



2009 SAN ANTONIO CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATES' QUESTIONNAIRE:

1. How will you protect the Edwards Aquifer, our City's drinking water source, if elected to City Council?

I will keep an eye out on any future Recharge Zone zoning cases that may come before council and will review all pertinent information before making a decision. I will, as I did as when I was Zoning Commissioner, keep rules, regulations and laws in mind that protect our aquifer. I will try, where possible, to initiate amendment proposals that can further protect our aquifer. This can be local level and State legislation proposals as they occur on a timely basis. I will use my past experience, along with my open door policy, to listen to citizens, groups and developers regarding such matters. Suggestions and observations from groups involved in protecting our aquifer are always welcome. A future summit of such matters would not be a bad idea.

2. Please identify priority water issues in your district.

TCEQ has cited SAWS for lack of water tanks per users served. This problem is now threatening existing homes and businesses from what is known by Bexar Appraisals as economic obsolescence. A meeting held in my area informed my community that the tanks could be ground level or elevated towers. The difference of electrical cost required to pump water upward, as well as to keep a ground level tank pressurized, was negligible. Our former councilperson was concerned about the tanks, but later became quiet when she found it would allow for higher density construction in the area. Other concerns of the tank being built at W. Martin and N. General McMullen, was the proximity of a creek, now channel that is next to it. The channel will be helpful when the two million gallon tank is drained for cleaning. No response was given if the drained water will be chlorinated or not. This is important to know because the channel feeds into Elmendorf Lake. Will the water, if chlorinated, affect the ecosystem of an existing watershed? Other concerns not water related were tank height impact on nearby military and civilian air traffic control as well as to the impact this elevated tank will have on a nearby newly constructed eco-solar-friendly elementary school.

3. True or false: The Edwards Aquifer filters stormwater runoff that enters it.

False. In the event that gasoline or paint, or any hazardous chemical were introduced, the aquifer could become contaminated and our water source would be destroyed. Only the monitoring of contaminated plumes could be done.

4. According to the 1995 San Antonio Water Quality Ordinance, the amount of impervious cover allowed in the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone is up to 30% for Residential, 50% for Multifamily, and 65% for Commercial developments. (Note: Impervious cover = any surface that does not allow water infiltration). Why are different amounts of impervious cover allowed for different kinds of development?

I asked this question to SAWS and EAA staff and I was perplexed by the responses. It is said that the impervious cover is greater because the structure built for commercial would not allow for additional property for parking. Something that may or may not still be occurring was that flood plain designated areas were used as part of the larger equation when considering impervious cover. For example, let us say we have one hundred acres of land and 50% impervious cover is allowed. That would mean that 50 acres could be covered.

What I saw happen was that if fifty acres of the one hundred were in the flood plain (areas that can't be built on in the first place), the flood plain acreage was included as part of the one hundred acres introduced. Fifty percent of one hundred acres is fifty acres but fifty percent of fifty acres that can actually be built on, is twenty five. This might sound strict but it still makes me wonder, why not?

5. Would you support extending impervious cover and land use restrictions (for example, prohibiting uses that might threaten or degrade water quality) to the Edwards Aquifer Contributing Zone within San Antonio and the ETJ?

As a former Zoning Commissioner I had a history of being critical of all and any development that could degrade our water quality. In one case, SAWS recommended approval of a case. The applicant (owner) retracted his application and thanked me for saving his company from a possible future disaster. His retraction occurred after hearing me question SAWS experts and listening to them confirm my concerns regarding carcinogens that could be formed by accident. Beyond protecting the health, safety, and welfare of our citizens as a City Council responsibility, the prohibiting of uses that might threaten or degrade our precious water quality is an affirmative yes within reason.

6. Would you support a Proposition to purchase land or conservation easements in the Recharge Zone and Contributing Zone within the San Antonio Metropolitan Area?

I am in favor of such purchases, budget permitting.

7. What do you propose to relieve traffic congestion on the Northside while protecting the Edwards Aquifer?

I would try to work with TXDOT to create HOV Lanes (High Occupancy Vehicle Lanes/carpool lane) on major highways with historic congestion. Cost permitting, bus stop inlets to allow better continuous vehicle traffic flow could also be implemented. With the extensive growth that is occurring towards the north side of San Antonio, which does not seem to cease or slow down, perhaps it is also important to see how we can protect the Aquifer from another angle. The use and prohibition of pervious concrete, where vehicle fluids or other hazardous materials can bypass catchment basins, would be prohibited. Hazardous Material containment basins besides roadways, parking lots and other developments should be inspected on a more regular basis.

8. Agree or disagree: Developers have the right to the highest possible return investment on their land.

Not in all cases. They have the right to the highest return for their investment as long as they do not infringe upon the health, safety, welfare and concerns of those to be impacted by their proposals.

9. Agree or disagree: Land owners are entitled to any rezoning request that is allowed by the Unified Development Code.

I disagree. The Zoning process allows for surrounding impacted communities to have a say of yes or no of what is to occur where they live. If such entitlement were the norm, a planning department, a zoning department nor a variance commission, would be needed.

10. Agree or disagree: Each Council Member knows what is best for his or her own district.

I disagree. If each councilperson knew what was best for his or her own district, Citizens to be heard would not be required. Existing communities to be impacted, in most cases, know what is best for them and therefore all Councilpersons should be cognizant of people have to say.