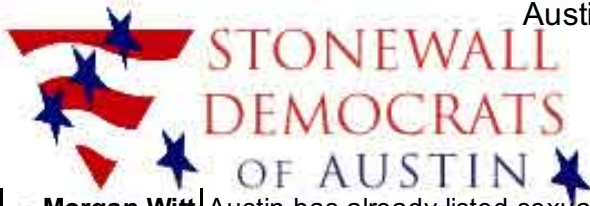


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<p>Question 1</p>	<p>Please tell us why you are seeking the endorsement of SDA. Do you consider yourself to be a Democrat? Do you have a history of involvement in Democratic politics and/or LGBTQIA+ issues? If so, please briefly describe this history.</p>
<p>Leslie Pool</p> <p>Morgan Witt</p>	<p>Triple D Democrat, 40 years in Travis County. Precinct chair in two precincts; Sustaining Member of TCDP and the State Party & TCDP Leadership Council/Finance Council; delegate to numerous state conventions; committee assignments (Nominations & Platform) at multiple State Conventions; tapped as Whip by Clinton Presidential Campaign for the 2016 National Democratic Convention in Philadelphia; currently a Presidential Elector for SD14 in the 2020 Electoral College; member of many of Austin's Democratic clubs, including a long-time member of SDA, if sometimes intermittently; volunteered on many campaigns for candidates & issues.</p> <p>Yes, I'm a progressive Democrat. Apart from voting for Democratic candidates in past elections, my focus of community engagement has been education and advocacy, especially in marginalized communities. I'm a born and raised Austinite with deep roots here. I'm closely tuned in with a diverse array of communities and have a track record of community advocacy and empowerment. I know Austin purports itself to be very progressive, but we have a long way to go. Austin has the third largest LGBTQIA+ population in the US, yet in conversations about equity and justice, and even more so in leadership, it continues to be a grievously underrepresented community. I've dedicated my career, and am strongly committed to achieving equity for everyone. As councilwoman I'd fight for systemic reforms to make Austin more inclusive for our LGBTQIA+ residents and ensure more diverse representation in City government.</p>
<p>Question 2</p>	<p>Although the landmark Supreme Court decision on June 15th affirming that the 1964 Civil Right Act protects gay, lesbian, and transgender from discrimination in employment was a huge victory in our fight of equality, LGBTQI+ Austinites faces continued attacks from a hostile state government. How will you protect and strengthen our local protections and support passage of a comprehensive non-discrimination state law?</p>
<p>Leslie Pool</p>	<p>I'm willing and able to support passage in whatever ways are most helpful, in any of these areas.</p>



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Morgan Witt Austin has already listed sexual orientation and gender identity as protected classes in the City's Employment Ordinance, Housing Ordinance and others — which is a good start. But is our system also inclusive? Beyond employment and housing discrimination, and public spaces, this also means changing our approach to decisions on new planning/development, transportation, and access to essential services like healthcare. As Councilwoman, I'd take advocacy further by incorporating equity and inclusion in all policy, procedure, and process decisions. And beyond that, promote more LGBTQIA+ inclusive recruitment and hiring practices. I'd also partner with organizations like the LGBT Chamber of Commerce and Equality Texas to support a comprehensive State non-discrimination law, and actively protest to support it.

Question 3	If elected would you commit to appointing LGBTQIA+ individuals to City Boards and Commissions? How will you strengthen the city's connections to the LGBTQIA+ community more generally?
Leslie Pool	Yes, I have done so, on a number of city commissions, members of my staff and my campaign identify as LGBTQ, and I have supported all policy and program initiatives while on the Council with the aim of strengthening the city's connections to the LGBTQIA+ community within the City's workforce and the community at large.
Morgan Witt	Yes. Austin cannot truly be equitable or diverse until our leadership reflects the diversity of its residents. Delegating LGBTQIA+ individuals to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Quality of Life Advisory Commission isn't the definition of true equality or inclusion. As Councilwoman, I'd overhaul recruitment and appointment practices for boards and commissions to build diversity into the way we appoint people to decision-making positions. I'd also establish ongoing partnerships with LGBTQIA+ organizations and residents to strengthen the City's relationships with them.

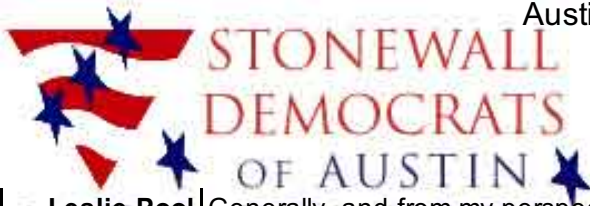
Question 4	Do you support the June 8, 2020 Austin LGBTQ Quality of Life Commission Recommendation 20200608-C related to Black Lives Matter? Describe your position on policing reform in Austin and our LGBTQIA+ community.



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<p>Leslie Pool</p>	<p>I am aligned with the Quality of Life Commission's resolution. Acknowledging the roles and authorities the Council operates within, I joined a unanimous dais in expressing our lack of confidence in the Chief of Police as part of the united front the Council presented as we addressed the horrible police action at APD HQ on May 30 and 31. I was one of the three lead Council Members bringing proposals to the dais during our FY21 budget deliberations to challenge line items and pursue a deep-dive audit of APD's spending. I voted to cut \$21.5 million in overtime, unfilled vacancies, and place a moratorium on the cadet classes while the curriculum is rewritten; these funds, along with the cuts proposed by the City Manager, were redirected toward expanded mental health diversion programs with EMS, permanent supportive housing and services, EMS for COVID-19 response, family violence shelter and protection, violence prevention, workforce development, and a range of other programs.</p>
<p>Morgan Witt</p>	<p>Absolutely. Though not a member of the LGBTQIA+ community, I know the community has a complicated and troubled history with police. Officers now routinely participate in Pride events, but it wasn't so long ago that LGBTQIA+ folks were routinely harassed and brutalized by them. Without the Stonewall riots, LGBTQIA+ individuals wouldn't have the rights they have now. But the struggle persists. To eliminate systemic racism and discrimination at every level of APD we can't make incremental changes. We've seen over the last several years that they don't work. The system must be rebuilt from the ground up because it was designed to discriminate and oppress. I support and would fight to implement all recommendations in 20200608-C. City Council's APD budget was a good start, but what we haven't seen is real commitment to the tough decisions and bold systemic changes — including the removal of Brian Manley and other APD leaders, or even the declarations that Black Lives Matter and policing brutality/disparities are public health crises. Systemic change requires a phased approach with ongoing evaluation — but we have to start now, and we can't be afraid to make tough decisions. I'd start with measures that invest in our community, decriminalize minor offenses and decouple civilian functions from APD, and above all ensure accountability and independent investigation of police misconduct.</p>

<p>Question 5</p>	<p>Do you think the City of Austin is doing enough to ensure equality for its LGBTQIA+ employees?</p>
<p></p>	<p></p>



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<p>Leslie Pool <small>Post Office Box 40898 Austin, TX 78704</small></p>	<p>Generally, and from my perspective as a Council Member, there is always room for improvement as we continue our work to ensure equality for LGBTQIA+ employees. As an example, your Commission's August 10 recommendation points to the lack of a city policy allowing employees to use their gender pronouns on their email signatures, business cards, etc. If some departments give employees the option and other departments do not, we need to correct this inconsistency and I am committed to working on this issue. The Council can direct the City Manager to address this issue and/or request AFSCME to work with the City Manager and employees to help resolve this disparity.</p>
<p>Morgan Witt</p>	<p>The City of Austin offers good protections and benefits in place for LGBTQIA+ employees, but there are more things the City can do to ensure real equality. Per a LGBTQ Quality of Life Commission recommendation to the City, I'd adopt the policy allowing employees to display preferred pronouns on official City collateral. I'd evaluate City insurance plans to ensure coverage of expensive antiviral drugs like Truvada/Descovy/Biktarvy that prevent or treat HIV/AIDS infection; hormone therapy; gender affirming surgeries; and robust mental healthcare options. I'd also create inclusive spaces by ensuring the implementation of gender neutral bathrooms and locker rooms where there are none. Lastly, I'd partner with LGBTQIA+ employees to determine other opportunities for making the City a welcoming, inclusive, supportive work environment. I look forward to seeing the outcome of the LGBTQ Quality of Life Survey that the City is currently doing as a starting point.</p>

<p>Question 6</p>	<p>Describe a step you would take, or have taken, or a proposal you would make, or have made as a member of Austin's City Council that would specifically benefit Austin's LGBTQIA+ community.</p>
<p>Leslie Pool</p>	<p>I voted to create the LGBTQIA Quality of Life Commission, supported prohibiting the use of city funds for businesses connected to LGBTQ conversion therapy, was a key sponsor on a 2016 resolution to strengthen city employee protections from workplace discrimination, harassment, and retaliation, and, as stated above, will work to ensure that we have a gender pronoun policy in place. Generally I try to live my values and worldview of inclusion and respect.</p>
<p>Morgan Witt</p>	<p>As Councilwoman, I'd work to establish a cultural center for the LGBTQIA+ community, like the George Washington Carver Center or Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center. This hub could provide community services and space. QWELL's proposed pop-up community centers would make a great pilot project that would provide data on the need for a safe cultural space for the LGBTQIA+ community.</p>



Austin City Council Candidate Questionnaire Responses
District 10

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