

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.

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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?

Absolutely! This has been a tremendous oversight of our elected officials. We must put more money, vision and energy into developing a strategic plan that will aim at building a robust economy here in Sonoma County. We must invest in the development of growing industries such as, green construction, hospitality, healthcare and green technology. We must make Sonoma County a friendly place to do business by providing economic incentives for business that are looking for a home. And we must have serious dialogue with industries that have left the county because of cost prohibitive reasons. What can we do to keep good businesses here and to make Sonoma County a place that is attractive to do business?

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, because all public policy must be evaluated on the triple bottom line; environment, economy and social equity. There are myths circulating that lead people to believe that investing in the environment is detrimental to the economy, but nothing could be farther from the truth. For example, if Sonoma County is aggressive in investing in renewable energy sources, such as solar, then we will become a very attractive location to do business. The costs of carbon fuels will continue to rise and energy costs continue to be a major expense for businesses. Both large and small businesses will find our county attractive if we can substantially lower their expenses as compared to the rest of California.

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?

Sonoma County is home to human communities that rely upon clean water for public health, for recreation and for aesthetic beauty. Increasingly, these two objectives – clean water for human uses and water to sustain ecosystems – are coming into conflict. This conflict is expected to increase given global climate change scenarios, and with increases in population.

Here are some ideas that I plan to pioneer and/or expand upon:

- a) Value Ecosystems: document the economic values and cost-benefit ratios of retaining healthy watersheds and “natural infrastructure” as a means to ensure clean drinking water, avoid regulation, enhance property values, avoid costs of water treatment, and sustain habitats and species native to Sonoma County.
- b) Protect Water Quality: Initiate a proactive county-wide assessment of water quality including a full assessment of the County's ground and surface water resources.
- c) Conservation Oriented Growth and Development: based on data from existing reports and the assessment outlined in item c, above, outline a conservation-oriented approach to growth – one that takes into account the carrying capacity of our watersheds.
- d) Environmental Justice: ensure that all residents of our county have access to clean drinking water, not just those in high income areas.

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?

We will need to develop private/public partnerships in the rural areas in order to fund maintenance of roads. We certainly need to prioritize which roads we invest in maintaining and repairing based upon travel occupancy. In a county that is as large and diverse geographically as Sonoma we simply cannot afford to fill in every country road pothole and that is why we need to look at developing partnerships with private rural land owners who want to invest in their roads.

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 believe the accounting rationale that was used to cut retiree healthcare benefits is misguided in that it is a 30 year projection of costs. GASB (Government Accounting Standard's Board) was meant to provide leverage for administrators to discontinue or cut

retiree health care benefits, however GASB is based upon 30 year budget projections, which is ludicrous given our current economy and state of national health care. There are plenty of undetermined variables in the economy which are out of our control and cannot be fairly evaluated in a 30 year projection. Moreover, it is highly likely that we will have some form of a national healthcare program within the next eight years.

In terms of OPEN (Other Post Employment Benefits), we must put aside sufficient reserve funds for retiree benefit packages. We will need to budget wisely for the future. I understand that in the private sector there is a deep seated resentment that public sector employees can retire at an early age with full benefits and there is pressure to look at 401K options with employer contributions; however this may be unreasonable for some types of job classifications, such as fire fighters, police officers and sheriff deputies.

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, I believe the efforts to redevelop the gateways area; downtown transit area and the Roseland area will all assist us in creating a robust economy with mixed use projects. Investing in areas that are traditionally underserved it is also a way we can fight gang crime. Economic development in Roseland is absolutely essential if we are going to provide youth with opportunities for paid jobs and meaningful recreation. If we ignore impoverished neighborhoods we essentially add to the gang crime situation because kids join gangs to feel empowered. We need to give these at-risk youth choices to feel empowered through well paid jobs and meaningful work as well as the opportunity to live in safe neighborhoods.

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.