



## **2018 City Council Candidate Questions**

### **CONFIDENCE IN GOVERNMENT**

**In light of the recent departure of several senior city staff members, what would you do to improve the attraction and retention of quality staff?**

#### **PAT BOONE**

Develop a more friendly and healthy work environment! Increase our benefit packages, not only for future employees but existing as well on all employment levels - not just senior staff.

Listen to our workforce, on a regular basis, city workers should have an on-going dialogue with council members - we need to know their concerns.

As for hiring, push for long term commitments from future employee's and offer competitive salaries but remain mindful of our city budget.

#### **ALISON CORMACK**

Some of the departures were expected retirements and in most of those cases we have a capable interim person while the city conducts recruitment. Hopefully the current and future city managers are taking any learnings from exit interviews and incorporating that into their plans. The private sector has the Great Place to Work program and the federal government has the Best Place to work program. The city could consider establishing a similar program with other local governments, or at least learning from the other programs what makes employees feel more valued, in order to attract and retain excellent people.

#### **TOM DUBOIS**

Many cities in California are experiencing a wave of retirements as the baby boomers reach that age. I am happy to have Ed Shikada on board to focus on hiring this fall before he takes over in January. We need to build up our bench strength to be able to promote from within – some of our current openings may very well be filled by internal candidates.

We need to make sure we have strong managers in place that are creating places that people want to work, without discrimination or bias, that provide opportunities for professional growth.

One of our biggest challenges for city staff, similar to teachers, is housing affordability.

There are other creative things we can do. One idea I've discussed with the City Manager is creating a remote Palo Alto office for staff that are not community facing, but purely "back office". Perhaps they could live and work in a more affordable part of California. We are already allowing people to work from home occasionally. Finally, there are private companies, such as Landed, that can help public employees with home purchases.

## **ERIC FILSETH**

It's really the task, and a top priority, for our incoming City Manager Ed Shikada. I have confidence he can do it.

In general I believe high-performing organizations grow most of their talent from within, and one of the most important responsibilities of the chief executive is to build and run such an organization; which is more easily said than done. Jim is passing on a team with substantial talent already, and I've got faith in Ed continuing that. To the extent it's necessary to look outside, I expect Ed will do that as well.

## **CORY WOLBACH**

I see this being rooted in three problems:

- 1) The community and the entire region is an extremely challenging environment for any employer to recruit and retain talent, due to housing costs and poor transportation options. Some potential employees balk at coming in the first place. Some on staff leave as soon as they can. We need to keep working on those underlying problems, and, in the meantime, we may have to invest more in salaries, housing bonuses, and transportation bonuses, and find ways to do more with less. Housing and transportation have been and remain central areas of focus for me.
- 2) In part because of issue above, there seems to be a problem with mediocre training of mid-level management within the bureaucracy of City Hall. This means work is inefficient, there is a thin bench for upward promotions, higher level managers lack mid-level management support, and lower level staff lack competent guidance. All of this leads to stress. Many City employees are dedicated to the community but become so frustrated that they leave, or at least are looking to leave. I have heard these complaints from employees in multiple departments. I am personally committed to working with our new city manager to ensure the City does a better job with basic management within the organization. This is important to improve morale for employees and to ensure the organization can efficiently and effectively deliver quality services for our community.
- 3) Outside pressure from Council and the community makes Palo Alto a particularly tough community to work in. I think it is good that we have high standards. But we all (including I) need to remember that the people who work for the city are human, that they deserve our respect. Our city employees, almost without exception, are dedicated to civil service, and want to do a good job for the community. It is important for the Council to give clear direction, not change it too often, and to understand the real limits of what our staff is able to do with limited resources in a given timeframe.