

QUESTIONNAIRE

GREEN PARTY OF ALAMEDA COUNTY

2014 ENDORSEMENT DECISION

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

To preserve and enhance the natural resources and recreational opportunities of the East Bay Regional Park District. The Bay Area has grown tremendously over the 80 year history of EBRPD as has Park usage. That tremendous growth brings a need to secure more open space and recreational opportunities in our communities. We need to be advocates to secure open spaces to make this possible and work diligently to balance preserving our existing parks amidst increasing demand. I would like the opportunity to advocate for more open space to provide recreational opportunities for our growing communities so we have adequate open spaces for people to enjoy for the next century. We need to balance the available open spaces with the community demand so we can preserve our parks & habitats for future generations.

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 Park District Board?

Preservation of parks, habitats for future generations; as our communities continue to grow with higher density development, having parks/open spaces for people to enjoy is extremely important.

Balance and manage park usage to sustain park trails/habitats.

Work to modify Park District's Board culture to work collaboratively w/ local agencies to take action appropriate to further enhance our parks/trails and solve issues timely.

3. Qualifications -- Please give a brief summary of your background and qualifications for the office of EBRPD Director.

For last 20 years, I have been involved in high-tech entrepreneurialism and wireless carrier

operations with experience in developing and marketing mobile & online software, advertising and media technology. I have experience in management team recruiting, company formation, entrepreneurial finance, capital acquisition, strategic business development, technology and marketing strategy. I have raised over \$10M in financing for companies I have founded, including venture capital and angel investments.

I have Master of Science in Computer Science from Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Master of Business Administration in Management from Golden Gate University in San Francisco, California and Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering from Karnatak University in India.

I bring a unique perspective to this post as an entrepreneur. I know what it takes to think "outside the box", develop ideas, solve problems, and collaborate with others to get the job done. I will apply these skills to the continued success and growth of EBRPD.

4. Recreation and Conservation

a. What balance do you favor between recreational access/development and protection of wildlife, creeks, and lands?

This is an issue that needs to be revisited regularly. As mentioned above, the Bay Area is growing tremendously and with that comes an increase in park usage. If we are to preserve our parks for future generations it is incumbent on us to understand the capacity of our parks and balance that with the visitor demand.

Mission Peak is a perfect example. When we moved into the neighborhood close to Mission Peak about 8 years ago, we could hear coyotes howling, owls hooting at night time and see different animals like deer, foxes, lynx etc. But over the years all these animals have kind of disappeared. Because of immense popularity, hikers visit this park from well before 4am in the morning till about 2am at night almost every day of the year. This has taken a tremendous toll on the preserve and has dwindled the wildlife population to near zero. Currently the visitor usage at the Stanford Ave. entrance is excessive to the point that the Park District is unable to keep up with the on-going damage to the trail/habitats. Problems like these and others need to be addressed with urgency.

We have to control park recreation to balance with what is sustainable to keep native habitats healthy.

b. Do you support opening to off-road vehicles of the 3,000+ acres of park district property in southeast Alameda County informally known as Tesla Park? Why or why not?

I would support the Tesla Park to be developed as a low impact recreation area. Park District should not open it to off-road vehicles, as it would have a devastating effect on the terrain, natural habitat, biological resources and the wildlife.

5. Vegetation Management

a. What do you think the EBPRD policy regarding the use of pesticides / herbicides on park district property should be and why? How would you propose to modify current park district policies?

Applying large enough quantities of pesticides/herbicides can temporarily eradicate non-native vegetation, but it will poison the land and the watersheds, and the parks will not be safe to visit. There could be exception where a small area with rare native vegetation protected by California law is threatened by non-native vegetation invasion.

I would propose a vegetation management plan that aggressively uses defensible space zones along the wildland-urban interfaces.

b. What approaches do you support for managing eucalyptus and other non-native or high-fire-risk species on park district property?

As the Marin County report by its environmental consultant concluded after analyzing all park management plans and talking to park managers, that the most effective approach to reducing fire risk and protecting structures, and adjacent communities is the establishment of defensible space zones along the wildland-urban interface.

I would support the approach of keeping the eucalyptus and other non-native species thinned and leaving them towards its natural end of life, with controls on clearing their seedlings, the forest fuel load, and focus on defensible space zones along the wildland-urban interface.

6. Grazing Program -- There are concerns that the District's grazing program does not provide the oversight to meet the District's own goals of enhancing botanic and biotic diversity, reduced erosion and improved water quality. What steps would you take to meet these goals?

Grazing program has its benefits of being an effective vegetation management tool. Moderately grazed areas generally display a greater diversity and density of plant and animal life.

If enforcement is not practical and it goes beyond moderate grazing, then cattle grazing will have negative impact on the habitat of native species, resulting in loss of biodiversity in the East Bay area.

As the tradition of grazing on District's land has been going on for 40 years, I would make sure that these programs meet the licensed regulations via active enforcement. For certain areas, when state approved studies confirm the negative environmental impact of cattle grazing, I would support eliminating grazing from those areas.

7. Concord Naval Weapons Station -- What role do you see for the District in the process of planning for the Naval Weapons Station in Concord?

According to preliminary reports, about 3,500 acres of the total of 5,000 acres will be allocated to EBRPD from the Concord Naval Weapons Station. This amounts to about 70% of the land that will be kept open space and parks for our future generations for enjoyment. A full detailed study will need to be done to see that the areas of the facility that are identified as contaminated with heavy metals including zinc, copper, lead, cadmium, arsenic and semi-volatile organic compounds are cleaned up and do not pose danger to our society and our environment.

District should play a significant role in providing a great urban regional park, with a significant area preserved in open space, managing diverse wildlife habitat areas.

District should use its experience in Resource Enhancement Program to develop the park that is sustainable and non-polluting, and that would provide education and recreation opportunities to existing and future residents.

As proposed, District should take the leadership role in planning the great urban regional park that could have 3 use zones: 1) Open Space/Habitat/Restoration; 2) Outdoor Education/Interpretation; and 3) Active/Passive Recreation.

8. Dog Leash Law - What do you believe the EBRPD's policy should be regarding a leash law for dogs on district lands? Please explain your answer, including the issue of compatibility of off-leash dogs and park wildlife.

A dog should always be on a leash. Though a pet and a companion to many, a dog is a canine and a predator by nature, which is harmful for small wildlife in the parks and preserves.

We need to ensure that park visitors understand their responsibility to manage their pet to keep everyone safe.

9. Altamont Wind Turbines -- EBRPD owns land at Altamont Pass that includes a wind farm. How would you attempt to reduce bird kills at the turbines on the district's land and help solve the larger problem of bird kills by the turbines Altamont?

I support the development of alternative energy. This reduces greenhouse effect and also reduces our impact on the environment. The Altamont wind pass area is one of the earliest in the US and the most concentrated wind farms in the world. But, in the Altamont Pass wind farm area we are causing massive impact to the raptors that are killed from collisions with the turbines and electrocution on power lines. About 4700 birds, which include about 1300 raptors, are killed annually. Among them are around 70 golden eagles. There has been an overall 80% decline in the golden eagle population and there is no nesting in this area even though it is a prime nesting habitat.

I believe in alternative energy but not at this cost. I believe that there are many changes that we can make to reduce the deaths of the raptors. I know that there are agreements in place to replace half of the smaller turbines with much larger and cost effective units. These units are higher and turn more slowly than their predecessors and are claimed to be less hazardous to the raptors. This is still not

enough and not fast enough. I also think an independent study needs to be done on the feasibility of this change for the protection of the raptors and plans need to be put in place to restore their habitat.

10. Public Participation -- Though EBRPD spends millions of dollars annually on its public relations department it continues to receive criticism for being out-of-touch with supportive grassroots organizations and activists that are occasionally critical of District policies and operations. What policies would you help implement to foster communication and inclusiveness with those that have much to contribute?

I have an open door policy for my employees at my company and I will try to bring that culture into the EBRPD organization. We need to take criticism constructively. I believe in multiplicity of views. I am very connected via up to date technologies and social media and I will make full use of this knowledge base.

For example, a simple feature of adding online forums on Park District's website for its various issues where public can discuss and post their views goes a long way in involving public participation.

11. Regional Parks Foundation -- This "private charitable foundation" receives millions of dollars in the public name with minimal disclosure of its finances. What changes would you help implement to provide more sunshine and transparency to the operation of this institution?

My opponent, Ayn Wieskamp, is an Ex-Officio of Regional Parks Foundation, so we can certainly know more on it through her disclosures. If the Regional Parks Foundation is mostly serving the transactional needs of donors of being green while doing well, I would recommend full transparency to the institution's operations.

12. Aircraft -- EBRPD spends a significant amount of money annually on its Air Force, providing non-emergency aerial surveillance that results in daily unnecessary disturbance of people and wildlife while contributing to air pollution in both counties. What changes would you help implement to confine the use of helicopters to emergency use only?

Park District's helicopter unit focuses on fighting crime, fire and saving lives, along with many non-emergency services. Though aerial over-flights provides a unique perspective in managing park property, I would like a better management of helicopter use for protection of natural resources, wildlife surveys, global positioning satellite mapping flights, photographic missions, vegetation management surveys and land surveys.

13. Earth-moving Equipment -- What changes would you help implement to assure that EBRPD follows "best practices" policies to prevent siltation pollution in local watersheds when operating earth moving equipment.

I would recommend that best practices policies to prevent siltation pollution in local watersheds when operating earth moving equipment is tied to the operations team's performance goals.

14. Eastshore State Park -- What are your thoughts on the future development of the Eastshore State Park and EBRPD's role?

EBRPD's role should be to protect the setting's unique natural and scenic resources, and to provide the citizens of California with a dramatic new open space resource in the midst of one of the state's most urban settings. Future development should be minimized in cognizant with the goal to protect its environmental value.

15. Expansion and Development -- Should EBRPD focus its efforts on continuing to expand its land holding to protect open space from future development, or should it focus on just doing a good job of maintaining its current parklands?

East Bay population is growing rapidly that is putting heavy demand on development of open spaces into urban developments. As stated above, we need to balance the available open spaces with the community demand so we can preserve our parks & habitats for future generations. EBRPD should focus its efforts on continuing to expand its land holding to protect open space from future development, otherwise not many opportunities will be left to acquire open park lands in the future.

16. Labor issues -- What is your view of the district's negotiations with the labor union last year? What do you think that your role as a board member should be if the management were to pursue a similar strategy in a future negotiation cycle?

I need to understand the district's negotiations with the labor union last year further in order to develop my opinion by consulting other board members, management and union management.

17. Endorsements -- Who has endorsed you so far? Who do you expect to endorse you?

I am in process of interviewing with and understanding several environmental groups for endorsements.

18. 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).

Though just 80 days left for the election, I am still in the early stages of assessing fund needed and fund raising. My funding will come from donations through my website, grass roots, friends, and park supporters.

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

I will constantly update my website at www.devgandhi.com with my understanding of the major issues facing the Park District and my opinion on how to address them.