses and have no or very little knowledge of how to run them efficiently and successfully. I would like to have public forums for current businesses and for people who wish to own a business. Many people and small businesses don't know about the resources available to them to help make them successful. For example, the Small Business Development Center with the city, the Small Business Administration, the local college and universities, SCORE and ACE, the Chamber of Commerce, the better Business Bureau, and the tens of local small business associations. The city has the means and ability to bring all these resources together to bolster small business in Austin. I will see that Austin conducting small business forums every six months or year. This would allow people to get the information and the help they need in operating their small businesses. The city could also use this time to hear concerns from business owners about problems in their neighborhood from crime to traffic concerns to zoning issues.

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

Most definitely! I have had the pleasure of operating two family businesses in Austin, and we never received a dime from the city to operate our businesses. It's a shame that the city will bend over backwards to bring big business to Austin, but could care less about the small business that makes Austin unique. The deal that the Domain received from the city; it's a wonder that we don't have every developer in North America beating down our doors for the same deal. Government waste has always been amazing to me. It's time to stop waste and bring government back to the people!

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?*

I think we all know the answer to this question! As I have stated before, the City of Austin has done everything in its powers to bring big business to Austin, and a lot of

time at the expense of small businesses and communities. As long as Austin continues to give subsidies, tax abatements, and utility subsidies to big business, we will all pay the price with higher taxes. Also, a larger tax base has not resolved our economic issues because the current council and its members keep spending more and more. As long as this continues, the taxpayers will never keep up. The runaway city budget has to be reigned in.

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?***

What did Austin do a hundred years ago? There were no big business, only family businesses and that's what made Austin what it is today. Big business should come to Austin because it wants to. We shouldn't have to beg or give huge incentive packages and if more big business comes to Austin, then great. If not, I believe that Austin will do just fine.

As stated in my answer to question 25, I will find ways to host small business forums and seminars for existing business and those who are interested in starting a business. Let's allow Austinites the opportunity to express their entrepreneurial spirit and help those businesses succeed.

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?***

Austin is "The live music capital of the world." We must strive to continue to provide a conducive environment for live music in Austin, while, also maintaining a good quality of life for our citizens that reside near live music venues. Perhaps noise ordinances can be written so that a compromise can be made between music venues and residents. On weeknights music decibel levels could be lowered at a certain time and on weekends continue longer before decibel levels would have to be reduced.

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?***

I don't think I deserve anything. In the military, I worked very hard to earn the respect and trust of my subordinates, peers, and superiors, and I did that by performing my job very efficiently, effectively and responsibly. What I believe is that Better Austin Today should support a candidate that has similar views to the BATPAC philosophy and I believe that a lot of my views are on a similar track with yours. I will meet with Better



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Austin Today and listen to their concerns. They have principles that align with my very own. Together, we can advance this city in a positive direction. If I am elected to serve this great community, I will do what is right and responsible for Austin and its neighborhoods and not what big business and special interest want. I hope that Better Austin Today can see that I am sincere about saving citizens tax dollars, bring a change to local government and that I have earned the trust and respect of Better Austin Today.