



2022 City Council Candidate Questions

EXPERIENCE

What experience with Palo Alto community issues would you bring to the council? Describe your personal experience with Palo Alto City government and recent issues that have come before public hearings at the city council or other board and commissions. What was your role? (For example, did you send an email, speak to the Council, lead a group of citizens, etc.?) How extensively were you involved?

ALEX COMSA

Throughout my real estate career, I experienced all sorts of housing problems: ghost houses, delays in receiving permits, issues with building permits, environmental issues related to construction, construction traffic management, parking tickets for construction workers, rental evictions, and more.

My recent experience with the City of Palo Alto is related to the Business Tax proposal. I learned about the new proposal, met with a few active members of our community and small business owners and got an overall picture of where those funds will go. With my research, I decided to go in front of the City Council and support the new Business Tax proposal. I have remained involved throughout the campaign to advocate for the proposal.

LISA FORSELL

I have served on the Utilities Advisory Commission for 6 years, including 2 as chair. In my time and role on the UAC I have been an advocate for numerous policies and programs, including:

- Helped formulate Palo Alto's carbon offset program for the natural gas utility (a bridge strategy). Appeared at the Finance Committee and Council meetings when this item was being discussed.
- Co-wrote a Commissioner Memo about leaked methane and carbon accounting, helping the commission and council understand why the offset program was not a permanent solution.
- Successfully sought to change the way Palo Alto does its carbon accounting to support the claim that our electric power is 100% carbon neutral.
- In three years on the budget subcommittee, provided oversight of the 300+ million budget.
- Advocated for EV charging facilities in public spaces and multifamily housing to improve access/equity of EVs in the community
- Supported Palo Alto's move to improve recycled water quality and participate in regional efforts to recycle water.
- Advocated for grid modernization to support increased use of electric power as we transition away from natural gas.
- At the start of the pandemic, advocated to suspend utility shut offs due to inability to pay. This policy was adopted, and vulnerable residents kept their power, gas, and water service even if they were unable to pay their utility bills.

BRIAN HAMACHEK

I don't have as much political experience working within the Palo Alto government as many of the other candidates. That being said, I am the only candidate running that was born and raised in Palo Alto. To me, Palo Alto isn't just another city; it is my home. I believe this experience would allow me to bring a unique and valuable perspective to the Council.

I have been involved with the City in many other ways though. I was a judge for the Civic App Hackathon. To increase the transparency and accountability of the police department, I began broadcasting and archiving the Palo Alto Police's radio transmissions online in 2016.

I interviewed for Palo Alto Planning and Transportation Commission on three occasions but unfortunately was never selected.

ED LAUING

I have been intimately involved with Palo Alto City government for almost 13 years. I first served on the Parks and Recreation Commission for seven years, and I am now in my sixth year on the Planning and Transportation Commission.

For the last 18 months I have been co-chair of the Housing Element Working Group working on the critical priority for our city – creating new housing for the next 8 years.

- Planning and Transportation Commission (PTC): 2017 — Present. 2X Chair
- Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC): 2010 – 2016 (7 years). 3X Chair
- Housing Element Working Group (HEWG) 5/21 – Present. Co-Chair

I have played a leadership role in advancing recommendations to City Council on a wide breadth of issues. At Parks and Rec, that ranged from refurbishing parks and designing new services and amenities to strategic planning for our bike and pedestrian transportation network, our urban forest master plan, and a long-range parks and recreation master plan. At the Planning Commission it includes affordable housing, renter protections, ADU standards, long-range planning for housing, zoning changes, residential parking programs, wireless antennas, neighborhood planning and more. Finally, on the HEWG my role was to co-lead the study, debate, and development of recommendations for where 6,000+ required new housing units could be located and which policies and programs should govern that new development

JULIE LYTHCOTT-HAIMS

As a lawyer and public speaker, I find oral rhetoric to be my most effective tool to advocate for what I believe in and to galvanize others. So I've tended to take the approach of speaking at Council rather than writing emails or leading a group of citizens.

Toward that end, I've spoken up at Council a number of times over the years, when matters really tugged at my heart. One example is the Stanford GUP hearing back in the early 2000s where I spoke up for the importance of working out the kinks as the city and the university are mutually intertwined and dependent upon each other and we ought to have a relationship of mutual respect and symbiosis. A second example was in 2012-13 when I spoke in favor of the Maybell/Measure D affordable housing. I spoke up for that project both because I will always speak up for more affordable housing, and because Maybell is my neighborhood so it felt very personal. Alas, we lost, and every time I drive out to the grocery store I see the housing that went up instead, and I'm reminded of our community's failure. A third example is when I spoke in favor of protecting the residents of Buena Vista.

Throughout my career, I've made it a priority to serve on nonprofit boards and advisory boards in order to support missions I believe in and to continue to grow my skills. Board service has helped me appreciate that a board's purpose is to set vision for staff, ensure that staff's policy, programmatic, and spending decisions are aligned with that vision, and to provide oversight to ensure that staff

appropriately follow through on the various priorities that have been articulated. This is quite similar to the relationship between a city council and city staff.

I've worked for boards in myriad locales, including: Palo Alto (e.g. YWCA of the Mid-Peninsula; Palo Alto Community Fund; Partners in Education (PiE) Advisory Board; Community Working Group; LeanIn.org); East Palo Alto (e.g. Foundation for a College Education); Stanford (e.g. Challenge Success; Haas Center for Public Service; Stanford Alumni Board of Directors); San Francisco (Common Sense Media; Narrative Magazine; Harvard Law School Association of Northern California); Oakland (Global Citizen Year); and Atlanta (Black Women's Health Imperative). I continue to nourish my passion for undergraduate education by serving as a trustee for my alma mater, California College of the Arts in San Francisco.

I'm also an activist who speaks out when things aren't right whether locally or elsewhere. Since I was a kid, I've stood on street corners and marched for what I believe in. I've walked in Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition, marched on Sacramento for more funding for higher education, stood up against Apartheid in South Africa, protested national injustices by standing on street corners with placards and signs right here outside Town & Country. I also organized a "Caravan to Clint" where I drove to Texas and invited others to drive or fly down to draw attention to the plight of migrant kids being kept in cages outside El Paso, Texas; by the time we arrived both local and national media were there to cover our protest and by the end of our week democratic candidates for president including Julian Castro and Kamala Harris had flown in to give speeches.

A highlight of my experiences as a volunteer and activist was helping elect and re-elect Barack Obama to the presidency by canvassing and getting out the vote for him in three states in 2007-08, representing Anna Eshoo's congressional district as an elected Obama delegate at the 2008 Democratic National Convention, and co-leading the peninsula's Democratic Volunteer Center (DVC) in Menlo Park in 2012.

Since the early 2000s I've been a staunch advocate for our youth as I observed the rising mental health challenges they were facing. I drew attention to this issue as Stanford's freshman dean from 2002-2012, and as Gunn's graduation speaker in 2009. Since publishing a book on the subject in 2015 I've spoken on the subject over 300 times in communities like ours in every region nationally, and I am known for inspiring change in behaviors.

DORIA SUMMA

For the last 15 years, I have devoted the majority of my time to working for my neighborhood and the city. I began working with the College Terrace Residents' Association in 2008 and was eventually elected President. I worked on the Traffic Calming Committee and Residential Parking Permit Committee. I served on the Development Center Customer Advisory Group (DCCAG) for which I volunteered as a citizen representative through PAN. I also was appointed to serve on the committee tasked with updating Palo Alto's Comprehensive Plan which sets the strategic vision for the city's future. I also served on the North Ventura Community Area Plan (NVCAP). For the past 6 years, I have served on the Planning and Transportation Commission and I am currently serving as Vice-Chair.

VICKI VEENKER

Experience with Community Issues

- For almost 20 years, I had children in the Palo Alto public schools, so I am familiar with issues related to safe routes to schools
- For 10 years, my parents were in senior residences in the city, so I am familiar with the challenges seniors face here.

- For the last 30 years, I have participated through my church in downtown Palo Alto with efforts to provide food, clothing and shelter for the unhoused, including through the Food Closet and Hotel de Zink
- I served on the Board of Directors of WIREforWomen and the Advisory Board of FundHer to support women running for local public office
- Both of our daughters were highly involved in youth sports and made regular use of city sports fields and courts, and our entire family made regular use of city libraries, so we are familiar with issues related to both.

Experience with City government

- I served on the Board of the Law Foundation of Silicon Valley during the five years when we represented the residents of the Buena Vista mobile home park and appeared in council chambers during meetings where council made decisions that ended up saving it
- I worked with current members of Council and City staff to launch the first ever Sibling Cities USA partnership with Bloomington, Indiana; I am the founder of SCUSA and helped prepare the proposal and resolution creating the relationship. The two cities have already shared best practices regarding destination marketing, public art, parks, economic development, and more.
- I recently spoke at a Council meeting in support of the Safe Parking Program proposed for my neighborhood.