

**John Van Geffen for Emeryville City Council**

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

**GREEN PARTY OF ALAMEDA COUNTY**

**2016 ENDORSEMENT DECISION**

1. What are three major issues in Emeryville that need to be addressed now? What creative ideas do you have to address these issues?

**A: Three major issues I believe should be addressed now:**

- 1) Renter protections;**
- 2) City planning - traffic/public works; and**
- 3) Safety**

**RENTER PROTECTIONS:**

The last census found that roughly 70% of Emeryville's citizens are renters. Unlike San Francisco, Berkeley and Oakland, renter protections have not been a priority of the city council and it should be since it would have a large affect on Emeryville voters.

My plan would be to take a regional approach and attempt to pass something along the lines of with whatever measures Berkeley and Oakland's vote on this November.

**CITY PLANNING:**

A recent study by the State Dept. of Finance showed the Emeryville's population increased 6.9% in just the last year and the Emeryville Community Development Dept.'s 'Status of Major Development Projects' (July 2016) shows roughly another 2,000 new units either pending approval or under construction.

How the city plans to cope with the increased traffic and strain on public works needs to be a priority since this will have a direct impact on Emeryville voters for decades to come.

My initial thoughts on how to address this: make sure developers will be paying their fair share of the increased costs/strain on the system; improved/increased public transit stops at large apt. complexes to incentivize against driving; continue to honor previous council's promises of expanding on the existing bike/walking path.

Additionally, I want to ensure connectivity to the Bay Bridge bicycle/walking path so that when the SF-Yerba Buena Island connecting bridge is finished, tourists will come to Emeryville and Emeryville residents can bike to work (for the truly die hard). This will only become more important if the Oakland A's plan to build on the water near the bridge comes to fruition.

**SAFETY**

There are frequent reports of high speed chases and shoot outs on Adeline and San Pablo, much of which appears to be spill over from

Oakland. There are massive homeless encampments along the West Oakland border that can easily migrate and cause issues along the way. I would not want to opine as to how to deal with this without first meeting with Police Chief Tejada and discussing what strategies are in place or coming down the pipeline.

2. Who has endorsed you so far (groups and individuals of note)? Who are you endorsing, from President all the way down ballot to local races?

A: I am seeking endorsements from ADPC, EBYD, RULE, Sierra Club, Local 55, and both the Mayor and Vice Mayor of Emeryville. I have already interviewed with the ADPC, RULE and the Sierra Club and have scheduled meetings with the Local 55, RULE and EBYD. I have spoken at length with Mayor Martinez and Vice Mayor Donahue and while they endorsed two candidates (prior to the nomination period starting), they're waiting to endorse a third.

As to the second part of your question, I think it would be best to wait until after the November election to see whether the residents of Emeryville have entrusted me to act on their behalf before presuming that others will base their votes off my endorsement.

3. How much money do you currently have for this race? How much money do you plan to raise? Where will the money come from?

A: I plan on spending less than \$5,000, all of which will be from my own funds. I am not seeking donations because I do not want to be beholden to any special interests. I have roughly ten volunteers who have offered to help canvas, make calls and support me on election day.

4. Why did you choose to run for this office? What strength/ skills would you bring to the Council?

A: I first thought about running due to, somewhat, selfish reasons. My wife and I just had our daughter (she turns 1 tomorrow!) and while I was home on paternity with my wife, I realized that the walking bridge next to my house has two flights of stairs (four total) so parents with strollers, the elderly, the disabled, and bicyclists can't use it.

Then I started thinking how my daughter will eventually be attending the new ECCL (opens today) which means she will be walking on one of the most heavily trafficked roads in Emeryville without any viable alternative routes.

As I was considering these and other community issues, I began to wonder what I could do that would have the most direct and positive impact. I

decided that becoming a member of the city council was the only way I could guarantee my voice was not just heard, but acted upon.

Regarding skill sets, I have a practicing attorney for 10 years handling regulatory compliance, business transactions and civil litigation. I have been a volunteer trustee on the board of directors of the Oakland Aviation Museum since 2011 and the Regional Vice President (Western-Pacific) of a transportation industry group. I have drafted, implemented and practiced Emergency Response Plans with large corporations, arbitrated and litigated multi-million dollar suits, etc.

I understand what it takes to build consensus, push through the red tape, and how to continue fighting for what you believe in. I have no misconceptions as to the amount work involved.

5. What major Emeryville development of the last 10 years do you least respect and why? Most respect?

A: I have some reservations about Emeryville's Minimum Wage Ordinance and upcoming Predictable Workers Schedules ordinance. I believe a livable wage is extremely important and offering hourly and/or shift employees a reasonable certainty in their future schedules is completely reasonable and should be put in place for all Californians, BUT by being the very first city to enact such legislation, we are taking risks that could have been mitigated, if not avoided all together, by taking a more regional approach by passing something more in line with our neighbor cities.

More importantly, I do not believe the city council should prioritize items that, while altruistic, do not help the voters that elected them.

All of the positive press for the Predictable Workers Schedule seem to cite the ACCE study of 110 frontline Emeryville employees. What is ignored is the fact that the study fails to state what % of those questioned live in Emeryville. The lengthy discussions about commutes suggests this proposed ordinance will mainly help non-Emeryville workers at the expense of Emeryville businesses.

Again, it's laudable to lead by example, but not when the majority of the benefits are felt by nonresidents while there were regional approaches that could have lessened the squeeze on local business.

As to the second part of your question, the Development that I most respect is Emeryville's ability to redefine itself from an industrial complex on the train tracks to a thriving city with a great mix of residential, family friendly park land, walkable commercial space and industrial research facilities.

If elected, I will strive to ensure that the city continues to develop

**its personality and prioritize community development over economic pressures.**

6. How can we attract more families into Emeryville?

**A: Improve the school system, continue to build public parks and walking paths, address safety concerns and build more single family homes. (The ECCL is a wonderful new development for the school system and community recreational groups.)**

**Unfortunately, due to Emeryville's small size (1.2 square miles) and location between S.F., Oakland and Berkeley, there may not be sufficient support to build anything but high density housing. To this end, the city council must ensure that all new building permits set aside dedicated park space and support a walking/bicycle path plan for the community.**

7. Traffic is a major problem in Emeryville and with all the development in the pipeline it seems likely to get worse. How would you work to lessen this?

**A: While it is easy to point fingers--e.g., location near the bridge, traffic from commuters avoiding highway backup, ongoing construction, etc., unfortunately, identifying the cause does nothing to ease the effects.**

**The Sierra Club suggests lowering the minimum number of parking spaces for new developments will reduce the number of cars. I have not seen any studies proving this theory so I am concerned that the more likely result of having less parking is having new residents park offsite on neighborhood streets and/or provide incentives for building private parking lots.**

**For now, the best answer is the most obvious, increase public transit options, support bike commuter paths, and consult with traffic study experts.**

8. The Sherwin Williams project as proposed will mean the demise of the Horton Street Bike Boulevard as defined by the General Plan owing to too much surplus project generated traffic. Additionally the 45th and 53rd Street bike boulevards will also be rendered impossible according to metrics defined by the General Plan because of the excess traffic generated by the Sherwin Williams project. The developers say the project is so good, it's worth destroying these bike facilities to get it. How will amenities from the project more than offset the loss of these critical bike corridors (presuming you agree)?

**A: Your question is how do the positive effects of the proposed Sherwin Williams project outweigh the negative impacts on the local bike facilities. If you ask someone who uses the bike paths, the answer is simple, they don't.**

**I'm lucky to own my home. The cost of living in the Bay Area goes up every year and will continue to rise unless there is either a decrease in demand or an increase in the housing supply. Without new development to ease the pressure, I am worried that in a few years the Emeryville residents who use the bike paths won't be able to afford to live in Emeryville anyway.**

**I would like to see a dedicated bike lane and boulevard reserved for a park and bike/walk path. I believe several of the issues with the new project could be minimized by reducing the density of the project which is very reasonable request.**

**9. Without the re-development agency, how can small business be encouraged to come to Emeryville?**

**A: To lure Small Businesses to Emeryville we need to minimize the costs of doing business here, we need to ensure there is space available for lease/purchase that fits the need of customers, and foster Emeryville's name brand/character to brings in clientele.**

**The MWO and Scheduling Ordinance make it harder to convince small businesses to pick Emeryville over Berkeley/Oakland from an initial cost/benefit analysis. So, to counter the additional costs, we need to identify specific areas of Emeryville to target as key growth sectors and create a development plan to incentivize targeted business development.**

**This is a large task for the council alone to try and accomplish without a Chamber of Commerce or several dedicated personnel to facilitate the development and implementation of such a plan.**

**On an aside, I read today that the Oakland A's recently toured the Oakland Port looking for the site of a new stadium. Due to Emeryville's proximity to the port, we may have more small business development coming than expected.**

**10. Do you believe that transparency in city decisions has improved in the past five years? Does this still need improvement? What changes would you suggest or support?**

**A: I have only been a resident in Emeryville since the fall of 2014 so I cannot speak to how the local government worked five years ago. As a new Emeryville resident I was surprised and pleased with the with**

**transparency of the City Government compared to my previous home. That said, time will be the judge.**

11. How do you see the role of the city manager in Emeryville with regard to both connection to the city council and the public? Can you comment on changes in this with our new city manager and your opinion.

**A: I am only aware of the current City Manager's position and not how the role within city government was previous organized.**

12. Do you support amending the Constitution to end corporate Constitutional rights and getting money out of politics? Have you <<https://movetoamend.org/pledge>>Taken the Pledge to Amend? ( <<https://movetoamend.org/take-pledge-amend>><https://movetoamend.org/take-pledge-amend> )

**A: Yes and yes.**

13. What is your current line of work, phone number, e-mail, and website?

**A: I am an attorney handling business transactions, litigation and regulatory compliance. Additionally, I volunteer as a trustee on the board of directors at the Oakland Aviation Museum and on other transportation industry groups.**

**M: (408)386-0345**

**E: [vote4johnvangeffen@gmail.com](mailto:vote4johnvangeffen@gmail.com)**

**W: <http://johnvangeffen.strikingly.com/>**

14. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about yourself?

**A: Plenty, but I'll save that for when we meet.**