

**Candidate's Name: Randi Shade**

**Capital Area Progressive Democrats 2011 Austin City Council  
Candidate Questionnaire (Amended)**

**1. What are (would be) your top three priorities as a Council member, how would you accomplish them and what in your past experience has prepared you to be able to accomplish them? Also, how long have you lived in the city of Austin?**

I moved to Austin in 1984 to begin my undergraduate education at the University of Texas, as a Plan II Honors major. In the more than 20 years that I've lived here, I have loved Austin and have worked hard to actively participate. I have experienced Austin as a student, as a government employee, and as an entrepreneur, in good times and in bad. Regardless of the circumstances, I have consistently supported causes and organizations throughout our community, dedicating whatever resources I could – sometimes as a grassroots volunteer and sometimes as a donor or board member. Other than during the four years that I attended UT, I have lived in the Clarksville neighborhood as a renter and as a homeowner; however, I have worked and volunteered in all parts of our community.

When I ran in 2008, my stated priorities were to ensure responsible growth, fight poverty, and deliver reliable, affordable city services. Three years later, I believe we have made progress on these issues; however, they remain my core priorities for the next three years as well. In terms of responsible growth, I cast the tie-breaking vote to go forward with the construction of Water Treatment Plant 4, and I am the only candidate running in this election cycle who supports WTP4. Opponents of WTP4 are working very hard to make my support of the plant a campaign issue. I also helped bring 1500 new jobs to Austin, improved evaluation of economic development agreements to increase public notice and input,

enhanced support for small local businesses, and prevented a proposed project in the Barton Springs Recharge Zone without adherence to a tougher, new ordinance. I helped launch the Pecan Street Project as an independent nonprofit with corporate and federal government funding to drive local smart grid technology research. My goals for the next term would be to continue growing our economy and attracting jobs at all income levels, and to continue working hard to ensure Austin does what it can to plan appropriately for infrastructure needs while safeguarding our environmental resources.

Fighting poverty is also an important concern of mine, and will remain so in my second term. As Chair of the Public Health and Human Services Committee, I drove a process to re-bid our social services contracts – something the City had not done since the 1990's. The purpose was to prioritize services to support our most vulnerable neighbors, but also to ensure tax dollars are used more efficiently. I plan to look for more ways to make the social service dollar go farther, and will be especially focused on investments that drive costs down in other areas of city government (i.e., reduced 911 calls, reduced reliance on emergency shelter for housing).

I also helped safeguard key City services during three difficult budget cycles. I helped craft a budget to expand the number of public safety officers on the streets, while preventing cuts to core services. I successfully advocated for increased parks maintenance support city-wide, created public-private partnerships to support youth sports city-wide, and voted to expand our commitment to renewable energy sources while minimizing rate increases. I already mentioned my support of WTP4. I plan to do more of the same in a second term, but hopefully with more success and greater focus, especially when it comes to prioritizing funding for activities directly related to providing clean, safe neighborhoods city-wide, and reliable, affordable utilities for all citizens. Of course, the City has an important role to play, along with other regional entities, on matters related to

transportation, land-use, and economic development, but while not glamorous, I am a strong believer in ensuring that the City staff focuses on core city services first. We've got to build a budget process that supports that prioritization, too.

**2. Do you support single member districts? If so, what configuration would you support to achieve fair and adequate representation?**

The subject of single member districts is very complicated and speaks to the very essence of how citizens of Austin are represented at City Hall. I expect the Mayor to form a charter review committee soon, and it sounds like ChangeAustin.org has already launched a petition drive to promote discussion on its proposal. I am opposed to the bill proposed by Senator Wentworth that would mandate a change in Austin's form of local representation; I feel strongly that such a change should be a vote of Austin citizens and not the State Legislature.

I have more questions than answers regarding the proposals currently being circulated, including Mayor Leffingwell's. Minority populations in Austin do not live in concentrated areas, something especially true for the African-American community, so it seems nearly impossible to draw districts that would guarantee African-American representation. Furthermore, if the assumption is that African-Americans and Hispanics would fare better in district races than in city-wide races, then I would be concerned about the perception that in a hybrid system, district seats are less powerful than city-wide seats. We would not want to have a situation where Council Members from minority communities are "downgraded to less powerful seats." According to the criteria set by the Supreme Court, a

legal challenge to fair representation must prove: historical under-representation, a compact population, proof that the minority group votes as a block, and proof that minority candidates are being defeated because white voters vote as a block. Any new system for representation would have to pass muster at the Department of Justice, and I am not sure any of the proposals I've seen circulating right now would.

Most of all, I want to better understand what specific problems the community wants to address with respect to our current system. It seems critical to first vet the options for addressing each of those problems individually before coming to the table with a pre-conceived proposal. For example, most cities see a spike in local elections after a change from one system to another is made, but then return to low turnout levels. Voter turnout in Austin could increase automatically and sustainably just by shifting city elections to November. Likewise, if the problem to be addressed is the financial burden of running a city-wide race, we need to be cognizant of the fact that running in a district with 150,000+ people is still a very expensive undertaking unless you rely on voter turnout remaining at the currently low levels. Similarly, if the problem to be addressed is geographic accountability then the community needs to actively debate the trade-offs of possibly losing guaranteed African American representation and also becoming a city government more focused on district initiatives than those that are city-wide. We need to play out the scenarios of having a city government with the majority of the Council accountable to only 10 – 15% of the population and therefore NOT accountable to the other 85 – 90%. Our current system is far from perfect, but I never take a vote now without thinking about the community as a whole versus thinking about working for one geographic area over another. Again, I look forward to the discussion and hope for active and engaged debate with local citizens driving the results they hope to achieve.

**3. Considering the environmental damage attributable to the coal fired generation of much of Austin Energy's electricity, the greatly heightened concern over nuclear generated electricity, transmission expense mandates, and the continued specter of significantly higher rates facing our most vulnerable citizens, what practical short and long term strategies would you, as a Council member, advocate to Austin Energy?**

I have been a strong proponent of Austin's Renewable Energy efforts. I helped launch the Austin Clean Energy Initiative ten years ago, have been an active part of the Pecan Street Project throughout my first term and sit on its board of directors to drive local smart grid technology research. I have supported a generation plan for Austin Energy that expands our commitment to renewable energy while capping annual rate increases. I fully recognize the importance of demand-side management (energy savings programs) to drive down the dependence on purchasing more power. Increases in utility costs are driven by much more than just the cost of power, even renewable power, and our utility has basic infrastructure costs looming as well as a cost of service study currently under way. There are other management challenges in front of us, too, such as the imminent retirements of senior personnel at AE. In other words, costs include more than just power generation. I expect AE oversight challenges to be a big part of my second term. Austin is very fortunate to own its electric utility, and I want to keep it that way.

600MW comes out of our share of the Fayette coal plant. Before selling our share, I would need to understand where that much base power is going to come from. From a clean air stand point, too, selling the plant it is not enough; there is no environmental gain of selling off our ownership stake if another utility can simply take it over, enjoy the cheap base power and continue to pollute. I always keep an open mind and am willing to hear about proposals that help us reduce our dependence on coal; however, I

have serious concerns about the costs and handling of waste where nuclear power is concerned. I have not been presented with a proposal at this time, and what little I have heard about a new participation proposal seems too costly to warrant consideration.

**4. When making decisions on issues that come before the Council how would you, as a Council member, prioritize environmental impact compared to, for instance, current law, budget concerns, cost to citizens, and effect on growth, among other factors?**

Our City is engaged in a number simultaneous area plans. A Comprehensive Plan, a Downtown Plan, Strategic Mobility Plan and hopefully, we will soon see the recommendations for the new waterfront overlay. The challenge for policy makers is implementation. No amount of planning can substitute for good judgment and the ability to balance all of the City's priorities as land use decisions are made. My influence will continue to be what it has been in my first term – a common sense approach based on careful scrutiny and an active seeking of varied input.

A good example of my approach can be seen in my attempt to protect the Eastside Creeks amid growing pressure to develop East Austin. We can not expect to apply the same watershed protection rules to our soft eastern alluvial soils that we apply to our hard limestone stream beds and expect the same results. The soft soils of our eastern watersheds are even more dependent on softer slopes and well vegetated riparian areas. I recently supported a staff-led initiative to craft a new set of watershed ordinances more suited to protecting our eastern streambeds, watersheds, and our tax base. We also need to take stock of the enormous recreational opportunities and responsibilities that exist around our eastern creeks and streambeds.

**5. Given the context of the confluence of revisions to the No Sit/No Lie ordinance, the proposal to move the Community Court from county to city administration, and proposed budget cuts that will constrain Austin Travis County Integral Care's ability to provide services to Austin's homeless residents most directly affected by these developments, do you have any specific plans or strategies for addressing the plight of our homeless neighbors?**

Helping our most vulnerable neighbors is one of my top priorities on Council. Services for homeless Austinites have a direct effect on the entire City, from public safety to housing to economic development. As Chair of the Council's Public Health and Human Services Committee, I led the process to re-bid the City's Social Services contracts and set our City's highest priority as providing basic needs services. This process had not been undertaken since the mid-1990's. The purpose and result was to prioritize services to support our most vulnerable neighbors, and also ensure that our tax dollars are used more efficiently. I plan to look for more ways to make the social service dollar go farther, and will be especially focused on investments that drive costs down in other areas of city government (i.e., reduced 911 calls, reduced reliance on emergency shelter for housing).

My legislative and voting record also shows strong support for helping the homeless. I co-sponsored Council Resolutions to prioritize housing for the lowest income citizens in our community (those who make below 30% of the Median Family Income); endorsed the Permanent Supportive Housing strategy, which directly assists those most in need in our community; and voted to move forward with creating a Leadership Council with members outside of city government to examine and recommend financing strategies for achieving our goal of creating 350 permanent supportive housing units throughout our community. I am also working with the Ending

Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO) to have the City become a partner in the 100,000 Homes Campaign, which would target the 100 most vulnerable citizens of Austin who are currently living on the street and working with private entities to find them homes.

**6. What is your response, procedural or otherwise, to the release of Council members' e-mails from the dais and the resultant public concern?**

Email is a casual, short-hand form of communication that is common in today's world. In my job as a City Council Member, however, my email belongs to the public. I am embarrassed by some of the emails I have written and am sorry about the poor judgment I used engaging in silly banter in some instances and making hurtful comments in a couple of other instances. I have apologized and have pledged to do better going forward. It has always been my intention to serve this community to the best of my ability and believe that most citizens would prefer we focus on the more important issues that face our City.

**7. Regarding a Differential Animal Registration, aka Spay/Neuter ordinance, in light of the support of the three major animal organizations in Austin and the Austin Neighborhoods Council, a 13,000 signature petition, and the success of similar ordinances in other cities, do you support such an ordinance for Austin and if not, why not?**

I will explore this in my second term. I have spent considerable time in my first term working with Animal Welfare issues. I am very proud of my work to help the donation fund, the citizen board, the transition of animal shelter directors, and am proud that our City has quickly accomplished the goal of becoming a "No Kill" city, reaching a 90%+ live outcome rate at our

animal shelter. Between the No-Kill Implementation Plan that I supported and the many non-profit animal welfare agencies in Austin that the City partners with, we are doing a good job of educating the public and working against pet overpopulation. From Emancipet's low-cost and free spay/neuter clinics to the Austin Humane Society's trap-and-release program, to Austin Pets Alive!'s tremendous outreach and adoption efforts, the City has accomplished a lot without mandating what people do with their pets. That said, there is still more to do, and I will explore the option of Differential Animal Registration.

**8. What, if anything, do you think the City Council can and should do to help AISD with its budget crisis?**

Public education needs to be one of our top priorities as a city—not just in lean times, but in boom times as well. Austin is unique as an urban area in that over 90% of eligible students within AISD actually attend our public schools. We need to keep it that way, too, because if parents begin pulling their students out of our public schools, the entire system—and every student—suffers.

The City Council can help AISD in two primary ways: by reducing redundancies in services provided, and making sure that we do all we can to seek fairness in property tax assessments. I co-sponsored the measure that Council passed, directing our City Manager to work with AISD and find ways to alleviate some of their budgetary pressure. Specific examples could include the City assuming more financial responsibility for afterschool programming and/or other school-based family support services that the City provides at community clinics, rec centers, etc.; helping with public safety cost savings; providing maintenance on shared City-AISD facilities, especially sports, parks, and recreational facilities; and

potential partnerships with CapMetro to alleviate the transportation burden moving our kids to and from school.

Another crucial way the City can help AISD is to make sure everyone is paying their fair share in property taxes, which is the primary mechanism of funding our schools. I support an equitable distribution of property taxes between our residential and commercial property taxes, and in my second term will seek to correct the underassessment of commercial properties within the Central Appraisal District. I also will continue to be extremely judicious in the use of historical zoning designations, which when received enable homeowners to pay a greatly reduced property tax rate. I am all for preserving and protecting historic homes and areas of Austin, and understand that historic zoning is an important tool to help people maintain these beautiful, significant homes. However, when historic zoning is used too broadly, it ultimately erodes the tax base that funds our public schools, and as a result pushes an increased burden on everyone else in Austin.

It's important to remember that there are rules in the State Constitution that proscribe certain kinds of help—such as the direct transfer of funds—between a city government and an ISD. It's also important to remember that not all Austinites live within AISD boundaries. All school districts within the Austin city limits (i.e., Round Rock, Del Valle, Eanes, and Leander) are facing serious budgetary challenges. As a member of our Council, I will continue to prioritize what is best for all of our public schools as much as I am allowed to within the confines of the office.

**9. As a Council Member, what three things would you propose to help alleviate traffic congestion within Austin?**

I have deep concerns about how we are going to move an increasing population in and out of downtown, as well as how we can better address the traffic challenges on our major roads and highways. Improving connectivity and increasing our transportation system's capacity will support economic development and reinvestment while also supporting our community's goals for the environment and public health and safety. I want to explore ways the City could do more to help Cap Metro in its mission for better bus service, and do more to promote carpooling, telecommuting and flex-time arrival and departure strategies for major local employers. I was a strong supporter of the 2010 Transportation Bond, and seconded the motion from the dias to place it on the ballot. I have frequently voted for better sidewalks, supported the City's Master Bicycle Plan, supported the expansions of the Lady Bird Lake trail and negotiated for the very highest level of pass through, and interconnectivity on projects in front of the City Council during my tenure as a Council Member. All of these strategies would benefit from better marketing and use of technology such as applications for smart phones.

There is no one silver bullet, however, and the City is one player among many in this region. We need a mixture of transportation modalities. I supported the recent transportation bond proposal for that reason, but also to ensure we had projects in the pipeline until a more comprehensive approach could be offered. I have been pleased to see the creation of a Transportation Department during my tenure on the Council and support the Strategic Mobility Planning effort currently underway. It is my hope that this effort be better coordinated with the Comprehensive Plan going forward.

## South Austin Democrats Questionnaire

1 A spay/neuter ordinance for Austin's cats and dogs:

**QUESTION: If you become a city council representative, would you support funding of increased pet adoptions or would you support a spay/neuter ordinance? What efforts would you undertake to effectuate your position?**

I will explore a spay/neuter ordinance in my second term. I do not view this as an either/or question. I have spent considerable time in my first term working with Animal Welfare issues. I am very proud of my work to help the donation fund, the citizen board, the transition of animal shelter directors, and am proud that our City has quickly accomplished the goal of becoming a "No Kill" city, reaching a 90%+ live outcome rate at our animal shelter. Between the No-Kill Implementation Plan that I supported and the many non-profit animal welfare agencies in Austin that the City partners with, we are doing a good job of educating the public and working against pet overpopulation. From Emancipet's low-cost and free spay/neuter clinics to the Austin Humane Society's trap-and-release program, to Austin Pets Alive!'s tremendous outreach and adoption efforts, the City has accomplished a lot without mandating what people do with their pets. That said, there is still more to do, and I will explore the option of a mandatory spay/neuter ordinance.

2 Imagine Austin/Comprehensive Plan and Community needs

**QUESTION: Do you have ideas/solutions for reconciling both the preservation/protection of the Edwards Aquifer underground water reservoir & the protection of in-city neighborhoods' livability / viability for Austin's long term sustainability?**

I support growth in the desired development zone to draw density away from the aquifer. I prevented a proposed 37-acre project in the Barton Springs Recharge Zone, support SOS compliance and the Bradley agreements, and will always maintain an incredibly high bar when it comes to any development over the aquifer. I also support moving water supplies to surface water and seek to move remaining ground water users on to our Austin Water Utility Infrastructure. I favor reasonable increased density and development in central Austin as an alternative to sprawl and as a critical component of supporting the tax base. But, I make sure watershed protection is part of any negotiated agreements (i.e., my support of the South Shore PUD). I have supported affordable housing initiatives citywide, and have expressed concerns when land use decisions increase costs associated with development, re-development, re-habilitation and renovation. We can preserve the character of neighborhoods while still allowing more family-friendly housing options in central parts of the city. This will be an important area of focus for me in a second term, especially given the current challenges facing AISD.

Circle C Democrats Questions

**1. Do you favor removing the extension of 45 SW (S Mopac to 1626) from the CAMPO Regional Transportation Plan?**

We should honor what voters have already approved. We need better major roadways to reduce the burdens on neighborhood roads (i.e., Shady Hollow Neighborhood), and we need to ensure all plans include sensible environmental protection measures.

**2. Please detail your plans to enhance mass transportation options and general mobility in SW Austin and Oak Hill.**

The City is finalizing an interlocal agreement with CapMetro this week to update the transit plan for the area. I would expect and encourage neighbors to be involved in the process. Enhancements I would like to explore include Park and Rides, HOV express lanes, and the potential impact of rail for SW commuters.