

Green Party of Alameda County Questionnaire

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Occupation: Attorney and Architect

Campaign Chair: Erik Giesen-Fields

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

As both an attorney at law and a licensed architect, I'm familiar with real property law, municipal law, architecture and design, green building, and urban planning. In addition to my professional skills I have a deep passion for local politics, community-building, and government. For the past two years, I have served as an appointed commissioner on Albany's Planning and Zoning Commission, first as Vice-Chair in 2015 and now as Chair. On the Planning and Zoning Commission I gained a deeper understanding of how local governments operate and the different departments work together to achieve a common goal. As a Planning and Zoning Commissioner I've worked to get Albany's General Plan updated and approved by the City Council, participated in planning review of the public works center, made wireless communications policy recommendations to the City Council, and conducted numerous commercial and residential project design reviews in Albany. The most significant thing I do is helping mediate people who have adversarial positions come together and find a compromise/solution such as neighbors arguing over lost privacy, views, a difference in aesthetics, noise, etc. I would like to further my service to the community by serving on Albany's city council.

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.

Albany's budget has improved compared to past budget deficits. Currently, Albany's city council has approved the fiscal year 2016 - 2017 city budget. The 2016 - 2017 budget estimates \$26.9 million in revenues, \$23.9 million in expenditures, and \$3 million in revenue surplus. The 2015 - 2016 city budget had an estimated revenue surplus of \$3.6 million with similar levels of revenues and expenditures. The city's current fiscal health is a change from past years. As recently as 2012 - 2013 the city operated with over \$3 million deficiency in revenues. I feel strongly that Albany's fiscal health will be directly tied to an active oversight and careful consideration of how new projects are funded and that sufficient revenues

are available or can be generated to fund the project. I would like to continue Albany fiscal health and prosperity.

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?

My vision for Albany includes a commercial corridor with every commercial property being utilized and thriving. Albany needs to ensure that every retail space is being used because a thriving commercial sector and the revenues they generate are essential for a strong commercial and residential districts. A primary source of city revenues comes from fees generated by business sales tax, licenses, and "other taxes." As a council member I would work with the Solano Avenue Association and the Albany Chamber of Commerce to meet a goal of zero commercial retail vacancies within the first two years of taking office.

The development currently under construction at San Pablo and Monroe (UC Development) is a project that has been the center of controversy and polarized many of Albany's residents. The UC Development has gone through CEQA review, citizen reviews, public comment, and formal reviews to get to its current state of construction. I personally reviewed, as a planning and zoning commissioner, the required public art contribution component of the project. The overall project was approved by previous elected officials with the public's involvement. Many have been critical of the final outcome. Regardless, the government's duty was met as a facilitator for public involvement was met through public hearings and review. Moving forward, with the project already approved, I think the city should work with the developer to ensure that the citizens' concerns are known and considered during any final planning. Ongoing public awareness of the development would help invest the community in the project and allow them to provide intelligent feedback about the project.

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?

Albany has made great efforts to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and meet its Climate Action Plan (CAP) goals. I support Albany's CAP. Albany's CAP was adopted in 2010 by the city council and has measures that when implemented would enable Albany to reach its greenhouse gas emission reduction goals. I would work to make sure the city implemented plan as quickly as possible. I also support residential solar energy and state subsidies for solar energy investment.

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?

I support both Measures N1 and P1. Measure N1 would authorize the city council to amend the parking requirement rather than a majority vote of residents. Simply because the authority is given to the city council does not mean that it will change the residential parking requirement. Albany's current residential parking requirement of two off-street parking spaces per dwelling unit can have a very chilling effect on new residential development. This requirement is increasingly out of step with decreasing car ownership rates, and unnecessarily limits flexibility for different types of housing. Passage of the measure would

allow the City Council to alter parking requirements following the usual public process for changing the Zoning Code, as is the case in most other cities. The current requirement of a majority of voters limits and negatively affects the city's ability to respond to changing demands in an effective manner. Measure P1 is a great initiative to improve the city's sidewalks and maintain our wonderful neighborhoods. Putting Measure P1 to the voters is a good way to ensure that a majority of the voting residents are aware and in favor of what is being proposed, since the property owners will be the person ultimately paying.

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?

Currently my grass roots campaign does not have any endorsements. Historically I have voted in favor of Democratic Party candidates and I am a registered democrat.

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>)

Although I support amending the U.S. Constitution to make clear that corporations and other artificial entities do not have Constitutional rights and that money is not speech and campaign spending should be limited through regulation, I think that it is an impractical way to overturn the legal precedent of Citizens United. A more effective way of changing American laws is through appointing Supreme Court justices that are willing to overturn Citizens United and challenge the case law with a valid legal claim. Since the office I am running for is a local office I will focus most of my attention to making changes at the local level. Therefore, I would also support local efforts to minimize corporate influence in politics through enacting campaign contribution and term limits in Albany.

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 would really appreciate endorsement by the Green Party. I agree and support all of the Green Party's key values. I am a proponent of renewable resources such as solar and wind power generation. Throughout my life I have worked with social justice organizations like Big Brother program, in-school tutoring, and minority professional organizations. I appreciate the effectiveness of non-violent protest championed by Rev. Martin Luther King. Especially, in our day and age of police and civil brutality and violence an alternative such as non-violent protest, sit-ins, and marching are need. My campaign is a classic example of a grassroots political campaign and diversity which is why I merit the Green Party's support and endorsement. I am David fighting goliath, three incumbents, but remember sometimes a giant can be felled by a single action.