



2022 City Council Candidate Questions

CITY OPERATIONS

Would you make any changes to the balance of power between the city manager and staff and the elected City Council entrusted to carry out the will of the people? If so, how?

ALEX COMSA

I truly believe that we need to build better community relations and that we need to have the city engaged with members of PAN or similar organizations. Also, one option is having a full-time Elected Mayor, not to mention a more aggressive and efficient City Council. If elected, I will lead to a more united, decisive, and efficient City Council.

LISA FORSELL

The City Council has a number of tools at its disposal to set policy. I intend to use them. Any two council members can author a colleagues memo and propose policy. The council chooses a Mayor who sets the agenda. Each council member gets regular 1:1 time with the city manager, and can reach out to other department heads as well. I will start with making full use of the existing powers of a council member before proposing changes.

BRIAN HAMACHEK

The City Council needs to stand up for residents, even when it goes against the recommendations of the City staff.

ED LAUING

There is sufficient "balance of power" in the current structure. Council Members run the city. They do it by hiring the City Manager and directing the City Manager on the policies and projects they want accomplished. Our current structure runs much like a business where the Council members are the board of directors and the City Manager is the CEO. Technically, by charter, all the board (Council) can do is hire and fire the CEO (City Manager) who is an employee of the city reporting to the board. But in practice this is much more of a strong partnership to address the city's issues.

It is up to the Council to oversee how its policy framework is implemented by the City Manager. If dissatisfied, direction should be clarified and corrections made. City Manager performance evaluations should be robust, specifically identify any need for improvement, and lead to a corrective work plan as appropriate. The City Manager serves until the Council decides differently.

JULIE LYTHCOTT-HAIMS

The main issue that concerns me in terms of balance of power is the inertia surrounding the planning of affordable housing projects. We are notorious for the "Palo Alto process" in which projects get clogged up in the approval system, discouraging developers and delaying the construction of much needed housing. On the one hand, I believe giving greater power to city council may help in this matter; on the other hand, I appreciate the importance of limiting city council's power to be in balance

with other aspects of local government. In general, I believe the balance of power works for the city as is; we just have to find a way to expedite the processing and construction of affordable housing.

DORIA SUMMA

I believe that the City Council has the duty to provide oversight to the City Manager. In the past, this has not always been effective – I would support more active and direct oversight than has been the case.

VICKI VEENKER

The role of the city council is to set policy and exercise oversight of the city government, much as a board of directors does. I have served on a number of non-profit boards. The best results are achieved when the roles are clear, communication is good, and there is a mutually respectful relationship. The role of council members is to provide direction to the city manager and staff, oversee their operations, and ensure that they are responsive to council direction. Staff in turn should use their expertise to make recommendations and operationalize council decisions.