

## QUESTIONNAIRE

### GREEN PARTY OF ALAMEDA COUNTY 2014 ENDORSEMENT DECISION

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

*A well-educated citizenry is the cornerstone of a well-functioning democracy. For 23 years at Public Advocates, a social justice non-profit, I have dedicated my career to serving that vision as a civil rights attorney challenging state, federal and local district policies that deny low-income students, students of color, and English learners equal and adequate educational opportunities. I have twice been recognized as a California Attorney of the Year for this work (2005 and 2011).*

*When my son became a kindergartner at Anna Yates, I became involved in Emeryville's schools, reinvigorating the Anna Yates school site council and serving as its Vice-President. When a vacancy occurred on the School Board in 2012, I applied for and was appointed to the position. I believe that my extensive experience in shaping California's laws regarding teacher quality, school funding, accountability, and public transparency, among other areas, serves our students well. I also believe that Emery Unified has an exciting progressive vision to build a full service community school with wrap around health and social services at the ECCL site. As a small district, with great teachers, a unique City partnership, and a strong community-supported parcel tax, we have the opportunity to build off our successes at Anna Yates and to provide all our diverse students a high quality college and career ready education.*

#### 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?

*First, the Board needs to see to the successful completion of the new full service community school site, known as the Emeryville Center of Community Life (ECCL). As ECCL comes on line in phases over the next 12-20 months, we need to make sure*

*construction is completed safely and within budget, that the joint occupancy partnership with the City is functioning smoothly, and that our education program plans for operating at the new site are in place before occupancy.*

*Second, our Board, like all others in the state, needs to embrace the second year of the new Local Control Funding Formula law and its ongoing requirements for engaging the community in educational program planning. This year, the district will be reviewing how our local LCFF plan is working and updating it based on that review and additional staff and community input. I hope that we can build off of our good engagement work last year and, together with our new superintendent, engage an even broader segment of the community in designing the district's educational program.*

*Third, last Spring the Board adopted a College and Career ready/Technology thrust to guide the district's education vision. Given our proximity to Silicon Valley, the many great tech companies in our own backyard, our small size, our great teachers, and a new superintendent with a tech background, we should be able to design a K-12 curriculum that graduates all of our students computer literate and tech savvy. How precisely to translate that vision into our K-12 curriculum and program supports is something I hope to see the Board, the staff, and the broader community move forward to figure out together now as we plan for ECCL occupancy.*

**3. Qualifications -- Please give a brief summary of your background and qualifications for the office of School Board member. If you are a current School Board member, what issues can you point to in your time as Board member that have had a positive impact? As a Board member what can you tell us about your service on the 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 Board?**

*I am currently Vice-President of the Emery Unified School Board. My son is beginning his fourth year at Anna Yates where, as mentioned, I was vice-chair of the School Site Council before joining the Board. After graduating with honors from Stanford undergrad and Harvard Law School, I became an attorney at Public Advocates. For 23 years there, I have worked to improve educational opportunities for low-income students and students of color in California.*

*As a lead counsel on one landmark case, I helped negotiate a 2004 settlement with the State guaranteeing California's students sufficient instructional materials, decent facilities and qualified teachers, particularly for English learners, securing over \$1 billion to support these requirements. I am currently lead counsel on another case, challenging the State for grossly underfunding California schools. I have also been a key advocate with the Brown Administration and the State Board of Education, on behalf of low-income communities, around the state's new Local Control Funding Formula. In this role, I have helped to ensure the new laws require additional funding and new services for low-income students and English learners and greatly enhanced community*

*engagement and transparency requirements when it comes to shaping districts' local educational program.*

*In my two years on the Board I have played a key role in ensuring we have a superintendent who is committed to developing good relations with our teachers and to communicating effectively with the broader community. I have ensured the district appropriately implements key legal requirements that serve students. In particular, I have worked to help the district comply with the new Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) law, including its requirement that additional funding and services be directed to our neediest students, that we be transparent in how we are spending funds, and that teachers, parents and students be active participants in designing the district's educational program. The students recognized our district as a model for how to engage students in the LCFF process at a press conference in June and again in testimony before the State Board of Education in July. I supported parents input into our LCFF plan by making sure the Anna Yates School Site Council was informed of the new law and that its input was considered by the superintendent and the Board.*

*I have also been dogged in ensuring the district complies with state and federal laws that govern teacher credentialing in general and the teaching of English learners and students with disabilities in particular. It is important that we employ teachers who are fully trained and credentialed to the greatest extent possible (currently 100% in EUSD) and that our staff effectively addresses the unique needs of English learners and our students with disabilities.*

#### **4. School Ratings and Evaluations -- How do you rate the Emeryville schools? Name the success and shortcomings?**

*Anna Yates is a very good school with a number of excellent teachers that has seen its achievement scores rise steadily over the past decade. As a parent with a child in second grade there, I have been impressed too with the level of individual attention and supports provided to students beyond the regular classroom teacher, including, academic intervention, special ed screening and support (both in-class and pull out), and health services. I'd like to see a music program return, more support with PE, and more support for enriching the experience in the upper grades (6-8). This year, the Board has approved the superintendent's request for a new assistant principal to help the school be even more responsive to student, teacher and community needs. With a new principal and assistant principal, and a new superintendent to oversee them, I am hopeful Anna Yates is poised to improve even more.*

*Emery Secondary School (ESS) has been doing a good job with many of its students and continues to graduate a set of vibrant, well-spoken young people as was evident at this year's graduation in June. The vast majority of our graduates go on to 2 or 4-year higher education institutions. There is more work to do to improve the curricular offerings and support at ESS and our students' performance. The Board approved a budget and LCFF plan in June that adds a second science teacher who can also offer another Advanced Placement (AP) class. (Currently, we offer only one AP class.) I*

*would like to see us offer more counseling support at ESS and to expand our collaborations with Berkeley Community College and other area high schools through which we can offer additional AP and college-level courses.*

**5. Budget -- What changes to the EUSD budget would you suggest? (include changes to revenue). How do you see the impact of the new Local Control Funding Formula and the role of staff and parents/community in LCAP?**

*As I am familiar with from the lawsuit I am leading against the State (Campaign for Quality Education v. California), California woefully underfunds public education. Depending on the particular year and cost-adjustments used, California consistently ranks 45<sup>th</sup> to 50<sup>th</sup> in per pupil spending compared to other states and is dead last in its ratio of students to adults in the system who teach, counsel, administer, serve as librarians, nurses, etc. Fortunately, the Emeryville community, including the business community, has supported our parcel tax (which is up for renewal this November), without which we would be seriously impaired in trying to provide our programming. That said, we have many more unfulfilled needs, some of which I discussed in the previous answer as among my next priorities.*

*With this year's budget I was very protective of LCFF's new "supplemental and concentration" funding dedicated to increasing or improving services for our low-income students and English learners (who make up at least  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the district's student population). With the \$241,000 in these funds this year (the first year of LCFF) we added a second science/AP teacher at the high school, a part-time EL teacher to help English learners at ESS, and more support and intervention services at Anna Yates, both during the day in the classroom and afterschool for struggling students. We are also re-directing other pre-existing funds to increase our parent outreach and translation services to better serve our English learner community and, as mentioned, to create a new assistant principal position at Anna Yates.*

*(I have addressed earlier the importance of involving students, teachers, and parents in the new LCFF process for developing the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) and my role at the state-level and in Emery, thus far, to make sure that happens.)*

**6. Properties -- The District controls three properties. How should it allocate resources amongst these properties? Assuming the completion of the Emeryville Center of Community Life (ECCL) in 2016 and the use of the San Pablo Avenue site for K-12 instruction and administrative offices, what should the District do with the Anna Yates and Ralph Hawley sites?**

*Before I joined the Board, the Ralph Hawley site was designated for 0-5 preschool educational activities by the Board. As such it is currently housing a very strong YMCA Head Start program. The precise use of the current Anna Yates site is still under*

*consideration. Some of the ideas that I have heard floated include post-secondary job-training programs, housing County Office of Education teacher training programs, additional after-school and recreation program space and a future K-3 or K-5 site should the ECCL site become over-subscribed down the line, among others. The District and the City have appointed a Task Force largely made up of community members to make recommendations regarding the future possible uses for the Anna Yates site and of the current Rec Center site post-ECCL. That work has currently been put on hold while the City considers its priorities. However we precisely proceed, the vision should be one in which we utilize all three sites to support the broader educational needs of our whole community, from preschool through to K-12 and beyond.*

#### **7. Fundraising -- What role should a Trustee play in District fund-raising from businesses, non-profits, and grant-making institutions?**

*Board members can play an effective role in serving as a cheerleader for the District; this can include raising funds from outside entities like businesses or foundations. I have reached out to foundation funders that I know on the District's behalf where appropriate and have participated in helping to brief a funder on the District's vision and programs.*

#### **8. Contributions -- Should Emeryville schools receive contributions directly, or should they be managed by a third party?**

*Whatever maximizes support for the District and our students. It seems, for example, that the Emery Ed Fund has often been an effective conduit for increasing business and at times foundation support for the District. If a funder prefers to contribute directly to the District and that can be accomplished effectively, then that route makes sense.*

#### **9. Charter Schools -- What is your view of charter schools? How should the District respond to any applications it might receive to create a charter school within District boundaries?**

*Any applications received must be reviewed objectively according to the statutory requirements. My personal view of charters is that they best function as pockets of experimentation to generate innovative practices which can then be taken back for use in the traditional public school setting. Such was the original intention behind charters when they were originated in the early 1990's as a result of advocacy from the American Federation of Teachers. I do not see charters, as some do, as an alternative to the public school system. Charters have not been good at creating sustainable systems of schools that have successfully been able to educate "all comers," particularly all the low-income students, English learners and students with disabilities that public schools accept. As for Emeryville in particular, we are small enough that we ought to be able to experiment and innovate within the traditional public school model.*

#### **10. Testing and Teacher Evaluations -- What should the EUSD policy**

be regarding student testing and teacher evaluation? How would you use the scores? Should scores be used to evaluate the performance of administrators or teachers?

*Standardized test scores are an important but imperfect indicator of student growth in learning. Important judgments about students, teachers, or schools should not be based solely on standardized test scores. Rather, any such judgments should be based on multi-dimensional, holistic evidence of student, teacher, or school performance. I have been a supporter of California's recent shift away from a test-centric accountability system to a more multi-dimensional one. See a blog I wrote (<http://edsources.org/2013/california-moving-away-from-washingtons-corporate-education-reform/36465#.U8rjxmK9KSM>) and a list of principles I helped draft as part of the 100-member national Coalition for Teaching Quality which I helped form. Principle 3 addresses teacher evaluation. ([http://www.publicadvocates.org/sites/default/files/library/principles\\_to\\_ensure\\_student\\_access\\_to\\_fully\\_prepared\\_and\\_effective\\_teachers.pdf](http://www.publicadvocates.org/sites/default/files/library/principles_to_ensure_student_access_to_fully_prepared_and_effective_teachers.pdf)); also see generally [www.coalitionforteachingquality.org](http://www.coalitionforteachingquality.org).*

11. Relationship to Teachers -- As an individual trustee, how would you want to interact with teachers? Would you want to meet with teachers as a group, individually, and if so, how frequently? Or would you primarily rely on the superintendent or public Board meetings to communicate with teachers?

*As a board member, I have regularly engaged in conversations with teachers that I know and see on a day-to-day basis in classrooms, in the hall, or at School site council meetings as I participate in my son's education. I have responded positively to every invitation I have received from teachers for after-hours meetings, be it for beers at Lanesplitters, a retirement party, or a ball game. On key issues, I have regularly reached out to teacher leadership to keep communication lines open.*

12. Outsourcing -- In recent years the District has fired or reduced the hours of some staff in favor of outsourcing school services such as the breakfast and lunch programs. When is it appropriate to outsource an existing school service? What factors should guide these decisions?

*The primary factor is always what is in the best interest of our students' education. Board members need constantly to analyze how the District can best maximize students' educational opportunities. Food service, for example, is a cost that is not fully covered by federal and state funds and by students who pay for meals. Thus, the cost of meals "encroaches" on the District's general fund and the educational programs we provide. In order to maximize our instructional services, it has made sense to look to less expensive alternative ways to provide high quality, nutritional meals to our students.*

**13. City Government Relations -- How should the City of Emeryville support the EUSD, and education in general?**

*The City should continue its current support for our schools. The City has invested \$21 million in the new Emeryville Center of Community Life. Together we are building both a full service community school site and a community center that will integrate education, health and community services. The City provides an afterschool program that integrates well with our school program as well as numerous other activities through its Community Services department that enable our children to stay healthy and active.*

**14. Accountability -- How do you propose making yourself accountable and accessible to the citizens of Emeryville?**

*I will continue my practice of responding to emails and phone calls from constituents where I listen to concerns, attempt to explain the reasoning for district actions, my own thinking and seek to be responsive.*

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

*I have not begun to seek endorsements but have received an endorsement from Residents United for a Livable Emeryville. I expect to garner most of the expected endorsements but it does not make sense to name names before you have asked people.*

**16. 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 not yet raised any money for this race and, to be frank, I have not yet assessed how much, if any, I will have to. Thus, what my campaign funding will be is very much up in the air at this point. I'm not a politician. I'm a lifelong education advocate interested in helping our neediest students not in pursuing a political career.*

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

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