

Sonoma County Supervisorial Candidate Questionnaire  
Valerie Brown, Candidate for First District

1. For nearly a decade Sonoma County has lagged other California communities in economic and income growth. Yet the current and draft 2020 Sonoma County General Plan, unlike many other counties including Napa, does not have an economic development section to address job creation and future location of businesses. Should such an element be included in the plan?

I believe an Economic Development section could be a useful addition to an upcoming General Plan, although I do not support delaying the adoption of the 2020 Sonoma County General Plan for its inclusion now. Sonoma County needs to look at ways to attract the kinds of businesses which would be an asset to the people Sonoma County. The primary focus of our general plan is to maintain and preserve agriculture and provide long term policies toward sustainability of our natural resources. The current General Plan has several areas which focus on industrial development. Our county is committed through our Economic Development Board to innovation and exploration of businesses that complement our work force. We provide research and data for long term planning and in our general plan encourage and promote a "greener" Sonoma County which is very attractive to a work force and business.

2. Board of Supervisors also serves as the Board of Directors of the Sonoma County Water Agency. What do you see as the biggest obstacle to securing a sustainable water supply to meet General Plan needs for the County and for the Agency's customers?

The bureaucratic nightmare of working through the State Department of Water Resources, Fish and Game at the National and State level and local Regional Water Quality Boards has not been advantageous for the county in solving some of our water needs. For example, we have had a request for 75,000 acrefeet from the Russian River, just to meet the needs of City Centered growth projections. The DWR is asking us to show adequate water conservation first - although the actual indications of water conservation are hard to demonstrate. Maintaining a habitat for fish is another obstacle, which is understandable but creates a long, complicated set of documents to

reinforce what we want to do. On a more positive note - the SCWA is one of the most innovative departments within the county. Looking at ways to conserve and provide energy efficiency that will potentially take us off the energy grid.

3. Sonoma County has the worst rating for quality of County roads in the entire Bay Area, principally due to deferred road maintenance in the unincorporated area of the County. How do you propose to fund repairs, maintenance and improvements of local roads?

Last year we began to see the beginning of what will ultimately be an extensive pavement rehabilitation in Sonoma County, largely due to the release of Prop 42 funds and our own Measure M which provided funding. In addition, we our budget projects 8.5M out of our General Fund for operation and maintenance. It is the first time in years we have had funding for needed projects. All around the county you see the results of that funding, Highway 101, Highway 12, rural roads, bridges, traffic lights, and maintenance. Our objective is to keep those funds in tact and continue to utilize our relationships at the state and federal level to increase funding. Reauthorization of the federal highway bill is coming up at the federal level and we are already lobbying our representatives for an increase.

4. Please state your position on the recent decisions by the County to adjust employee's benefits.

I would like to maintain a benefit for our retiree's - however the liability for the county is astronomical - 500M this year and in 5 years would be a billion dollars. There is no easy solution. My concern is paying retiree benefits at the detriment to current programs and workers which I will not support. Our current goal is to construct a new benefit plan that allows retirees to maintain health benefits but it would not be at the same rate offered previously.

5. The key to Santa Rosa's Economic Health is our ability to implement Redevelopment areas throughout our City. Do you support Santa Rosa Redevelopment efforts?

The Roseland area which is the largest subject of redevelopment currently should be a part of Santa Rosa, we have long held in the County a need to have Santa Rosa incorporate that island. There are definitely areas of blight that would benefit greatly from redevelopment and I am supportive.