

Central Valley Progressive Political Action Committee
Endorsement Questionnaire for Fresno City Council Candidates

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Date 8/31/2018

Please limit your responses to no more than 300 words per question.

1) As a City Council member, describe what you will do in each of the following areas:

b) Improving air quality:

With three of Fresno's freeways already cutting through my district, we will have to be cognizant of policies that negatively impact the amount of pollution. This means looking for ways to minimize the zoning of environmentally harmful industries in our residential areas, as well as a smarter way of planning the city in order to encourage less urban sprawl.

c) Improving Fresno's public transportation levels of service:

The City should be looking at the outcomes that BRT is producing and looking for ways to possibly improve upon that existing system. This may take time as there are not many years of BRT data in Fresno to date. Also open to exploring other forms of public transportation that may be conducive to the organization of our city.

d) Reducing urban sprawl:

The primary tool to address this issue is probably zoning in such a way that discourages urban sprawl and encourages higher density housing. Sprawl has pushed its limits on most borders of our city with little of anywhere left to go, so this is imperative as our city continues to grow.

e) d) Supporting high-speed rail: Encourage HSR activity from the City Council;

HSR is a project that our City ought to be fully capitalizing on. While critics are quick to point to ballooning costs and displacement of businesses, we fail to demonstrate the many benefits. The City can be proactive in planning those areas of town that will be impacted by HSR and put us in a position for residents of Fresno to be the ones becoming employed in the HSR HUB as those jobs are created.

2) What specifically do you plan to do to ensure that Fresno's stock of affordable, safe and decent housing increases significantly while you're on the City Council? Include in your answer if you support and would you strengthen a comprehensive routine interior code inspection program for rental housing?

I supported the current rental inspection ordinance in place and would be open to making it more comprehensive upon analyzing the outcomes of the current policy. The city should be taking an active role in regulating slumlords that are heavily impacting the safety & conditions of the existing housing stock. I also believe that if we want to avoid our housing issues from turning into an all-out crisis, that the city will need to both work with developers and actively invest in order to boost the stock of affordable units. Some form of a public-private partnership would likely be most productive

to accomplish this goal. Home ownership rates and the significant number of mortgages underwater in Fresno also negatively impact the rental vacancy rate, decreasing availability and increasing the price of rent.

3) Evaluate the successes and failures of City Hall's approach to ending homelessness and what, if anything, you would do differently. Include your position on the new anti-camping ordinance.

I will actively oppose the camping ban and any other form of ineffective public policy that criminalizes the homeless population while doing absolutely nothing to solve the problem. The City (or at least certain representatives of it) claims to have a housing-first policy, which I agree with. But we have seen no evidence of that policy being implemented. The outcome of the City's policies on homelessness has been a mere shuffling-around of the population. Our approach should be data-driven and humane. How many folks are homeless because of the lack of affordable housing? Because of the lack of mental health services? Because of a disability? Because of an addiction? It's difficult to structurally address the issue when we don't even have a real inventory of the root causes. But no matter what may have led each homeless person in our city to their current predicament, evidence points to housing-first as a critical first step.

4) What do you see as the most important components in cultivating a productive and cooperative and useful relationship between the Board of Supervisors and the City Council?

Really just the ability and willingness for politicians to put egos aside and pick up the phone to chat with their city/county counterpart. I think having 2-3 top issues identified that require collaboration and that our common constituency wants some action on is a good incentive for both parties to cooperate.

5) Police accountability in Fresno has been a longstanding concern of the progressive community. What exactly do you propose to require greater accountability of the police to the citizenry of Fresno, especially in interactions within neighborhoods of color and the LGBTQ community?

As the city becomes successful in increasing the number of sworn officers to 1000+, that is an adequate number of officers to implement a community policing model. Policing in Fresno should be something that is proactive and community-driven. In underserved neighborhoods, trust can be built between the department and residents by humanizing each side to the other, and that requires relationships to develop through a different model of policing. There are also police accountability mechanisms in place at City Hall that seem to lack any teeth. This is one of those policy areas where I think we should be looking at best practices in other cities that have had comparable issues to ours, and consider adding those teeth accordingly.

6) Given national attacks on immigrants, what steps should the City Council take to support our vibrant immigrant community, especially our undocumented neighbors and DACA recipients?

Hardworking families and students who happen to be undocumented are part of what make our city such a special place. If they require a little bit of help in order to continue being part of our community, I think the city should provide that. Through a legal defense fund and having at least a liaison (if not an office) of immigrant affairs that helps those families navigate those issues and connect with the appropriate resources.

7) The city has uneven park and green space distribution. What are two specific ways to address this issue, ensuring more access to green space, particularly in low-income neighborhoods?

In a perfect world, Measure P would rectify this particular inequity. Soaking up the deferred \$110 million maintenance on our existing parks and building new parks. With the exception of joint-use agreements between the school district & city (which we have some form of already), there really is no way around the financial challenge that this issue presents. In the absence of Measure P, I will

support a dedicated portion of the city budget going first toward the deferred maintenance on parks in underserved neighborhoods & on/near poverty census tracts. That way we are focusing on the areas of the city that need the most help. As that project is completed, we could look at the construction of new parks in those same areas. But fixing this problem in a more timely manner will either require the passage of Measure P or significant tradeoffs in other city budgetary areas.

8) What is your stand on unions and unionization? What will you do to support city workers?

I fully support worker rights to collectively bargain for a living wage, fair benefits, and better working conditions in order to support our families. I am a member of a union myself. The decline in real wages has mirrored the busting of unions over the last several decades. The specifics of all the different functions of our city workers are too long to list here, but in a nutshell I will vote to provide humane working conditions, wages and benefits that support their families, and will always listen to their concerns. I keep in contact with the different unions and bargaining units within city hall and am familiar with the range of different issues across the many categories of city workers.

9) What is your position on medical marijuana and recreational marijuana dispensaries within the city?

It is a missed revenue opportunity to shut the door on medical and recreational dispensaries. The city has the zoning authority to control the distribution of such businesses in a fair and effective way. They should surely take more care than they have in allowing a high density of liquor stores to negatively impact our already underserved neighborhoods. Preventing these dispensaries from thriving in our community will only ensure that the black market for marijuana in Fresno continues to thrive. The city should be picking up that revenue, as we have many different departments (parks for one) that would benefit.

10) In conclusion, tell us what you consider to be the top three progressive priorities of your campaign (these can include issues addressed above, or add details not yet addressed in this questionnaire).

To invest in people is to invest in our city. But that requires increased revenue, which is why my primary focus in the campaign has been economic development that our entire city can share in. Growth that trickles out to our working and low-income families through mechanisms like Community Benefits Agreements. If we can create a local economy that does that, then I believe much of everything else at City Hall either falls into place or becomes much easier to do. Whether you care about parks, community policing, or simply having your potholes filled, the economic livelihood of every person in our city (and empowering them) lies at the core of most issues in our city.

Thank you so much for your time and energy in completing this questionnaire. Your answers will be distributed to our members prior to the September 8 endorsement meeting through the CVPPAC Website.

Please return this questionnaire by email to Mike Rhodes < mikerhodes@comcast.net >. The deadline is Sunday, September 2 at 11:59 p.m. If you have any questions, call CVPPAC president Pam Whalen at (559) 994-9390.