

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 17th. 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) 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?

Yes. The County's General Plan should include an element addressing Economic Development.

This county has seen the loss of leading businesses and high paying jobs, from Agilent's shift of production to China to early stage companies that have been acquired and moved out-of-state. We should encourage new businesses to develop here in industries with markets that can be served from Sonoma County for at least the next 20 years. We should be taking a generational approach to attracting business and working with the leadership of Sonoma State University to ensure that graduates are prepared to work in emerging industries.

We already have our first business incubator in the County, Sonoma Mountain Village, located in Rohnert Park. This environmentally conscious redevelopment of a former Agilent Technologies campus can be a source of new business ideas for the County. Start-ups are already leasing space there, with many more certain to open in the future.

Companies all over the world are finding that building economically and environmentally sustainable business models is highly profitable. By reducing their environmental footprint companies increase their economic viability at the same time. There are good environmental and economic reasons for Sonoma County to be a national leader in the emerging "Green" business sector.

2. 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

Yes. I agree with this statement.

I am a professional mechanical engineer specializing in energy and environmental management. I have worked on environmental problems at the EPA, PG&E and have worked with businesses as the owner of an energy conservation consulting firm. I realize that building a strong economy and protecting our environment are not mutually exclusive objectives. In fact, I have seen many examples of the gains that companies have made by pursuing the double bottom line – enhancing their profitability while reducing their environmental footprint.

By attracting the right kinds of business that will be able to remain in the county for the long-term, as I discussed in the answer to your first question, we will be able to achieve that balance.

I look forward to the kind of partnership between business, government and the environmental community that can help us achieve and sustain a proper balance.

3. 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?

There are two primary challenges to securing a sustainable water supply for the County. The first relates to reuse of water and conservation technologies that can be incorporated into new residential and commercial development projects. The second concerns the use and exportation of our existing water supply, which is finite.

By reducing the demand for water through conservation and reuse, we improve our ability to achieve a sustainable water supply. The SCWA has developed extensive plans even though Santa Rosa currently controls most of the wastewater and has not agreed to the proposed SCWA plans. Re-using wastewater with on-site grey water systems plus reducing water draw with on-site rainwater collecting systems will reduce demand, reduce energy use and make our communities more self reliant, especially in case of a natural disaster.

We also need to retain control of our scarce water supply. We are under contract to supply Marin water and we should honor our agreements with them. We should communicate effectively to Marin, however, during the remainder of the contract duration about the sustainable level and limitations of our ground water resources. I oppose any additional exportation of water from our county unless our community's needs are well met.

4. 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?

Where there are gaps in funding road maintenance for county roads, those gaps should be filled. It is far cheaper to maintain a road, than repair one that has been neglected and has to rebuilt from the ground up.

We need to look into bond measures to cover a portion of our cost increases. When our economy expands, we have an increased tax base from which to draw. This is not always available, however, so we must sometimes be creative about our tax sources.

Even if we fund something popular like paramedics or parks, it frees up other money in the general fund to fill the gaps. This can be an especially valuable tool in times like we have now, during national and state budget crises, and when home values are retreating and home sales are slowing. This can be something simple and popular like paramedic or fire services, or capitol improvements like the SMART train. We will have to come together as a community to creatively solve our budget woes and maintain our budget priorities.

5. 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?

This is a very difficult issue. On the one hand, it is never prudent to carry an unfunded liability on the books of the County. On the other hand, it is difficult to walk away from agreements made with long-term employees who bargained in good faith, oftentimes taking lower salaries, to ensure the future health of their families after retirement.

I support providing quality health care for County employees, both past and present. One of the best ways to meet this obligation is to provide universal comprehensive health care to all Californians. I support SB 840, The California Universal Health Care Act authored by Senator Sheila Kuehl

In Sonoma County, all of our cities, the Office of Education and the county itself will save million of dollars combined in employee health benefits each year under this new health plan. In addition to the benefits to individuals, universal health care will also benefit business. Small and mid-sized local businesses will be free from the burden of having to pay for and administer employee health benefits. As a County Supervisor, I will lead an initiative to lobby the governor's office to sign, not veto, this legislation when it again crosses his or her desk.

6. 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. I am supportive of redevelopment. I am also very interested in exploring using some redevelopment funds to create environmentally-conscious local solutions for foreclosed properties.

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.