

Gray Harris

August 21, 2016

Green Party Questionnaire

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

I chose to run for the Board because I believe we have taken exciting action over the last year on projects that I am proud of. I have spearheaded the building of affordable employee housing in an existing historical building owned by the school district on the former Navy Base. I coordinated action on an enrollment policy making it easier for military personnel to enroll in our district. This policy is now headed to the Governor's office. I have advocated for the reinstatement of career pathways in our high schools so that our students can graduate not only college ready, but also ready for a career that inspires them. We are renovating a school that has been closed for several years to expand our early childhood development program in order to give every student the foundation they need to succeed. We have created a committee of employees to help us resolve the chronic underpayment of our educators. I would like to remain on the Board in order to see these projects and policies to fruition.

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 believe the main priorities of the school board are to provide each student with the resources he or she needs to succeed, and to provide working conditions for our employees that allow them to be the best educators for our students that they can be. I also believe that we need to be fiscally responsible in meeting these goals, as well as protect our limited physical space for our district's programs. Above I listed the new ideas that I placed on the agenda in the last year. In the future I plan to advocate for a middle school on the west end of Alameda, where there are currently only charter middle schools. I also plan to bring our employee salaries at least to the mid-range in the county.

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 an Alameda Unified School District Board Member who has spent the last 16 years advocating for public school children, teachers, parents, working families and my community. Before recently taking a position as an education advocate for the California Teachers Association, I worked as an Alameda elementary school classroom teacher for 10 years. I am also the immediate past president of the Alameda Education Association. Since being appointed to the Alameda Unified School District Board, I have spearheaded implementation of a fair enrollment policy that assists our military families and have created additional career pathways and apprenticeship opportunities for our students. I also led the fight to adopt policies that ensure local hire and fair wages for work that is done on our schools. I have successfully passed a balanced budget for the school district and have taken a lead on attracting and retaining qualified educators by advocating for smart uses of existing buildings at Alameda Point for low cost employee housing. I have also protected AUSD facility space to ensure each student's ability to attend neighborhood schools. My extensive background also includes serving three years as PTA liaison and being a finalist for "Teacher of the Year" in 2012. I was a member of the School Site Council and taught several afterschool enrichment classes for students. I was instrumental in creating the Maya Lin arts magnet program and was the teacher volunteer coordinator for the School District's successful 2010 parcel tax campaign. In

2013, I was selected Woman of the Year by Assembly Member Rob Bonta. In my current capacity with the California Teachers Association, I represent over 2,000 teachers in nine Bay Area school districts where I help educators maximize their instruction to best serve the students in the classroom. In addition, I focus on important state legislative work and use my extensive government experience to help our teachers effectively navigate AUSD's bureaucracy and bring new partnerships to the District. I earned my Bachelor's in Psychology from University of California at Berkeley and received my teaching credential from Mills College. I also hold an early childhood education degree from the College of Marin. I graduated with honors from all three colleges. I enjoy being an active member of the Alameda community through the Elk's Lodge and the League of Women Voters. I spend time in Alameda's parks and beaches with my family and live in a historic Alameda residence where I enjoy preserving the city's history. I am also the proud mother of a son who graduated from Alameda High School in 2011.

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?
I am absolutely opposed to spending this amount of money on leasing office space and I actively campaigned against the idea when I was the president of the union. Unfortunately at that time, we had a different Superintendent and a different Board who signed the lease against the will of the teachers. I will do everything in my power as a board member to discontinue the lease and move the district offices into a building we already own.
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?
The new school building should be paid for by the developer(s). I sit on the city/school subcommittee and have agendised the conversation about how to ensure equitable space for students moving into newly built housing. The District is doing a demographic study to project the impacts of the new homes. Not only do we need enough classroom space, but I would like to also study the school boundaries to ensure that we have diverse populations at all of our schools across the island.
6. How did you perceive the district's refusal to obtain appraisals for the tidelands swap with the city?
My opinion was that there should have been multiple appraisals of the property since it wasn't owned by the city or the school district, but by the taxpayers. However, I was not on the Board at the time. During that period, we had a Superintendent and a Board that was not open to the input the community and employees gave. That has changed. Since joining the Board, I have built collaborative relationships with my fellow board members, and as a former teacher and as a parent I see the importance of listening to the community. I believe my current fellow Board members have also observed the value of community participation and are open to being more receptive of input before making decisions in the future. I hope that the newly elected Board will continue in this vein and avoid the types of decisions that the former Board made.
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?
I will be happy to remove the language about class size and have conveyed this to the teachers. In the end we need an agreement that is acceptable to our employees and I am committed to making that happen.
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 visit school sites to hold lunch meetings with employees and I attend PTA meetings. I participate in the Special Education Parent Support Group, and in the Alameda Collaborative for Children, Youth and their Families. I have met with every community member who has asked to meet, respond to email within twenty-four hours and regularly give out my cell phone number. I want to be accountable to my constituents and I actively seek out their opinions.

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 raised over \$14,000 to date from individuals and organizations that represent working families. I plan to raise at least another \$5,000 through two fundraisers slated to be held after the start of the school year. I would refuse to accept money from any organization that does not share my values.

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

Not at this time, but please feel free to contact me with any follow up questions. My cell phone number is 510.552.6521