

## 2026 Austin Environmental City Council Candidate Forum Questions

### 1. Climate Change and Air Pollution

- a. Austin is woefully behind on meeting its existing greenhouse gas reduction commitment to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions for the entire Austin community by 2040. **How would you get the City of Austin to prioritize and adequately fund climate initiatives to match the scale and scope of the Austin Climate Equity Plan?** Please be as specific as possible and limit your response to 1 minute.
- b. Heavy duty diesel vehicles like trash trucks are highly polluting. Switching to electric models reduces local air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions and saves money over time, but requires significant up-front investment in the trucks themselves, transfer stations and charging stations. **Would you commit to prioritizing funding the transition to electric trash trucks for Austin Resource Recovery?** Please raise your hand if you support electric trash truck funding.

### 2. Environmental Justice & Children's Environmental Rights

- a. Austin has a long history of environmental racism, with polluting facilities concentrated in East Austin and communities of color. People point to the Dogs Head agreement as a recent example of this, and the placement and operation of the newly approved Austin Energy gas peaker plants may also become such an issue. **How would you ensure that Black, brown, and lower-income communities are not disproportionately burdened?** Please be as specific as possible and limit your response to 1 minute.
- b. In the past, Austin has funded an Austin Youth Climate Equity Council to engage young people in implementing the Austin Climate Equity Plan and supporting school sustainability projects. **Would you enhance programs like these or others to meaningfully include young people's perspectives in the City's environmental and sustainability policymaking process and if so, how?** Please be as specific as possible and limit your response to 1 minute.

### 3. Energy

- a. The Austin City Council adopted a goal of achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions for the entire Austin community by 2040 and a carbon-free by 2035 goal for Austin Energy, but also recently approved the purchase of 400 megawatts of methane gas, also known as natural gas, power plants. **Would you support cancelling the contract for Austin Energy to build new gas-burning power plants?** Please respond yes or no and limit your response to 30 seconds.
- b. Austin Energy needs additional local clean energy resources. **Do you support committing City of Austin and Austin Energy funds to establishing programs that empower low-to-medium income residents to host batteries and solar installations that are owned and operated by third parties without any out-of-pocket cost?** Please respond yes or no and limit your response to 30 seconds.

4. Data Centers

- a. **Do you support updating city zoning to exclude larger-scale data centers to enact a de facto ban?** Please respond yes or no and limit your response to 1 minute.

5. Water Quality

- a. The Dog's Head Agreement recently approved by Council reduces the environmental standards for the "Critical Water Quality Zone" of the Colorado River. **Would you support reinstating the standard Critical Water Quality Zone to 400 feet in the Dog's Head and keep the trail next to, but out of the Critical Water Quality Zone?** Please raise your hand if you support reinstating the prior water quality standard for Dog's Head.

6. Water Conservation

- a. In 2024, Austin Water's pipe system lost 17% of our water from leaks. Replacing old pipes is more cost effective than expanding supply. **Would you support an average \$1 per month increase in residential water bills dedicated to fixing leaks?** Please respond yes or no and limit your response to 30 seconds.
- b. Currently, requests to extend water service to a development in the Drinking Water Protection Zone require Council approval. This helps protect some environmentally sensitive areas, but it does not address companies (like data centers and chip manufacturers) using too much drinking water. **Would you support requiring Council approval for all industrial and commercial service extension requests that use large amounts of water, regardless of where they are located in the City?** Please raise your hand if you support Council approval of large water user service extension requests.

7. Democracy and Transparency

- a. Texas state law allows city council to vote in secret on some decisions for Austin Energy. This was recently used to allow a secret vote on what appears to be a \$1.3+ billion investment in natural gas generation, raising concerns in the community. **Would you support a city ordinance that would require the Austin City Council to vote in public on all Austin Energy matters?** Please raise your hand if you support Council voting in public on all Austin Energy matters.
- b. Nondisclosure agreements or NDAs are sometimes used by developers and other businesses to share information with city officials while keeping that information from the public. Likewise, recent controversial votes, like the one on the Dog's Head, have raised concerns about lobbying by business interests during Council meetings (outside of public view). **Would you support a city ordinance that defines transparency practices—like prohibiting the use of NDA's by elected city officials and their staff and prohibiting lobbying during Council meetings out of public view?** Please respond yes or no and limit your response to 30 seconds.

8. Open

- a. Each candidate will now have one minute to share additional thoughts. **You are encouraged to share any other environmental policy priorities you think are most important.**