

## **Dennis Popalardo for Alameda School Board Candidates**

### QUESTIONNAIRE GREEN PARTY OF ALAMEDA COUNTY 2016 ENDORSEMENT DECISION

1. Motivation -- Why did you choose to run for the School Board?

**When our son started kindergarten at Bay Farm School last year, my wife, Daira, and I both felt it was important to get involved. We believe parent involvement is a key factor in maintaining the quality of our schools. We both volunteer in our son's classroom and Daira serves on the PTA Executive Board. I am a PTA member. I am also a founding board member, and chair of the scholarship committee, of Kids' Chance California, which raises money for scholarships for children of workers killed, or seriously injured, at work. Through my work with Kids' Chance, I have seen first hand the positive impact education can have a child's life.**

2. Program and Priorities -- Elected office provides the opportunity to proactively lead by placing new ideas on the agenda for consideration and development. What are some specific ideas you intend to pursue if elected? What do you believe are the main priorities for the School Board?

**I think we need to look closely at developers' impact fees and make sure these fees are sufficient to cover the necessary infrastructure costs, including state of the art schools, that come with additional housing. I believe some of the main of the priorities for the school board are maintaining, and in some cases reducing class sizes, offering competitive pay for teachers in order to attract the best candidates, student safety, elimination of bias, support for low income students, and green campuses.**

3. Qualifications -- Please give a brief summary of your background and qualifications for the office of School Board. If you are an incumbent, what issues can you point to in your time as an incumbent that have had a positive impact? As an incumbent what can you tell us about your service on the school board, and share with us the decisions you have made in this capacity that you believe made a difference in the functioning of the school district?

**I am a partner at Boxer & Gerson, LLP, a law firm in Oakland. I represent workers who are injured on the job, ensuring that they have access to medical care and compensation for lost wages and permanent disabilities. I did my undergraduate studies in my home state of Connecticut. I attended law school at Pepperdine University in Malibu, CA and have been practicing law since 1992. My wife Daira and I moved to Alameda in 2007 and our son, Christian, is in the first grade at our local elementary school, Bay Farm. We love our community and we want to do our part to keep Alameda a wonderful place to live.**

4. There has been a concern over the cost of the school district lease in Marina Village which houses the district offices. What are your thoughts about this situation; have you considered a more economical solution to this cost?

**The lease for the district office will be up in January 2018. It would be ideal if it moved into a district owned building. Currently the district is undergoing an assessment of all properties to plan for increased enrollment in the future and placement of the district office.**

5. There are close to 4,000 housing units on schedule to be built along the north shore of Alameda. What solutions would you suggest to accommodate the increased number of students this housing would generate and what ideas would you propose to cover the cost of these new school buildings?

**Measure I, a facilities bond, was passed in November 2014 to upgrade our current facilities. Many schools on the west end are below capacity and can accommodate additional students, including Paden, Maya Lin and Encinal Junior and Senior High Schools. Additionally, the Navy is returning the Singleton property (old Miller School) to the district to be used as a school. It was not included in the bond and will need to be upgraded. Further, the district needs to work with the developer and the city to collect developer's fees to build new schools and update current facilities, in order to accommodate the expected increase in students.**

6. How did you perceive the district's refusal to obtain appraisals for the tidelands swap with the city?

**I am aware that some people are of the opinion that the district did not get enough in return. However, it is my understanding the district did not have the legal rights to own the tidelands property and had to return it to the city. What the district did get, in exchange for the tidelands property and the old Island Highway property on Eagle Avenue was two parcels at Alameda point. One parcel contains the former bachelor officers' quarters (BOQ). The other parcel is an almost empty lot, used for parking, across the street from the Officers club and a couple of dilapidated buildings. I believe the current idea, which I support, is to develop the BOQ into district employee housing. It might also need to have some market rate housing, in order to support low-cost housing for employees. In a district where teacher salaries are some of the lowest in the county, this is one way we can offer additional benefits to teachers and other employees.**

7. The teachers turned down a contract proposal at the conclusion of the school year. This necessitates negotiating a new contract to settle the dispute. It is our understanding the issue is class size. What suggestions would you offer to settle this dispute and obtain an agreement with the school district teachers?

**Alameda values neighborhood schools and small class sizes. It is my understanding that, during the past year, the district's enrollment committee worked to draft new policies to support students and families. This was the first step in dealing with diversions. The district and the teachers need to continue to work on a solution to their contract dispute which keeps our class sizes small and does not increase student diversions (resulting in families driving across town).**

8. Accountability -- Concretely and specifically, how will you make yourself accountable to the voters who elect you? How can the voters participate in holding you accountable if you are elected?

**I believe in transparency. If elected, I will make myself available before and after Board meetings to speak to the public. I also pledge to respond to emails and phone calls from the voters.**

9. Campaign Funding -- How much money do you currently have for this race? How much money do you plan to raise? Where will the money come from? Describe sources of financial contributions for your campaign that you would refuse to accept (if any).

**I have \$10,500 so far and I hope to raise \$20,000. The money will come from labor unions, my law partners, friends, family, neighbors and grass roots supporters. I would refuse to accept a donation from any person or entity that I felt could affect my ability to be fair and impartial.**

10. Anything Else? -- Is there anything else you would like us to know about you?

**I am a political newcomer and relatively inexperienced in educational matters. However, I care about my community and I pledge to work hard for Alameda, to be fair and to be a good listener.**