

Candidate Questionnaire: City of Austin City Council Race 2014

Response from Ann Kitchens, District 5 Candidate

1. Many farmers and artisan food producers tell us that their biggest challenge is navigating the regulatory maze. **Do you support reforms at the health department such as simplifying the regulations imposed on local producers and creating an ombudsman position to help producers understand the requirements?**

X Yes Comments: I would support simplifying regulations in a way that ensures protection of public health and helping producers navigate city regulations. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss with FARFA specific approaches to accomplish these goals.

2. While local, sustainable foods have gained a reputation for being higher priced than conventional foods, that is not always the case. And, even when the food is higher priced, it reflects higher production costs that the farmers pay in order to raise food in ways that are environmentally friendly and on a small scale. The result is that profit margins for our local farmers are tiny. Yet the City of Austin has some of the highest permit fees in the state for producers selling at farmers' markets. **Do you support reducing fees to support small-scale local farmers and food producers?**

X Yes Comments: Yes, I would be supportive of examining a reduction in fees as a means to support local food production in our region.

3. Access to land is another major challenge for people seeking to bring back locally raised foods. **Do you support measures to improve access to land for growing food, such as allowing public property to be used for nonprofit community gardens and working with County officials to reduce property tax burdens on small urban farmers?**

X Yes

Comments: Yes, I have seen very successful use of public lands for community gardens and other food production. Also, please see my Property Tax Reform ideas on my website at www.kitchenforaustin.com which includes reforms to support small businesses including urban farmers.

4. Sustainable farming methods allowed under the city's code provide not only nutritious food, but also support a clean, healthy environment for our communities. Selling locally raised food provides income (either the primary income or supplemental) for growers, improves access to healthy local foods for consumers, and promotes local economic development. **Do you support people's ability to grow food and sell food in residential areas, subject to reasonable requirements (such as available parking) to protect neighbors' interests?**

X Yes

Comments: Qualified yes, I require more information as to the scale of both growing and selling that would be undertaken.

5. The interest in local foods goes beyond simply purchasing food. Re-connecting people with where and how their food is grown has many benefits. It promotes healthier eating; it creates transparency and encourages farmers to practice environmentally sound agriculture; it builds a sense of community and increased local economic development. An important aspect of rebuilding a local foods community is having people on farms for a wide range of events, including classes on cooking or canning; birthday parties for children that engage kids with their food; and weddings and other celebrations that recognize the vital role that food and our environment play in our lives. **Do you support urban farms' ability to host such events, subject to reasonable requirements (such as available parking and music restrictions) to protect neighbors' interests?**

X Yes

Comments: Absolutely, I think as long as reasonable requirements are followed. I have attended events at local farms and believe that hosting events adds to the community and connects people to their environment.