

Candidate name: Amber Whitson
Address: 931 Madison Street Albany, CA 94706

Telephone: (510) 978-8850
Email: phlamber.the.bull@gmail.com
Website: pending

Occupation: Community Organizer
Campaign Chair: N/A
Treasurer: N/A

1. Please briefly summarize your background, qualifications, and reasons for seeking to serve on the Albany City Council.

I have lived in the East Bay Area for nearly 20 years and I have spent the last 10 years living in Albany. I have been civically active in the City of Albany since 2011, attending many Waterfront Committee and City Council meetings and in 2012 I was appointed by the City to be one of two Representatives of Albany's Homeless Community on Albany's (since disbanded) Homeless Task Force.

When Project HOPE (Albany's homeless assistance program) began in June of 2013, the Housing Case Managers enlisted my assistance and I personally went to individual camps around the Albany Bulb and helped homeless Bulb residents complete their intake papers so they could apply for housing assistance.

I was friends with the late Paul O'Curry, a fellow Albany resident and former member of Albany's Social and Economic Justice Commission, who championed the idea that the City of Albany should have a drop-in center, wherein people who are experiencing homelessness and other people in need of referrals to various social services in the area could go to find said referrals. If elected, I would like to work with the City to make the Paul O'Curry Drop-in Center a reality.

I am also one of the founding members of Albany's Diverse Housing Working Group (DHWG), a group of Albany citizens who are working hard to educate Albany residents about Albany's Housing Element while also ensuring that Albany continues to be a community which is welcoming to people from all backgrounds.

I have an extraordinary wealth of knowledge with regards to Albany's treasured Waterfront and have hosted several walking tours of the Art and History of the Albany Bulb, which I continue to host to this day.

I am very passionate about the safety and prosperity of this little town. I understand that representing all members of Albany's citizenry requires personal initiative, the ability to listen to all points of view and the willingness to engage directly through community outreach.

2. Please summarize your understanding of the city's budget in terms of current status and projected future status? What is your approach to the budget going forward, given current and

likely near-future economic conditions? Please share any specific proposals you have for changes in the city's budget.

I don't know much about the current status of the City's budget, nor about their projected future budget. I used to keep very close track of some of their spending...

However, I have intentionally not been paying attention to what the City does with their money, ever since it was made quite clear that they were willing to waste large sums of taxpayer money, hiring an agency to administer services to people experiencing, and at risk of experiencing, Homelessness. But were only willing to devote the most paltry amount to actually providing the actual services.

However, appreciate that being on the City Council will require me to pay close attention to the City budget. And I look forward to being able to bring my unique perspective to the Albany City Council, when voting on future spending decisions for the City of Albany.

3. What is your vision for future development along Solano and San Pablo Avenues? What is your view of the development currently under construction in UC Village at San Pablo and Monroe?

I feel like Albany really dropped the ball on the Sprouts/UC development (the construction at San Pablo and Monroe). I remember watching the deer and the turkeys grazing happily behind the fence that enclosed the "unused" lot. It looked like the wildlife was using it quite happily! Not only has all the wildlife been either cut down, uprooted and destroyed or pushed up against the creek, but all this is being done to make way for another concrete structure (which WILL NOT do as much for the quality of our air/environment as those trees did) which will contain a grocery store and far fewer apartments than any new development should.

If Albany is going to have any chance of meeting its RHNA, in light of the imminent inclusionary zoning requirements, then it needs to work towards building up, since it is already built-out.

San Pablo is already a transit corridor. It would have benefited everyone much more if more units of housing (with some units dedicated to being affordable to people of lower incomes, of course) were included in that development and if the footprint of the development were smaller, leaving more of the original trees and open space.

Now that the opportunity to make the most of the site on Monroe has been forfeited, any future developments on San Pablo and/or Solano should take the anticipated population increase into account and should contain the maximum amount of housing possible. Even if that means adjusting the zoning in those parts of the city.

I understand the importance of cities being able to craft their own zoning laws. However, our city is a part of the United States. And the United States is in the midst of a serious housing shortage crisis. Albany should be part of the solution, not part of the problem.

4. A recent update on Albany's annual greenhouse gas emissions indicates a reduction of about 10% in 2011 compared to 2004. This is remarkable given that Albany's population increased by

13% from 2000 to 2010. Still, a projection based on reasonable assumptions indicates Albany will likely miss its target of a 25% reduction from 2004 levels by 2020. What is your plan for Albany to achieve its target?

Transit corridors. Public education about GHGs and the need to get out of personal vehicles and onto public transportation.

I think that Albany should also be open to considering the possibility of mandatory recycling.

5. This year's ballot features a city-council sponsored ballot measure for a parcel tax to repair sidewalks, and another to remove a 2 parking spot per residential mandate enacted by voters in 1978. What is your stance on each of these measures? Will you be actively supporting or opposing one or the other?

As someone who doesn't own any parcel, I admit that I haven't been following the details of the ballot measure regarding the sidewalk tax.

However, I do believe that it is essential for the 2 parking spot rule to be removed. It is an essential piece of the effort to meet the necessary Housing Element requirement for Albany's share of the RHNA.

6. Who has endorsed you or is supporting your candidacy? Is there anything else you would like us to know about you? Who are you endorsing, from President all the way down ballot to local races?

I haven't spent any time seeking official endorsements. But, I am affiliated with at least a couple local Albany organizations whom I can fairly confidently say will likely endorse me.

When I first started community organizing, I was homeless and living in the City of Albany.

Money was allocated by the City Council to an effort to house Albany's homeless residents.

Despite a great deal of activism on the part of numerous residents of Albany and other neighboring cities, those funds were subsequently wasted on short term "solutions". I want to help bring about positive change for the City of Albany.

For President? Anybody is better than Trump. So, in that spirit, I will vote for Hillary. Although, I am deeply saddened that Bernie didn't win the Democratic Primary. I don't have any specific candidates in mind to vote for in other offices. However, I can tell you that it is quite likely that, at each and every level of government, I will be seeking out fellow Berniecrats to vote for.

7. Do you support amending the Constitution to end corporate Constitutional rights and getting money out of politics? Have you Taken the Pledge to Amend? (<<https://movetoamend.org/take-pledge-amend>><https://movetoamend.org/take-pledge-amend>)

Absolutely. And, indeed, I have Taken the Pledge to Amend.

8. The following are the 10 Key Values of the Green Party (more details available at <http://www.cagreens.org/platform/10k.shtml>). In view of these values, why do you feel your candidacy merits Green Party endorsement?

Green Party 10 Key Values:

- 1) Ecological wisdom
- 2) Social Justice
- 3) Non violence
- 4) Grassroots democracy
- 5) Decentralization
- 6) Community based economics
- 7) Feminism
- 8) Respect for diversity
- 9) Personal and global responsibility
- 10) Sustainability

I feel that mankind is rapidly destroying the planet that we all live upon. We all owe it to ourselves and to future generations to do everything that we can to halt, or at least to slow, the damage that our species has inflicted (and continues to inflict) on the Earth.

As a woman who spent nearly two decades experiencing homelessness, I am all too aware of the social and economic injustice that is going on all around us, everyday. I hope that if I am elected to the Albany City Council, it will stand as a ray of hope for all other people who are socially and economically repressed that it IS possible for someone to come from the bottom and achieve a position from which they can effect real, positive change.

Jimmy Carter once said "The measure of a society is found in how they treat their weakest and most helpless citizens." And I would like to see that, in the future, Albany could stand tall and proud if measured on such a scale.

Change always happens from the bottom up. If we want a more people friendly government, then we need to vote that way. And, those of us who do vote need to educate those in our community who do not yet vote about the importance of registering and actually showing up to the polls on election day.

Thank you very much!

Be well,
Amber

We the willing, led by the unknowing,
are doing the impossible, for the ungrateful.
We have done so much, with so little, for so long...
We are now qualified to do anything, with nothing.
- Konstantin Josef Jireňek