

Candidate Questionnaire on Climate and Energy

350 Austin, Solar Austin, Earth Day Austin, Shades of Green

Candidate Name: Kathie Tovo

Candidate For: Austin District 9 Council Member

1. What are your top three priorities for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Austin, and what actions would you take to implement needed changes?

I believe that fighting climate change requires a multi-pronged approach in which we adopt a variety of policies that improve energy efficiency, increase our public and private use of renewable resources, and reduce our use of fossil fuels.

Some of my top priorities at the City related to this include retiring the Fayette Power Plant, electrifying our City fleet, and increasing private and public generation of solar and renewable energy resources. As a Council Member, I have worked toward each of these goals by supporting efforts to:

- Close the Fayette Power Plant, including supporting creating a cash reserve fund that we will use to pay off related debts so we can retire the plant.
- Identify a target for transitioning the City's fleet to electric vehicles.
- Adopt an update to the Generation Plan that supports at least 330 new charging stations for electric vehicles by 2020.
- Approve a contract investing \$3.2 million in electric vehicle infrastructure.
- Set aggressive goals for net zero public and private emissions through the Generation Plan and the Austin Community Climate Plan.
- Direct the City Manager to nearly triple the City's portfolio of solar energy.
- Require new buildings be constructed in a way that allows them to be "solar ready."

Additionally, I believe that we must work with our partners in Central Texas, such as CapMetro, to provide real mass transit solutions that can provide alternatives to driving. I have consistently supported urban rail and mass transit efforts. I was one of the only candidates citywide who supported the 2014 urban rail bond and have voted for projects at the City that will help provide two new train stations on the existing MetroRail line.

I look forward to continuing to lead on efforts at the City to close the Fayette Power Plant, electrify our fleet, and increase generation of renewable energy resources, as well as working with our CapMetro partners to bring Austin mass transit through Project Connect.

2. As mayor or council member, you will be a member of the Austin Energy Utility Oversight Committee. What will you do to make sure that Austin Energy takes the necessary steps to phase out its use of fossil fuels for power generation by 2030?

I have been a strong and consistent voice leading the way on increasing renewable energy and moving away from fossil fuels. As a Council Member, I have led and supported efforts to:

- Establish the Austin Generation Resource Planning Task Force, which helped develop the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2030 for city- controlled resources.
- Adopt an Austin Community Climate Plan with the goal of achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions citywide by 2050.
- Direct the City Manager to nearly triple the City's portfolio of solar energy.
- Require new buildings be constructed in a way that allows them to be "solar ready."
- Establish a Joint Sustainability Task Force to advise Council on policies related to the Austin Community Climate Plan.
- Create a Low-Income Consumer Advisory Task Force to recommend ways the City can offer renewable energy and energy efficiency programs to less affluent residents.
- Support the Obama Administration's "Clean Power Plan" to control greenhouse gas emissions.
- Close the Fayette Power Plant, including supporting creating a cash reserve fund that we will use to pay off related debts so we can retire the plant.

I have also led the way on protecting our Council control of Austin Energy, which has made action on renewable energy initiatives possible. As a Council Member, I successfully fought off an effort to turn Austin Energy over to an independent board and instead supported establishing the Austin Energy Oversight Committee to ensure continued Council control and leadership.

I look forward to continuing to push to set aggressive renewable energy goals, expand our renewable energy generation, implement innovative policies, move away from fossil fuels, and protect the local control that allows us to make real progress.

- 3. Despite declining costs of solar, many low income residents and multi-family housing tenants are challenged to participate in Austin Energy's existing rooftop solar programs. Do you think it is important to expand access to solar by developing targeted programs and policies at Austin Energy? Please explain.**

Yes. I believe it is important for the City to expand access to solar to residents of all means in our community. As a Council Member, I have worked on efforts to help less affluent residents participate in our energy efficiency and renewable energy programs by establishing the Low-Income Consumer Advisory Task Force. I believe we need to continue to look for opportunities to expand access and, importantly, to invest in robust outreach efforts that ensure meaningful participation in these programs.

- 4. Local, distributed scale solar installation has produced values to the utility,**

community and the local economy. Do you support the expansion of utility investment programs (including rebates) for installing solar locally within the Austin Energy territory? Please explain.

Yes. I support expanding solar usage across our community. I helped lead on a successful effort to require new residential and commercial buildings be constructed in a way that allows them to be “solar-ready,” or able to be retrofitted for solar installation. Going forward, I will continue to look for opportunities to expand our solar installation programs, make them accessible to residents of all means, and push for robust program participation.

5. What specific role and responsibility do you see Austin taking in responding to local, regional and international impacts of climate change, including preparing for large numbers of people displaced by extreme weather events?

We know climate change is a serious problem, even though the president has called it a hoax created “to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive” and the Texas Republican Party’s official platform describes it as “a political agenda promoted to control every aspect of our lives” and actively calls for defunding climate initiatives.

With the state and federal governments actively undermining progressive efforts to fight climate change, it is extremely important that our local leaders stand up for sustainability.

I have led on climate change issues at Council, including the efforts at increasing renewable energy and decreasing fossil fuel use discussed earlier in this questionnaire. Additionally, I have led on efforts to increase our resiliency in the face of drought and extreme weather events.

Two of the key challenges we face related to climate change are ensuring a sustainable water supply in the face of intense droughts and a clean water supply in the face of extreme storms. I have led on water conservation and sustainability by launching the ambitious effort to create a plan to manage our resources responsibly and meet Austin’s water needs over the next 100 years, an effort known as “Water Forward.” That draft plan is currently being reviewed by our boards and commissions. I look forward to the Council reviewing and adopting Water Forward in the months ahead and to continuing to implement progressive policies and programs that help us conserve our resources and grow sustainably. I also have a strong record of voting to uphold our water quality protections by opposing unnecessary variances to the Save Our Springs Ordinance and other means of circumventing our watershed standards.

We need to continue to move forward on policies that can make our community more resilient to climate change and can allow us to respond rapidly to emergencies. For instance, I believe that the City should explore ways to: improve our disaster preparedness and ability to shelter displaced individuals during emergencies, move

toward “greenfield development standards” which would require developers to mitigate for their flooding impacts regardless of whether their project is a new development or a redevelopment, and expand our green infrastructure requirements to improve water quality. On the latter, I supported a Council budget item to invest in hiring a consultant to help City staff develop new green infrastructure requirements that may be able to help enhance the way we integrate nature and water quality features into our community.

If re-elected, I will continue to be a leader in fighting for policies that move us forward on climate change preparedness and resiliency.