

## **SONOMA COUNTY SUPERVISORIAL CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE for April 2008**

**Please fill out the following questionnaire and return to the Santa Rosa Chamber no later than 5 pm on Thursday, April 17<sup>th</sup>. Please limit your responses to no more than 200 words per question.**

**The responses to this questionnaire will be posted on the Chamber website ([www.santarosachamber.com](http://www.santarosachamber.com)) after the April 23 Good Morning Santa Rosa event.**

- 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?**

Definitely. We don't want to lose generations to opportunities afforded elsewhere. We must have a sustainable economy which is strategically planned. Regardless of one's position on growth, the reality is that Sonoma County will grow. Our population is projected to grow to more than 600,000 over the next approximately 20 years. Key to maintaining and improving our quality of life is to properly prepare, plan for, and manage that growth. That includes focusing on retaining high quality jobs in the county and developing new job sources. I'm a proponent of green building and the businesses that support it. I will work to implement incentives to attract these businesses, including encouraging our schools to implement programs focused on green businesses. I also recognize, for example, the importance of tourism and its beneficial economic effects on various sectors of our economy such as, but not limited to, agriculture and hospitality. No aspect of our economy is isolated to itself and we must pursue policies and planning that recognize that and promote opportunity.

I support of smart growth policies which locate jobs near housing and transportation thereby avoiding sprawl and reducing traffic congestion and pollution. I'm a strong supporter of the SMART train.

**Do you believe in the following statement? Why?**

**There needs to be a balance between enhancing a community's economy and protecting the environment. You can enhance both without being detrimental to either**

We can do both. This is why I've been promoting the subject of green business and Sonoma County as the leader in this area. This is a win-win for the economy and the environment. The steps needed to take to maintain a healthy environment are the same

steps needed to take to maintain a sustainable economy. Less energy consumption, clean air, and water conservation are all important to a healthy environment and a healthy economy. For example, climate researchers have noted that increasing temperatures from climate change will have a negative impact on California agriculture. Within 80 years most of Sonoma County will face temperatures too high to grow the premium grapes so vital to our economy. Our efforts to reduce green house gas emissions and their impact on global warming are essential if we are to keep a healthy wine industry in the county.

Having sufficient resources, both public and private, is critical to our economy. Business is directly dependent on preserving water, clean air, and energy. Again, focusing on the environment presents an opportunity for Sonoma County to build new businesses based on green building and green business practices. Last, business must be welcome at the table.

**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 biggest obstacle is the lack of a comprehensive resource management plan.

Under our current water use practices there is not a sufficient supply to meet increased demand. Evidence of overdrafts on our aquifers has increased and the extent to which groundwater will be a reliable future source is not known.

Despite increases in demand and evidence of shortages, we lack comprehensive research about our groundwater resources and a plan to manage our overall resources. For example, the county issues up to 500 new well permits a year with little to no consideration given to the impact on the existing groundwater and current wells.

To make sure that we have a sufficient supply of water for the future we need to do the following:

- a. Undertake the research to identify the status of our groundwater basins.
- b. Develop a comprehensive resource management plan that includes groundwater resources as well as others.
- c. Adopt and implement policies toward future development which include water management as a key element. All future development should have a "show-me-the water" component. Each new development, commercial, residential or industrial, should complete an evaluation on its water usage and impact on our current infrastructure and environment.

**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?**

The status of our roads reflects the overall state of the budget which has plagued our county. The majority of our funding is dependent on the state, which is facing an \$8 billion deficit. Roads compete with all the other services that the county provides and like other services, costs are increasing and revenues declining. While the cost of asphalt and fuel have increased we've seen reductions in state and federal reimbursements for road repairs and storm damage.

As a member of the Sonoma County Transportation Authority's Citizen Advisory Committee for nine years I am very familiar with the funding challenges. I have experience working with the state and federal governments, and, as Supervisor, I will make it a top priority to ensure that we are getting every available dollar to the county. My established relationships at the state and federal level make me uniquely qualified to be effective in ensuring that this is accomplished. Longer term we need to resist efforts by the state to redirect funding away from local services and lobby and pressure the state to restore funding. This likely means developing responsible and stable revenue sources to close the budget gap.

**4. Please state your position on the recent decisions by the County to adjust employee's benefits. How would you address the OPED (Other Post Employment Benefits) issue?**

I understand this is a very difficult problem for both the county and retirees. I've looked at pre-funding methods and the possibility of moving to CalPERS. There are differing opinions regarding how well any of this will work. If need be we may have to adjust the way benefits are provided for new county employees but we should not be taking benefits away from those who have worked for the county with the clear understanding that OPED were part of the deal.

Many employees have worked up to 40 years with the county with a promise they would receive OPED – primarily retiree medical benefits. For many this was what attracted them to the job and kept them there. We, as a county, have benefited by having experienced employees. In many cases, these employees have accepted reduced compensation with the understanding that this was the trade off for current and future benefits. I don't believe we can now look them in the eye now and say, "sorry, we miscalculated?" We must vigilantly look for another answer.

Finally, the current problem reflects a failure of the county to recognize, respond to and fund a liability that has been building for years.

**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?**

Yes. Santa Rosa has been effective in getting dollars to help redevelop areas and this has generally been helpful to the communities where the redevelopment takes place. This will be critical as things move forward with annexation of Roseland. While it's an opportunity to bring needed services to Roseland, at the same time I believe we need to make sure that the projects brought forward comply with the letter and the spirit of the rules. This will hopefully help avoid some of the conflict around projects qualifying. Finally, these projects can be effective public private partnerships but should not be used to get around important principles such as, for example, prevailing wage standards used throughout the county.

Redevelopment agencies are controversial for a variety of reasons, one of them the definition of "blight." Another is that redevelopment activity often has the potential for abuse of eminent domain against private property. I do not support government taking homes to make way for redevelopment. I support Proposition 99 which is currently on the ballot, and, if passed, will protect homes from eminent domain abuse.

**Please return this questionnaire to the Santa Rosa Chamber, 637 First St. Santa Rosa, CA 95404, attention Mary Ann Barr or email at [maryannb@santarosachamber.com](mailto:maryannb@santarosachamber.com).**