

## QUESTIONNAIRE

### GREEN PARTY OF ALAMEDA COUNTY 2016 ENDORSEMENT DECISION

Please email your responses to: [GPAC-VoterGuide@yahogroups.com](mailto:GPAC-VoterGuide@yahogroups.com)

In the subject line, please include "Oakland City Council" and your district number.

Any written correspondence for the Alameda County Green Party should be addressed to:

2022A Blake Street \* Berkeley, CA 94704

Please respond by Saturday, August 27

Name: Viola Gonzales

Phone: 510-530-8369

Email: [viola@voteviola.com](mailto:viola@voteviola.com)

Website: [www.voteviola.com](http://www.voteviola.com)

Note: You may respond to any question with a link to your website or other posted positions. For the yes/no questions, please answer yes or no and if you wish to add to your answer, feel free to do so.

1. Motivation -- Why did you choose to run for City office? If you are running against an incumbent, what are your main dis-satisfactions and differences with him or her?

I am motivated in part by Donald Trump. How was it possible for someone with such little qualification to have gotten so far ? Perhaps it was because too many of us thought that surely there would be another qualified person next to us that would step forward. Our issues are complex and require careful analyses, thought and leadership. As I look at what District 5 has or has not accomplished in the last 3 ½ years I am confident that we can do much more as a community working in collaboration with other Council Districts, the Mayor, the City administration and our employees and their union leadership.

We can do much more about jobs, housing and the quality of life. We can't wait in hopes that the new growth in jobs in the regional economy will lift everyone in our

City. We can't just be cleaning up on weekends in hopes of changing our environment. We need to be mounting a much more proactive policy framework for the long term. If we care about our environment then we need to be much more proactive in infill development and looking for ways that the city can improve its services to both residents and businesses that have chosen to live in our community.

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 City?

I believe that Oakland lacks middle-income jobs. Too much of our job creation is in low paying jobs that are likely to remain wage stagnant. There is too much distrust between our residents and our public safety employees and with our elected public officials. Our leadership appears fractured and unable to provide the necessary governance required to instill a culture of excellence in serving residents and creatively mounting smart growth/sustainable development for our city. Therefore, I plan to work on issues in which I can bring strength based on my experience. These are as follows:

(1) Make the economic pie bigger, focusing on economic development to create jobs in all areas of our city for all resident:

Support policies that help local businesses grow. Create jobs by encouraging self-employment, micro enterprise development, business revitalization and larger business development

Support quality training & education that leads to good paying jobs

Support smart growth and creativity in housing options: transit-oriented development; secondary units, infill and new, et al.

(2) Instill a culture of excellence in the delivery of all city services in all areas of the city, for all of our residents. Our public services need to be well managed whether these are public works, libraries, parks, police or fire departments. We deserve to live in a city where our residents do not fear the very same services that are paid by tax dollars to protect them. Our city workers should know to what standards they are held accountable, take pride in providing those services and be respected for providing them.

(3) Bring civility to public discourse through bridge building and collaboration. Make room for differences: helping bring civil discourse to public meetings

- ☒ Work collaboratively with mayor, council and community to build a great city
- ☒ Support dialogue between youth of color and police: programs that humanize all sides

And I believe that these goals are achievable by working collaboratively with other city council members, the Mayor and city administration, and with our employees from all unions to create a great city in which to live and work.

3. Qualifications -- Please give a brief summary of your background and qualifications for the office of City. If you are a current City Government elected official, what issues can you point to in your time as an elected official that have had a positive impact?

I bring considerable experience to the City of Oakland. I hold a Harvard MBA, and an undergraduate degree in business economics. I have a diverse work history that encompasses the private and public sectors. Most of my professional career has been in managing people and money. My first jobs in the SF Bay Area were with Pacific Telephone in accounting and later regulatory divisions of the company. I've been self-employed and owned a small retail business. In the last fifteen years, I have worked primarily as nonprofit executive, managing a wide range of agencies that include direct services, advocacy and an emerging philanthropy. In my last post, our agency helped low income entrepreneurs succeed. I worked for Elihu M. Harris when he was Mayor, as Assistant on Economic Development, giving leadership to private-public initiatives for economic recovery, conversion of military bases, access to capital-business development, and school-to-work projects. I have lived in Oakland for over 35 years. I grew up in a blue-collar family and secured my education primarily through scholarship. I have extensive experience in board governance, having served on a multitude of community boards with focus on equity: economic and social justice. These include as follows:

#### Past Appointments

Appointed to Audit Committee: Oakland Board of Education ( 2009);  
Oakland Fund for Children and Youth (2005-2008)  
Appointed to Oakland Board of Education by Mayor Jerry Brown ( 2002-2003)  
Oakland Planning Commission (2001-2002)

Current: Board Member of Health Access Foundation.

Past Boards: Community Leadership Awards Committee of The San Francisco Foundation (Chair); California Pan Ethnic Health Network - CPEHN, statewide coalition re disparities in health (Chair); Health Access California - statewide coalition (President); Clinica De La Raza, Inc.

(Parliamentarian); The Unity Council ; YWCA of Oakland (Vice President), Center for Urban Family Life, Steppingstones for Cultural Growth

Past Community Advisory Boards: Community Advisory Board (CAB) of Union Bank (2013-2015); UCSF Helen Diller Family Comprehensive Cancer Center( 2005-2010), PG&E Community Advisory Council; OneCalifornia (now Beneficial State Bank), Verizon Corporation (Chair: Nominations & Corporate Social Responsibility Committees-2000-2007)

Oakland Specific. Vice President, Glenview Neighborhood Association (2010); Chair Fruitvale Community Development Council.

I believe that I am prepared and qualified by a winning combination of education, training and experience.

4. Local groups -- Are you affiliated with any of the active Oakland groups? Such as TOLA, Make Oakland Better Now, Oakland Justice Coalition, Block by Block, Wellstone Democratic Renewal Club, GO Public Schools, OCO, or any other. Describe your involvement and why you feel this group is worthy of your support.

No, I am not. I have been involved in issues more specifically connected to my work in microenterprise development and economic development.

5. Local activities -- Other than local politics, are you involved in any other Oakland based community activities that you would like to share with us? This can range from volunteering in your school to being in your church baseball league.

I have volunteered over the years with many nonprofit organizations, including such local organizations as : Clinica De La Raza, Inc.; The Unity Council ; YWCA of Oakland, Center for Urban Family Life, and Steppingstones for Cultural Growth.

I have been appointed to and served on Audit Committee: Oakland Board of Education ( 2009); Oakland Fund for Children and Youth (2005-2008); Oakland Unified School District Board by Mayor Jerry Brown ( 2002-2003) Oakland Planning Commission (2001-2002); and elected by the community members as Vice President, Glenview Neighborhood Association (2010); and Chair Fruitvale Community Development District Council.

Current: Board Member of Health Access Foundation and in more recent years, I have been an active member of the Greenlining Coalition and the California Reinvestment Coalition to increase opportunities for all Californians including Oakland.

Past Boards: Community Leadership Awards Committee of The San Francisco Foundation (Chair); California Pan Ethnic Health Network - CPEHN, statewide coalition re disparities in health (Chair); Health Access California - statewide coalition (President);

6. Budget -- If you were on council for the next budget in 2017 how would you act differently from the council members dealing with the budget in 2015? How much additional revenue should the City aim to take in, and how would you generate it?

We typically generate revenue from sales taxes and property taxes. All other revenues are generated through special assessments and fees, a patchwork of additional costs to residents that create short-term solutions but create confusion within the community who are trying to buy homes or build businesses. The City should strive to have stretch goals to have revenues that are in line with its population, applying best practices and that provide quality of life amenities to all of its residents: public safety, economic development: supporting local economy growth and job training for good paying jobs; and well functioning departments for public works, libraries and parks.

We need for the public to better understand the budgeting process and sources of revenue that are available to the City in order to ensure that there are realistic expectations as to what the budget can provide. At a minimum our City should provide quality in the delivery of its services and that is only going to happen if we work in collaboration with our workforce.

Looking forward, we need to grow the local economy and that includes working with our local merchants to help them increase sales. For example, we don't have a long term strategy to increase revenues in our neighborhood commercial corridors.

7. Youth -- Describe the condition of youth in Oakland? What would your priorities for youth be for Oakland government and how would they get implemented and paid for?

Our youth deserve good parks, places of recreation and community building. We need to help them secure transferable skills to good jobs.

To the extent that we can cultivate school to work opportunities in the course of

providing City services we should do it. Our youth also deserve to live in safe communities, free of violence. If we do our basic jobs as a City correctly, we can help our youth to prosper.

We currently support Oakland Fund for Children & Youth. Those efforts need to continue to leverage other resources including additional philanthropic support and the efforts of our institutions: private citizens, businesses and schools. We need to build upon recent efforts that Mayor Schaaf has advanced Oakland's Promise and beefing up summer jobs for local youth.

8. Police -- How do you think our community policing is going and what are the next steps? Describe the current relationship between the residents and the Oakland Police. Do you suggest any changes? Do you support Restorative Justice programs and how should the city be involved, if at all. What are your thoughts about police misconduct and how do you feel Oakland should deal with it?

We aren't doing enough with community policing. We have too many people fearful of the very services that are financed by their own city. This is not acceptable. Many residents feel that justice *has not* been served either by our police and/or by our city leadership. If the ballot measure on the police commission *should not* pass, then the city should strive to beef up its existing citizen's review body. There have been too many complaints over the years that have fallen on deaf ears. That is unacceptable. We need better management in our police and more communication between police and community members especially our youth. We should look for new opportunities to bridge that communication including looking at new ways of re-examining restorative justice because what we are doing now is simply not enough.

9. Development Projects -- What are your thoughts and views about the West Oakland Army Base, The upper Broadway-Valdez Triangle, Oak to 9th and other projects?

We need to do as much infill development both residential and commercial as we can do. These developments need to benefit Oakland residents in job creation and housing opportunities without adding burdening our environment. The Oakland Army Base is a conversion project from military use. It came to us contaminated and with an infrastructure that didn't meet current codes. It will require considerable investment to realize its fullest potential to benefit both our community and the region as a whole.

10. Housing & Gentrification -- Increasing rents, dislocation, and gentrification have been in the news. What policies do you advocate to assure that Oakland tenants are protected and that Oakland remains an economically

and racially diverse city? Do you favor rent control?

Increasing rents, dislocation and gentrification have been going on for quite some time although granted at a faster clip in most recent years. Typically when housing costs go up, this signals the market to build more housing but in our community housing production has not kept up with people attracted to the region and our beautiful city. We should be asking ourselves why this is the case and what can we do to improve opportunities to create more housing. Rent control has been necessary as a means to provide stability to individuals but it has also caused distortions in the economics of housing. I favor pursuing all efforts to create housing for all income levels throughout our City. We can't only focus on one segment of interests. We must work on policies that help residents whether they are homeless, low income, meet affordable standards or at market rate.

11. Environment -- What do you think the Oakland City government should be doing about the environment?

If the city pursues aggressively infill development and in combination with supporting increased public transit options and bike use, it would also help the environment because it would reduce the necessity of driving – the greatest cause of pollution.

The City could also encourage people to take more personal steps to help reduce all of their uses of natural resources. It should give public recognition of people and businesses that go the extra mile. There should be recognition of efforts among neighborhoods and across communities, with churches and nonprofit as well as business and residents.

12. Public Banking -- Will you introduce, co-sponsor and/or support an ordinance or charter amendment to create a Public Bank of Oakland, inspired by the Bank of North Dakota<sup>[i]</sup> (BND), a 100 year old public institution? The Public Bank of Oakland would hold the city's deposits - in contrast to having them held by Wall Street Banks as currently done. It would make fiscally responsible loans in the best interest of the residents of Oakland - in contrast to Wall Street banks' record of risk and ruin. Profits made by the Public Bank of Oakland would be returned to the General Fund of the City of Oakland, or used to further buttress the loan capabilities of the bank, much as the BND does (the BND has returned over \$400,000,000 to the General Fund of the State of North Dakota over the last 21 years,<sup>[ii]</sup> while substantially increasing its capitalization and its loan outreach)

I cannot support a concept unless it makes economic sense to do it. It needs a

business plan and community members, not City staff , need to do the heavy lifting. We also already have Beneficial State Bank and the older Community Bank of the Bay and numerous credit unions. Why aren't we putting our dollars in these institutions? Mounting a new idea requires time away from executing on the core business of our city: public works, libraries, parks, streets/public works—services that have been underfunded for some time and also need attention.

[i] <https://bnd.nd.gov/>

[ii] <https://ilsr.org/rule/bank-of-north-dakota-2/>

13. Local Payday Lenders -- Oakland is awash with for-profit Check Cashing and PayDay Loan emporiums (a simple Google query[i] shows 20). These outfits provide emergency cash and other financial products to those who cannot obtain it otherwise - at outrageously high interest rates and/or extremely high fees. Professor Mehrsa Baradaran, in her book *How the Other Half Banks*, [ii] quotes the astounding statistic that those who use these services spend on average over \$2000 per household per year.

It is not widely known but Oakland is home to the only non-profit check cashing and payday lending storefront in the country - Community Check Cashing [iii] (CCC) in Fruitvale Plaza. It provides the same services for-profit operators do at 33% - 50% of the cost, while paying its employees a living wage. Will you support build-out and capitalization loans by the City of Oakland to expand CCC to other storefronts around Oakland (much as the City Council gave a 50-year, \$3,300,000 interest-free loan to the E 12th St. developers [iv])?

I am actually familiar with CCC and have spoken with Daniel Leibsohn about his work. Although a nonprofit, It has been unable to attract as much funding as it may deserve because many funders shy away from anything having to do with payday lending—a perception based on the community's distain for all payday lenders. The larger issue is to address the lack of financial education throughout our community. Too many don't know how to successfully manage credit. Even individuals who we assume have good paying jobs are living beyond their means because they have no idea how to use credit effectively.

I am not familiar with all the details of the loan that you listed above. However that funding went to support the nonprofit developer EBALDC which is a reputable nonprofit economic development corporation. Without their role, it is doubtful that the development would have been possible. Also these dollars are meant for one time capital infusion to create housing.

The CCC needs funds to operate not just for physical plant. There can be other additional creative means to generate support.

[i] Type 'Oakland Payday lenders' into Google Search and click on the resulting map.  
[ii] [NALC.org](http://www.nalc.org) "Author makes the case for postal banking" <http://tinyurl.com/h9e6a2p>  
*Baradaran noted that the average unbanked family with an income of around \$25,000 spends about \$2,400 per year on financial transactions like these, even more than it spends on food.*  
[iii] <http://communitycheckcashing.org/>  
[iv] Oakland City Council agenda, June 15th, 2016 <http://tinyurl.com/jzy398p>

14. Satisfaction of Residents -- How do you think the average resident feels about city government? How would you rate the satisfaction level?

I believe that the City of Oakland would be lucky to get a "C" on its performance. Most residents have very low expectations of city services not just the police department. Probably the only arm of city government that has sustained high ratings would be the fire department.

15. Accountability -- How do you propose making yourself accountable and accessible to the citizens of Oakland?

I hope to have an open door policy and communicate with all facets and interest groups in our community. I expect to host regular hours to meet constituents in their own neighborhoods. I will use social media where feasible and for those unable to access technology, hosting regular forums in our libraries or other similar venues.

16. Governance -- What kind of relationship could you have with other office holders? Who do you see as a working majority on council and who can you work with?

I would like to have a respectful and collaborative relationship with all council members including the Mayor, city administration and the unions that represent our employees.

17. Endorsements -- Who has endorsed you so far? Who do you expect to endorse you? Who are you endorsing, from President all the way down ballot to local races? Include your #2 and 3 choices (if applicable) for your own race and note that this year the City races are Council seats, School Board seats and City Attorney.

I currently have the endorsements of my neighbors, the Mayor of Oakland, Libby Schaaf, former Mayor Elihu M. Harris, and former Council President, Ignacio De La Fuente. Now that Hilary Clinton is the nominee for the Democrat Party, I plan to give her my vote but I am not endorsing anyone. There are only two people running in District Council 5; therefore there will be no rank choice voting

involved.

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).

Although, we started later than conventional wisdom would dictate; we expect to run an aggressive field operation. Campaign consultant is the Eveleth Group and the campaign manager is Mitchell Oster. We've just started and we've raised \$12,000 and another \$13k pledged. We expect to meet 75% of our financial goals by the end of September, composed of both large dollar and small dollar donors.

The campaign looked into funding made available through the City but it is an arduous process that is unlikely to secure any gains. Our campaign has accepted City of Oakland Campaign Expenditure Ceiling as set by the City's Campaign Reform Act. I wouldn't accept funding from America Beverage Association members, especially now that the city is putting a soda tax on the ballot. They have improperly described the soda tax as a grocery tax, confusing shopkeepers and voters.

19. Checks and balances -- How do you view current the relationship between the Council and Mayor? Any comments on the same question for the Auditor and City Attorney? Are there any changes they would propose to the city charter?

We have limited experience with our current system. When Jerry Brown as Mayor helped move us to a modified Strong Mayor model from a City Administrator Model, we settled for something in between so we have been in uncharted territory. Two high profile personality mayors have been succeeded thus far by one one-term mayor and now we are in the middle of the first term of the second. We need to ensure that we are not duplicating efforts, creating morale issues in our workforce or stumbling over each others' feet. That means that we need to be in much more communication with each other. Right now, we need to see more of the City Council working more effectively with each other and with the Mayor to get things done. We also need to be careful that when we create new elected offices—with separate accountability that there is in fact some kind of accountability on how they expend funds, if they are meeting their mission and purpose for which the community created them. Once created, these actions cannot be so easily undone.

20. Money in elections. -- Does Oakland need campaign finance reform? If so, what kind? 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)? ( <https://movetoamend.org/take-pledge-amend> )

It would be great if we didn't need to raise money because more people would run for office. Right now the paperwork alone to have transparency and account for dollars has created a cottage business in paper preparation.

Yes, I do support ending giving corporations the same protection as an individual.  
No, I have not as yet taken the pledge.

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

Although I am a lifelong Democrat, I understand that people of good faith have different views. A key message of my campaign is that I strongly believe people with opposing or varied perspectives can—and should—work together to solve Oakland's problems. It is for this reason that I think it's important to work with people who belong to other parties. We can all collaborate on coming up with good solutions for Oakland.

Yes or No questions (follow with an explanation if you want to add one)

- Do you support raising the minimum wage to a living wage? YES
- Are you in favor of a police commission? Neutral Position-I am dissatisfied with the end result but I favor citizen's oversight of the police. We cannot continue business as usual.
- Would you vote for using eminent domain to abate foreclosure crisis? Don't know how much leeway the city has to do it; it may only result in that only the only beneficiaries are lawyers hired by all sides.
- Do you support Ranked Choice Voting? No, I do not. I believe that it is a lazy option in response to civic apathy and in direct opposition to our basic right to vote for our representation. It diminishes democracy, attracts mediocrity to elected posts and increases voter confusion and apathy.
- Would you support Proportional Representation? The question is not clear. In proportion to what?
- Do you support diverting people from prosecution if they participate in a restorative justice program? I do believe that people should get second chances to rebuild their lives and help restore well being to the community. Individuals that cause others hurt should have the opportunity to reduce the pain caused by their actions. However no one should be coerced to participate.
- 
- Do you support Community Choice Aggregation?  
Yes.
- Would you vote to allow more grey water systems? Yes I would.

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire.

Sincerely,  
Greg Jan  
Green Party of Alameda County

(Please reply to: [GPAC-VoterGuide@yahogroups.com](mailto:GPAC-VoterGuide@yahogroups.com) by Saturday, August 27 ).