

Sierra Club Questionnaire for Alameda City Council Election November 2012 – Stewart Chen 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: I think that it is important to preserve our natural and cultural heritage and I will strive to keep these special areas untouched. I will also encourage and give preference to green businesses as a means of preserving our environment and achieving economic and technological growth.

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: Like you, I am also concerned about the toxic wastes and hazardous materials that have been left at Alameda Point. Since I am not an expert in this matter, I would listen to the evaluation and recommendation of regulatory agencies, such as the EPA, but I would also proceed carefully and even err on the side of caution when humans and other living things are involved. Taking the case of Shinsei Gardens, I would like to learn more about the level of toxicity in the site and the potential hazards that they pose. Before forming an opinion, I would go through studies done by federal and/or state regulatory agencies, as well as independent, reputable companies, to make sure that all points have been considered. Concerning the deed restrictions, I think it is good to err on the side of caution and enforce restrictions on digging into heavily-contaminated soil, however, imposing this “in perpetuity” may be too severe. As more and more technological discoveries are made, it is possible that the contamination can be cleaned up. For example, some plants have been known to clean up toxic materials in the soil while benefitting humans and other living things around them. I believe that such possibilities should be taken into consideration and, rather than leaving toxic sites untouched, we

should look into ways of cleaning these up. Then, perhaps, periodic evaluations can be undertaken to determine if there are any improvements.

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: If elected, my goal is to preserve and improve the quality of life in Alameda and I plan to accomplish this by taking the needs and concerns of every citizen into account. Regional issues can also be local issues and because of the symbiotic relationship between cities and regions, I believe that regional issues should definitely be considered when developing Alameda Point.

Alameda Point can be developed and utilized to improve the quality of life of our residents if we use it wisely to provide jobs, housing, recreational areas, and a transportation system. With over 900 acres of land, developing even just a fraction of the whole property would be enough to accomplish this. My vision of Alameda Point includes affordable housing coupled with recreational areas, like parks, and maybe even an elementary school and a library that the residents can enjoy. It would also have a public transportation system to serve the area and minimize traffic and pollution. All of this would be supported by a vibrant mix of shops and businesses that would also help boost our economy.

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: Being an island, Alameda offers various modes of transportation for its residents to enjoy. I think modes of transportation that eliminate or reduce the amount of pollution per passenger should be supported. For example, bicycles are already popular among the residents of Alameda and because it improves one's health while eliminating pollution, I believe that riding bicycles as a means of transportation should continue to be encouraged. I also favor the ferry service between San Francisco and Alameda and I would like to see this service expanded to include other locations in Alameda, like Alameda Point in the West End. Increasing the number of buses and bus routes is another possibility that can be explored.

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: I believe that the opportunity to design and plan a community should be taken very seriously because it will literally affect residents' quality of life. I will consult civil engineers and urban planning experts to make sure that most, if not all, points have been considered. Considerations like providing an adequate and affordable means of transportation near high-density housing, especially low-income housing areas.

I fully support the revised housing element that was recently passed by the Alameda City Council because it provides 2,400 units of affordable housing. However, care must be taken when planning and executing this important undertaking.

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

RESPONSE: I think the biggest barrier to green job development in low-income communities is the lack of interest and the lack of the required technical skills. From my experience, these two are very closely-related. When I was with the Social Services and Human Relations Board, we conducted a city-wide needs assessment survey and found that housing and childcare are the top two priorities in low-income communities. People with low income are faced with the urgency of earning money to pay for their daily needs. They cannot afford to spend the time and money that is necessary to acquire the skills that would qualify them for green jobs.

I will try to overcome this barrier by working with green companies and businesses to provide on-the-job training to their employees. I can also try to find green businesses that do not require a high level of technical skills from their employees.

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: I think our solid waste recycling program can be improved if we can make it more accessible to the public. For example, we can provide more receptacles for recyclable materials on our sidewalks or have a recycling center that would provide services such as: reimbursing the CRV (Cash Return Value) of recyclable containers or accepting electronic wastes for free or in exchange for vouchers or credit that can be applied towards one's utility bills. I believe that most, if not all, the residents of Alameda

care about their environment and are responsible enough that we will meet the County's landfill waste reduction goal.

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

RESPONSE: Yes, I support AMP's sale of excess recycled energy credits if part of the proceeds are used towards achieving the goal of 100% carbon-free power by the year 2020.

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, I fully support the section of the reuse plan that calls for creating a wildlife refuge. It is important for us to preserve our cultural and natural history. Also, the wildlife refuge can be used as an educational resource to teach our future generations about wildlife and increase their awareness regarding the importance of nature.

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: No, I don't believe it is 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. Measure WW funds were intended to keep and maintain our existing public parks.

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: Enterprise Park already has the sports facilities that can be used to attract people who are looking for some intense physical activity. I think the campground can be used as the starting point for developing areas for more leisurely activities. We can develop parks and green open spaces around this

area so we can attract more people to use and enjoy this location. Stipulations can be made in agreements with developers so that such parks and open spaces will be built as commercial developments and residential housing are developed.