

Sierra Club – Alameda Election November 2012

Questionnaire for City Council - Jane Sullwold Response

General Approach

As a Councilmember, we will be counting on you to help Alameda develop environmentally, equitably, and economically while preserving our natural and cultural heritage. As long as economic growth equates to material growth requiring materials from outside of the local area, such as large homes and automobiles and other possessions, there will be a tension between economic development and environmental stewardship. What guidelines do you use to achieve sustainable and equitable economic development and preservation of our natural and cultural heritage?

RESPONSE: The most important steps a member of City Council can take when confronting issues presenting the kind of tension you describe is to listen to concerns expressed by all interested parties, do the necessary homework to understand the issues, and reach a result that reflects the best compromise possible. This may require some active involvement in mediation among those advancing opposing positions. Usually the best result is one where all parties are a little unhappy; that is the nature of settlements.

I have been involved in settlement negotiations throughout my 30+-year legal career, and feel that I have the right temperament and skill set to bring to the Council on issues such as these. And I believe my skills were polished during the last several years as chair of the Golf Commission.

I took the lead in opposing the land swap with Ron Cowan, which would have led to a dense residential development on a street that already has a significant traffic problem, especially during the morning commute, and would have resulted in the loss of dozens of memorial trees. But I did not take that position as a knee-jerk response; I insisted that the City gather more information on the potential benefits of the project, i.e., seeking new land appraisals when the first one was so obviously flawed, before making up my mind that it was bad for the City. We were successful in convincing City Council to reject the swap option, which had been recommended by City staff.

I also pushed the City to explore other options to the land swap by issuing a new, stronger Request for Proposals to potential operators. Indeed, I proposed the language that was ultimately used in the RFP because I was dissatisfied with what the City had come up with the first time around. As a result, we received four solid responses, each of which offered viable solutions to our problems, instead of the two unsatisfactory responses the City received to the first RFP.

After Kemper was recommended by City staff for a long-term contract, I led the charge to convince City Council to go the other way. Greenway Golf offered a plan that addresses the

ongoing concern about drainage and course playability, and does so in a way that promotes more environmentally sensitive turf management practices (reducing the amount of fertilizers and pesticides, and reducing the frequency of mowing) while at the same time improving the Jack Clark course to make it much more desirable to golfers by using the design of a world-class golf course architect. Again, we were successful in convincing the Council to go against the staff recommendation and instead take a bold step to ensure our future.

While my attentions and time were rightly devoted to golf issues during the last seven years, because that was the job I took on, it is now time to apply the things I learned from golf to the larger issues facing the City of Alameda.

Toxics and Environmental Restoration

1. Alameda Point is a Superfund site and the Navy plans to leave some contaminated materials in place and impose deed restrictions, some in perpetuity, on the land when it is transferred. The toxics at Alameda Point pose potential hazards to both people and other living things. Do you think existing cleanup standards are adequate? Do they protect other living things as well as humans? Is it advisable for Alameda to permit the construction of housing, such as Shinsei Gardens, above soil containing fuel or chlorinated hydrocarbon vapors? Is it advisable for the City to accept deed restrictions that require the City to enforce restrictions on digging into soil in perpetuity where residual "marsh crust" (heavy asphalt like hydrocarbons from town gas plants in the 1800s and early 1900s) is found?

RESPONSE: I have no doubt that existing cleanup standards are less than stringent. Alameda needs to press for stricter standards, to try to get the Navy to clean up larger areas than what are currently contemplated, and to be vigilant in assuring that the Navy is living up to its promises. Certainly it is not acceptable to allow construction of housing, single family residential especially, in areas where a hazardous soil condition exists. Deed restrictions on digging may indeed be difficult to enforce. As a City Council member I would try to learn from RAB members who have devoted so much time to these issues. I am very concerned about comments I have heard recently about the current City Council essentially ignoring RAB's hard work.

Regional Development

2. Is it important that Alameda consider regional issues when developing Alameda Point, such as regional jobs housing balance, housing for those who cannot afford to pay market rate rents, and regional transportation systems? What would you or your major supporters like to see developed at Alameda Point?

RESPONSE: Without a doubt regional issues such as those listed are important to Alameda Point planning. The nearest access point to that part of the island is the tube, which implicates Oakland and more particularly Oakland's Chinatown in assessing the transit needs. I believe that Alameda Point will require a mix of residential, commercial and recreational uses to be attractive to any company able to finance such development, although I do not currently have an answer as to how

big any such area should be, or what density level is best for residential development. Even though Suncal has become a dirty word in this town, I believe that Peter Calthorpe's basic plan is a good starting point to address environmental and transportation issues, with housing density levels to be determined in consideration of public transportation goals. I recommend that Alameda comply with, meet, and support regional housing goals, transit-oriented development, and the newly adopted Housing Element.

3. What modes of transportation should the City support to develop in Alameda and the region? Possible modes include auto, motorcycle, bus, ferry, BART, bicycle and walking. Which modes do you see increasing their share of trips in the future

RESPONSE: All other forms of transportation should be encouraged in order to wean people away from their cars, although we need to consider cars in transportation planning because until the price of gas rises much higher than it is now, I expect it will be hard to get enough people out from behind the wheel to make a real difference. What would help would be improved rapid bus service off the island to BART stations, and increased BART trains to accommodate the additional customers. I see public transportation -- buses, ferries and BART -- being the most promising modes on which to concentrate because I think they could have an immediate positive environmental impact, although bicycle and pedestrian issues cannot be overlooked.

4. How would you create major transportation hubs with high-density housing, especially low-income housing? Do you support Alameda's revised housing element, the first one certified by the State in nearly two decades?

RESPONSE: What I have heard so far about creating a public transportation corridor from Alameda Point down Lincoln to the BART stations in Oakland sounds very promising as a means to encourage use of public transportation by residents at new developments at Alameda Point. I support the revised Housing Element because I believe that Alameda needs to fulfill its part of the State commitment to build low income housing and fulfill regional housing requirements. Obviously, however, environmental concerns, including traffic impacts, need to be addressed as specific projects are proposed for the designated districts.

5. What are the biggest barriers to green job development in low-income communities and how would you overcome these barriers?

RESPONSE: Low income communities have an unfortunate association with low levels of education, and green jobs tend to be offered to those with more education, so focusing on education is crucial, in addition to offering appropriate inducements to "green" businesses to locate in Alameda. City Council needs to work closely with the Alameda Unified School District and the Peralta Junior College District to achieve educational reform in low income areas of the City.

Resource Management (Water, Materials, Energy)

6. Alameda has an outstanding solid waste recycling program and has worked well with CASA to implement it. What do you think can be done to improve our solid waste recycling program and do you think the City will meet the County's landfill waste reduction goal?

RESPONSE: Education is the key -- making sure that all residents understand how the program works and how little effort on their part is required to comply. I personally would tell people about the availability of "Bio-Bags" to line their small green food scraps bins because they helped me understand how easy it is to collect the scraps and carry them out to the outside green bins. Enforcement is another option that the City may need to pursue, especially with businesses and multifamily housing complex owners. I don't know whether the landfill waste reduction goal will be met.

7. Do you support AMP's sale of excess recycled energy credits to fund energy conservation programs in Alameda?

RESPONSE: The concept is very appealing, although I will have to do more research in this area to determine whether using such funds for energy conservation programs is the best use of that resource.

Fauna, Flora, Open Space and Recreational Land Management

8. According to the 1996 Community Reuse Plan, the runway area at Alameda Point is slated to become (1) a national wildlife refuge and (2) California Public Trust land (Northwest Territories) for open space and recreation.

After the US Fish and Wildlife Service refused the Navy's terms for accepting the land to create the Alameda National Wildlife Refuge, the Veterans Administration expressed a willingness to take over the parcel and manage the least tern colony, while it runs a medical clinic and columbarium. The VA would be responsible for maintaining the runway area as a wildlife refuge. It is possible that the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) would manage that refuge site. Do you support the section of the reuse plan that calls for creating a wildlife refuge?

RESPONSE: Yes, although I am concerned about the VA's ability to manage such a site, and would insist on involvement by the Fish and Wildlife Service in that effort.

9. Do you believe it's appropriate for the city to require EBRPD to give Measure WW funds to the city before the park district creates and manages a regional park on the Northwest Territories?

RESPONSE: I was not happy about the decision to allocate WW funds to the Boys & Girls Club, although that project has turned out well for the City. I am strongly in favor of using funds that are available as a result of a public initiative for the purpose for which the voters approved them.

10. Enterprise Park, located next to the USS Hornet and Breakwater Beach, includes active soccer fields, a dormant campground, a shuttered recreation building, and unused volleyball, basketball and tennis area. What would you do to help create the regional park at this location as called for in the base reuse plan?

RESPONSE: I support creation -- or restoration/renovation/re-creation -- of the regional park in this area, and believe that we have a great opportunity to assess our specific recreational needs (all-weather athletic fields, e.g.) and build appropriately -- or better yet, have someone else like a master developer or local business that locates at Alameda Point, build it for us.