

2020 GENERAL ELECTION BIOS

CITY COUNCIL

SCHOOL BOARD

Jennifer Cavanaugh
Incumbent

Jennifer Cavanaugh was elected to City Council in 2016 and is completing her first term. She first ran for Council due to her business background and knowledge of the city’s financial needs. She is a former Brand Manager with The Clorox Company and IT executive at Accenture (Andersen Consulting). She earned her MBA degree from the University of Chicago and a B.S. from the University of Illinois.

While on Council she has continued to advocate for the priorities established with her former colleagues on the Budget Advisory and Financial Planning Committee Member. One of the city’s greatest needs will be taking care of its old and aging infrastructure, streets and sidewalks, parks and recreation facilities.

Cavanaugh represents Piedmont with the League of California Cities.

She and her husband Dan have lived in Piedmont for 17 years. They have three children, Jackson, a college sophomore, and Salem and Shelby in high school.

Connie Herrick
Licensed Acupuncturist

A Piedmont High grad and resident of Piedmont for 50 years, she is running for City Council for the first time. Married to Mark, they have a son, who graduated from Piedmont High. She and her husband are active in the newly renamed Community Resiliency Group, formerly Neighborhood Watch.

Her background includes 40 years working in both the pri-

vate and non-profit sectors of healthcare, financial services and global transportation. She has an MBA in corporate finance, a Master of Science in Traditional Chinese Medicine, and has been in private practice for 10 years as a Licensed Acupuncturist. As a council member her focus would be on supporting a new aquatic center, retaining a high level of city services, ensuring public safety, fiscal management, and supporting a full transition to a green city through the Climate Action Plan.

Conna McCarthy

A volunteer for 25 years and currently a member of the Piedmont Recreation Commission, she and her husband Peter Craigie have three children. She has been involved with a range of organizations in support of schools and co-chaired the \$56 million seismic safety school bond in 2006. She has served on the City’s Budget Advisory Committee, on the Piedmont Recreation Facilities Organization and on the 2012 City Parcel Tax campaign. She serves on the Civic Improvement Projects review committee,

“Years of deferred maintenance and coping with outdated facilities is untenable in light of the changing needs of our residents. It is time for important community conversations challenging us to define our vision of Piedmont for present and future generations, and to determine how we will act upon that shared vision.

Nancy “Sunny” Bostrom

Information not received by press time.

Cory Smegal, Incumbent

Currently the school board’s Vice President, she is completing he first four-year term.

I am running because I believe that experience is important, and I care deeply about the schools and the well-being of our students and staff. Recognizing that California continues to underfund public education, I led PUSD advocacy efforts in Sacramento for additional state funding.

Locally, I fought for Measures G&H to guarantee Piedmont’s continued fiscal solvency. I am proud of my role in bringing a new STEAM building and theater to PHS. I also convinced the district to refinance a PUSD facilities bond which will save Piedmont taxpayers \$25M over the life of the bond.

I have an MBA from the Haas School of Business at UC Berkeley. My husband Tom grew up in Piedmont and we moved to town 17 years ago with our daughter Anna (PHS ‘19), and son Tommy (PHS ‘21).

Veronica Anderson
Strategy Consultant & Mom

I am a strategy consultant to school systems and educational nonprofits. For the past 10 years, I have partnered with leadership teams to build inclusive, more effective organizations. Earlier I was editor-in-chief of an education policy magazine and as a business reporter. I have degrees in economics and journalism from Northwestern University, and spent a year as a graduate fellow at Stanford.

I moved to Piedmont in 2018 with my husband, David Thigpen, and high school daughter, August. I have been an active volunteer with the Piedmont Appreciating Diversity Committee, and twice served as co-chair of the annual MLK Day Celebration.

I’m running [because] we can do more in PUSD to cultivate an anti-racist culture, engage and retain diverse educators, and use a racial equity

lens to inform educational and business decisions. Today, we face unprecedented challenges in delivering and paying for top quality public education. To serve our students well, it is important for PUSD leaders to remain trained on and thoughtful about education, equity and excellence. These are the priorities I bring to Piedmont School Board.

Hilary Cooper

I am running for School Board because I believe in public education and I want to serve the community that I have been a part of for the past 11 years. Both of my children attended Havens Elementary, PMS and PHS. During that time, I was an active volunteer in our school community. I served seven years on the PMS and PHS parent club boards, including two years on each board as president. I co-chaired Spring Fling, The Giving Campaign, and most recently, the Measures G&H school parcel tax campaign.

I received my undergraduate degree from the University of California, Berkeley and my teaching credential from St. Mary’s College.

Like other districts, we face major and unprecedented challenges right now. If elected, I will work collaboratively with our community, teachers, administrators, and parents to find solutions to today’s unique challenges. Our new normal will require open-mindedness and innovation. We must re-imagine how we teach our kids and keep them safe, so that they can thrive.

James Crawford-Jakubiak

Information not received by press time.

Jason Kelley

A long-time producer of Beach Revue and a member of the Piedmont Appreciating Diversity Committee. I have kids who have attended Havens, Beach, PMS, PHS and Millennium, and I’m a PHS graduate.

I have a wide understand-

ing of Piedmont schools from serving as a board member of the Beach Parents Organization, PMS Parents Club and PRAISE.

Schools that work for every student should be our common goal.

My years as a labor and employment attorney have taught me that fairness and good faith between the District and teachers leads to outstanding educational results. I want Piedmont’s amazing educators to have the facilities, materials, and support to continue to succeed.

Parent and teacher input are essential to PUSD decision making as we continue to work to find ways to provide quality learning that keeps students, families, educators, and the entire Piedmont community safe.

Hari Titan
Data scientist

I have been a mathematician and data scientist for 20 years. I have a Ph.D. In Computer Science and a Masters in Mathematics. My wife and I have had children in Piedmont schools since we arrived in 2008. My youngest child is currently a freshman at PHS.

I have been a vocal advocate for full-disclosure transparency in the leadership, management, and operation of our schools. The education and health of students is my primary focus. I believe the PUSD Board needs to maximize both the safety and achievement of every Piedmont student.

The distance learning in the Spring of 2020 is now being called “crisis learning” and the new year will begin with an improved version of it. We should not elect a school board that leads from behind the superintendent.

My focus will be making decisions based on science, data, reason, care, and empathy while always putting the students’ best interests first.

Nancy “Sunny” Bostrom

Information not received by press time.

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Election Preview – City Council candidates Q&A

By Allyson Aleksey

Part 2 in a series

In advance of the November 3 municipal election in Piedmont, City Council candidates were asked two questions:

1) *What volunteer organizations are you or have you been a member of?*

2) *How familiar are you with the council’s decision to place a \$19 million bond on the Nov. 3 ballot for a new community pool? Will you be involved with the campaign?*

The Post will ask each candidate two questions every week. Responses are listed below.

JEN CAVENAUGH, Incumbent

1 – I have a long history of and passion for community service. During this current crisis, I have been a weekly volunteer with the Alameda County Community Food Bank and have supported AC Census 2020 outreach.

Equity and inclusion are priorities for me: I am an active member of Piedmont Appreciating Diversity Committee and the newly-formed Piedmont Racial Equity Campaign, Let’s Talk Co-program Organizer, and Different Together Program Advisor through Glide Memorial Church.

In Piedmont, I served on the city’s Budget Advisory Committee and was the Recreation Department Community

Outreach Project Leader. I have been volunteering in our schools since 2005, including on every Parent Club Board and as President of Piedmont Language School. I am an active member of the League of Women Voters and Piedmont Connect.

In Oakland, I taught strategic and financial decision-making skills to underserved youth through Game Theory Academy, developed a professional mentoring program, and was Co-Founder and Director of the Oakland Treasure Hunt.

I have a deep commitment to the social/emotional development of our youth: I developed Healthy Relationships programs for the Recreation Dept, lead the high school Coaching Boys into Men and Athletes as Leaders program rollout, and serve with Change a Path Foundation, a donor circle to fund anti-sex trafficking initiatives.

For over a decade I was the General Manager (and below average player) for the Baja Bombers adult softball team.

2 – I am intimately familiar with Yes on Measure UU to rebuild Piedmont’s Community Pool. The campaign has great campaign chairs leading the grassroots effort. I am using my experience with countless City Council, School Board, and financing measure campaigns to help with strategy, volunteer recruitment, and voter outreach. The goal is to personally reach every voter to educate them about the current state of the pool, which has been the literal and figurative heart of our

community for over 50 years. Unfortunately, our current pool has surpassed its useful life and can no longer serve children, adults of all ages, and our public schools and athletic teams. Measure UU will provide the funds necessary to construct a safe, sustainable, and affordable pool facility for our community for the next 50 years. These are challenging times to be working on a campaign, but now is the time to support an investment in our future.

CONNIE HERRICK

1 – For 25 years, I have been part of the Charlotte Maxwell Clinic (CMC). We provide integrative cancer care for low-income, underserved Bay Area women with cancer. Our clients are mainly Latina, African-American and Asian, many are monolingual and 70% live below the federal poverty level.

I have faced breast cancer twice. Even with incredible support, the experience was grueling and my life was never the same. CMC clients get chemotherapy and go back to work the same day. Many work two jobs. There is no respite for these women. Our clinic is their community, their place to receive care and support.

I’ve been honored to volunteer at CMC in many capacities: acupuncturist, board vice president, medical advisor and executive director.

2 – In 2002, Josh Bernstein asked my support for a new pool and I gladly gave it.

Our pool was already old and worn then, two decades ago. I hear the concerns about incurring \$19.5M in debt. However, now is a good time to take advantage of low interest rates. If we continue to delay, replacement costs keep skyrocketing, the pool keeps leaking, and we keep spending more and more to maintain its degrading infrastructure.

Our pool is a midtown jewel that strengthens our property values. Potential home buyers find our community amenity extremely attractive. I hope for a modern, green facility that can easily accommodate all our swim, health, recreation and community gathering needs. As a swimmer and enthusiastic advocate for aqua circuit training, I will vote Yes on Measure UU.

CONNA MCCARTHY

1 – For 25 years my volunteer efforts focused on our City and PUSD. I chaired the 2019 CIP and continued in 2020 reviewing resident proposals and ongoing long-term projects. City Council appointed me to Recreation Commission in 2017; I now serve as Vice Chair. Since 2015, I’ve served on Piedmont Sports Hall of Fame Board. In 2012, I joined Mayor Chiang leading Measure Y to victory. I’ve served on the Budget Advisory Committee reviewing 5-year financial projections, funding and expenditures. I volunteered during a series of PUSD Parcel Tax campaigns. I co-chaired the 2006 Seismic Safety Bond Program. I served

with Piedmont Educational Foundation 2007-11. I served as PMS Parent Club President, with Beach Parents Organization, PHS Parent Club and on the Support Committee for PHS Wellness Center. I served PHS Boosters 2008-14 and PHS/PMS “Every 15 Minutes” 2011. I chaired the Tri-school fundraiser, started Meet the Masters, and led PEP.

2 – Five studies, (2002-2016) each concluded the same sad fact: The Piedmont Pool, as it currently exists, does not meet the needs of our community. Staff reporting to City Council confirms: pool expenses remain stable but operating costs continue to accelerate due to irreparable wear and tear. While Alameda County is now re-opening community pools, our Piedmont pool will remain closed. Public testimony and resident surveys reveal a groundswell of deep attachment to our pool. As a resource for lap swim, recreation swim, swim lessons, therapeutic swim, competitive swim and water polo, there is no dispute that our pool is a valued community asset. Taking advantage of historically low interest rates, Measure UU funds construction of a safe, sustainable, and affordable facility. The June BAFPC analysis indicates a favorable operational recapture rate depending on fee structure. I endorse Measure UU and campaign for its passage.

NANCY BOSTROM

No reply received.

School Board Election – Candidates Q&A

By Allyson Aleksey

Part 2 in a series

In advance of the November 3 municipal election in Piedmont, School Board candidates were asked two questions:

1) *What volunteer organizations are you or have you been a member of?*

2) *What do you believe is the biggest loss students are experiencing during distance learning?*

The Post will ask each candidate two questions every week. Responses are listed below.

VERONICA ANDERSON THIGPEN

1 – I am always actively engaged in civic life and community service. As a young adult in Chicago, I was a volunteer math teacher for a community GED program. I have served on several nonprofit boards, including Congo Square Theatre Company; Healthy Schools Campaign; Genesys Works Chicago; and Community Organizing and Family Issues, where I was board president. When I moved to Piedmont, I immediately joined the Piedmont Appreciating Diversity Committee. At the first meeting I attended, I volunteered to co-chair the MLK Day Celebration, a longstanding Piedmont tradition and PADC’s signature event. When I became co-president of PADC, I worked with students and educators to launch a Black student affinity group and partnered with community advocates and district administrators to submit a racial equity policy. At PHS, I carpooled for my daughter’s badminton team and I was a parent volunteer for this year’s Musical.

2 – During this time of physical distancing, masks and social bubbles, we all miss the way we walked through the world six months ago. Obviously, the absence of personal contact with teachers and classmates is the biggest loss. In our current state of

distance learning, everyone is feeling the pressure. Students are transitioning from unstructured summer months at home to five days of classes sitting at a computer screen – still at home. Working parents struggle to balance office responsibilities with parenting, a particularly challenging dance for parents of young children. And teachers are working mightily to adjust to new technologies in remote environments. COVID has presented us with the challenge of how we educate our children in a different way that is effective and fulfilling. With great challenge comes great opportunity. I am looking forward to working with Piedmont families to find solutions that meet the needs of our children.

HILARY COOPER

1 – Since moving to town, I have been involved with the Havens Parent Club, PMS Parent Club and PHS Parent Club. At Havens, I co-chaired the tri-school’s Spring Fling fundraiser. And at both PMS and PHS, I served as Vice President and President. I have co-chaired the Giving Campaign twice, which is the largest fundraiser for the Piedmont Education Foundation. I volunteered during the Measure A Parcel Tax Campaign and I co-chaired the Measures G&H Parcel Tax Campaign. I am a board member of The Cancer League and I just became a provisional member of the Piedmont Garden Club. My daughter and I were also involved with the National Charity League for seven years where we focused most of our time at Piedmont Gardens, a local senior living community.

2 – I believe the biggest loss our students are experiencing is the lack of social interaction with their peers, teammates, teachers and coaches. Humans are social beings and distance learning is not an ideal substitute for in-person teaching and learning. However, since the state mandated that all schools begin with distance learning, we must look for creative ways to find alternatives to get our students together (while minding the guide-

lines). We should look to partner with some of our excellent resources, like the Wellness Center or the Piedmont Makers, to collaborate on gatherings of smaller groups of students. Once we are able to re-open, we should look into sending the students whose need for in-person instruction is greatest, like our elementary students. I am hopeful that we could have a successful rollout by grade that would ensure we remain open safely.

JASON KELLEY

1 – My main volunteer commitment for the past four years has been producing the Beach Revue at Beach School, heading up 50 parent volunteers to put on the annual live musical that sees 200-plus students and a live band perform in four shows – and earning Piedmont schools about \$20,000 each year. I’ve also been on the boards of the Piedmont Middle School and Beach Elementary. I’ve been a board member of PRAISE, the special education parents’ organization, and I was a member of the Piedmont Appreciating Diversity Committee. Outside of Piedmont, I’ve volunteered for charities focused on helping LGBTQ youth by raising money and awarding scholarships, as well as finding services and shelter for young people who have been thrown out of their homes because of their sexual orientation.

2 – Students, parents, and teachers are adapting to online learning, but students are really missing direct teacher contact and the classroom setting. Although online learning is much more organized and thought out this fall as compared to the emergency situation in the spring, younger students especially are having a hard time learning remotely. Students are also missing their friends and the growth that comes from interacting with their peers academically, athletically, and socially. An additional loss is the delay in the natural childhood progression of ever-increasing independence. Normally, every year brings new milestones of independence. Children go out into the

world on their own farther and for longer times as each year passes. That forward momentum has been interrupted, and I think it’s important to find ways to help our kids continue to become more independent even though they’re spending almost all of their time home with us these days.

HARI TITAN

1 – My volunteer experience includes active participation with Piedmont Neighbors’ and Newcomers’ Club, Havens Parents Club, Havens Dads Club, Piedmont Asian American Club, Piedmont Makers, PMS Parents’ Club, Yes on Measure H1, Yes on Measures G & H, Piedmont Parents Network, PREC Education Subcommittee, PHS Parents Club, Piedmont Appreciating Diversity Committee, STEAM Funding and Marketing Committee.

2 – I think the biggest loss is the loss of social and emotional connection of seeing friends every school day and having a shared experience at school. Working alone at home is not a substitute. Some students with advanced executive functions may be able to use the lack of distraction at home to their advantage to get their work done more quickly. It is going to be hard to measure this impact.

Another impact is the loss of freedom from the tyranny of staring at a computer screen. Most of the Chromebooks were chosen and purchased before the pandemic and we didn’t anticipate online instruction for anywhere from 2 to 5 hours per day.

Learning loss is the result of a less than robust educational model being implemented to cover the same amount of subject matter. We won’t know what this learning loss will be until after grading at year-end. At that point we can compare the average standardized test scores with years prior to measure the actual learning loss. McKinsey & Company did a meta-study that estimated learning loss ranging from no impact to months of learning loss per year depending upon the financial resources of the parents among other factors.

CORY SMEGAL, Incumbent

1 – My volunteer experience includes the following:

Current School Board member, 4 years ; Vice President and Correspondent, 2 years; Facilities Steering Committee, Board Liaison; Measures G&H Parcel Tax Campaign, Board Liaison; Giving Campaign, Committee, 6 years, co-chair 2 years, raised more than \$3.4 million over two campaigns; Wildwood Parent Club, 7 years, including Club President; Piedmont Education Foundation Co-Treasurer; APCP Treasurer and Tri-School Treasurer; Piedmont Education Foundation Grants Committee Co-Chair; Piedmont Middle School Site Council, 2 years; Appointed to Math Task Force that relaunched District curriculum; Piedmont Middle School March Mingle Founder; Piedmont Middle School Learnscape Legacy Wall Creator; Piedmont Community Church Mexico Trip Team Leader ; Piedmont Scouts BSA Merit Badge Counselor; Piedmont Baseball/Softball Board Member, 9 years; Piedmont High School Booster Board – chaired Highlander Classic; Youth sports coach – soccer and softball

2 – Our students and teachers are missing the daily in-person connections with one another, from kindergarteners who couldn’t get a hug from their teacher on the first day of school to the middle and high schoolers who just want to walk through the halls and see the casual smiles of their classmates. No student should be at home in front of a screen all day. The pandemic is clearly taking a toll on our students’ emotional health. At our School Board meetings this summer, I advocated strongly for as much in-person learning as possible. If re-elected, I will continue to encourage the District to make decisions that address student mental health and, as public health recommendations allow, to creatively develop ways of supporting vital in-person connections.

NANCY BOSTROM

No reply received.

Election Preview – City Council candidates Q&A

By Allyson Aleksey

Part 3 in a series

In advance of the November 3 municipal election, City Council candidates were asked two questions:

- 1) *What qualities or experiences set you apart from other candidates?*
- 2) *Do you support the city's current reach code proposal? Why or why not?*

The Post will ask each candidate two questions every week. Responses are listed below.

JEN CAVENAUGH, Incumbent

1 – I earned an MBA from the University of Chicago and a BS from the University of Illinois. As a business professional, I had strategic and financial responsibility for large consumer products businesses and was an IT management consultant. I am honored to continue to put my experience, work ethic, and dedication to work on the City Council. As a Council Member for the past four years, I have made it my priority to balance fiscal responsibility with a commitment to improving Piedmont’s aging infrastructure and enhancing public services.

I leverage my deep community connections to engage and promote diverse perspectives, develop mutually beneficial solutions, and increase equity and inclusiveness. I am actively involved with many community organizations

to hear their perspectives and support their efforts including PUSD School Board, Piedmont Connect, League of Women Voters, Piedmont Appreciating Diversity Committee, Parent Clubs, Piedmont Community Service Crew, Appreciating Diversity Film Series, Piedmont Parent Network, Piedmont Racial Equity Campaign, and others.

2 – Climate change is one of the biggest threats to our health and the environment. Evidence of the effects can be felt in countless ways, including the air we breathe today due to extreme wildfires and recurring droughts. Piedmont has made a commitment to do our part to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, as 70% of emissions come from cities, according to Piedmont’s Climate Action Plan 2.0. As Piedmont is almost exclusively a residential city, we will need to work together to do our part in our homes and transportation choices. “In 2015, the three largest sources of GHG emissions in Piedmont were building electricity use, natural gas use for space and water heating, and petroleum-fueled personal vehicle use.” We will have the greatest impact if we reduce our consumption, shift to 100% renewable energy sources, walk, bike and take public transportation or drive an electric car, and switch to electric appliances. Fortunately many residents embrace the plans and want to be a part of the solution because the city cannot achieve our 2030 goals through municipal changes alone.

When the Reach code proposal was first presented to City Council, a few

residents requested additional time to consider the proposal and some raised concerns that were not reflective of the proposed plan. I care deeply about community engagement and want Piedmonters to be informed and feel a part of the solution.

Staff agreed to allow time for additional community education about the plan; thus, a Community Town Hall is scheduled for Thursday, September 3 at 6:00 p.m. The research staff conducted in Piedmont shows that most residents support the proposed changes. In reality, given the narrow scope of the changes, very few residents will be impacted. Staff built in options to allow for maximum flexibility, allow for exceptions for projects that would not trigger changes, and considered cost effectiveness with short payoff. I welcome further community input on Piedmont’s Climate Action Plan 2.0 and how we can best support the changes needed to reduce our carbon footprint.

CONNIE HERRICK

1 – I am bi-racial. My mom was first generation Japanese and dad was a Scottish/Irish/English mix. There were 230 in my PHS class of 1975, and approximately 6% of us were of color. I know firsthand the importance of diversity and inclusion in Piedmont. My life experience as a person of color has taught me to listen well, seek out different perspectives, embrace new ideas and value open discourse. I embrace our differences. They make us strong.

I am a 2-time breast cancer survivor. All of us who have faced cancer know this: you get an instant perspective on what is truly important in your life and your priorities become crystal clear. Two cancer experiences gave me grit, unwavering determination, perseverance, resiliency and an unending gratitude to be alive.

Every moment is extremely precious to me and I am honored to offer some of those moments to serve our City.

2 – Yes, I support our Climate Action Plan and the Reach Codes. I encourage everyone to attend the September 3rd Reach Codes Town hall to understand how the Codes affect us, ask questions and voice concerns.

These Codes were carefully developed with public input. There will be a menu of energy upgrades with many low-cost, easy-to-implement options. Replacing old, worn out gas reliant appliances, will only require completing a few of the easier, low-cost menu items. Only large scale building projects and new construction will require more costly options.

Climate change directly affects all of us in Piedmont. We are living with higher temperatures, less rain and poorer air quality. Wildfires and floods are now an annual event. Through these Codes, we take the necessary incremental steps to increase our climate change resiliency. I encourage everyone to read our Climate Action Plan 2.0 and participate in the Piedmont Climate Challenge.

CONNA MCCARTHY

1 – San Francisco in the 60’s and 70’s was the backdrop to my childhood. My father served on the SF Board of Supervisors 1964-68 and State Assembly 1968-80. Because our home was a constant source of political activity, I was exposed to “counterculture” ideals of peace, racial equality, gay rights and women’s liberation, as well as, equally passionate concerns expressed from folks advocating traditional mainstream viewpoints. Weekend outings with my Dad meant visits to residential neighborhoods where folks articulated genuine fear of losing The City they loved, to hippies, radicals and crime. We took urban hikes with Sierra Club leaders discussing CEQA, preserving Pt. Reyes, and the GGNRA. We investigated San Francisco businesses including a new rock and roll venue called: The Fillmore West. I learned first-hand the importance of affording citizens an opportunity to participate, that citizen involvement in decision-making builds trust, and, most importantly, that compromise is vital.

2 – Piedmont should help protect the earth’s climate through a unified approach to decreasing greenhouse gas emissions. Although early efforts for public outreach included 5 public meetings and 2 surveys, it is now apparent, as greater public attention focuses on this topic, bigger conversations are required.

Our City Council did the right thing *See City Council Q&A on [Page 11](#)*

School Board Election – Candidates Q&A

By Allyson Aleksey

Part 3 in a series

In advance of the November 3 municipal election in Piedmont, School Board candidates were asked two questions:

- 1) *What qualities or experiences set you apart from other candidates?*
- 2) *Do you support the passage of AB 331, the High School Ethnic Studies bill? Why or why not?*

The Post will ask each candidate two questions every week. Responses are listed below.

VERONICA ANDERSON THIGPEN

1 – I’m passionate about equity and inclusion in public education – qualities that Piedmont schools can use now. As a relatively new resident of Piedmont, I offer a different perspective and fresh ideas informed by research and exposure to other school districts. I bring my lived experience as person of color.

Professionally, I have experience advising schools on strategy and following education policies, trends and practices. I am a problem solver who draws on my professional experience in education and my social justice values to develop solutions that work. I believe in public service and I have consistently served on the boards of nonprofit organizations and volunteered in the community.

2 – I wholeheartedly support the measure to include ethnic studies as a graduation requirement. Schools in Piedmont and elsewhere must do more to prepare students for an increasingly complex and magnificently diverse world.

Historically, students of color have not seen themselves, their history or their cultures accurately or fully represented in traditional school curriculum. Ethnic studies courses address this by centering Black, Latinx, Indigenous and Asian narratives and perspectives. Equally important is the value of ethnic

studies for white students, especially those in racially homogenous schools, where there are limited opportunities to interact with teachers and students of color. When equity is a core value, it requires that we examine what is being taught, whose point of view is represented and whose voices are missing. As the Zimbabwean proverb says, “Until the lion tells his story, the hunter will always be the hero.”

HILARY COOPER

1 – I am in a unique position because I can represent three different groups of our community. I am a parent and volunteer, a teacher and an empty nester. I have a proven track record of raising money for our schools by co-chairing Spring Fling, The Giving Campaign and Measures G&H. Those fundraisers and parcel taxes have brought in over \$10 million annually for our schools. I have worked in the classrooms at PHS as a substitute teacher and understand the incredible work that our teachers do on a daily basis. Now, as a community member, I serve on the board of The Cancer League and am a provisional member of the Piedmont Garden Club. Being a part of these three important cohorts lends me the ability to understand each perspective and help us all work collaboratively to ensure an excellent educational experience for all students.

2 – I think AB 331 is a good start to teaching the diverse cultural backgrounds of the people of this country. Some of our community may not be aware, but our district is one of the few to currently offer an ethnic studies course at our high school. The course is an elective, and AB 331 calls for the course to be a requirement, so our course will have to change accordingly. Beyond this bill and course, I would like to see ethnic studies material incorporated into the Piedmont curriculum in a broader way, with a focus on inclusiveness. We have a responsibility in Piedmont to teach our children to be thoughtful, compassionate and anti-racist leaders and citizens. As a school board member, I would look forward to

working with the district and the community to continue to improve how we teach ethnic studies.

JASON KELLEY

1 – As a parent who is currently supervising distance learning for four students in Piedmont schools—my girls in 6th and 9th grades, and my nephews for whom I am educational guardian in TK and 10th – I understand the challenges for students and families at all three school levels. I am in daily contact with teachers and other parents, and I see what is working and what is not as the year progresses.

The community is grateful to residents who stay involved with the schools after their children have graduated, but I also think it is imperative that the Board of Education include parents who have children in the schools now and throughout their four-year terms in office, otherwise that immediate connection can be lost.

2 – We should always be judicious when considering whether to add new high school course requirements, because we need to ensure students have room in their schedules to explore subjects of interest to them that can open up a wide variety of career paths. That said, I do believe that the course proposed in AB 331 would be a beneficial addition to the curriculum. The California Department of Education has shown that properly designed and taught ethnic studies courses lead to increases in civic engagement and community responsiveness for all students. A model curriculum that has been drawn up by the state focuses on four specific groups, and I would like to see local districts be able to expand on that framework in order to include additional populations they serve.

HARI TITAN

1 – I am one of four candidates who have kids in the school district currently and one of three candidates who will have children for the duration of the 4-year term in office. Having kids in the district is especially important during a modified system of instruc-

tion and when board members not up for reelection no longer have kids in the school district.

I am the only candidate who participated in school board debates since 2013. This is important for the continuity of institutional knowledge as well as a proven record of oversight. I initiated or expanded debates on deferred school bond property taxes, the cost-effectiveness of new high school theater construction over a renovation, improving STEM education, a net-zero STEAM building to reduce ongoing district expense, refinancing the 2013 school bond to save \$26 million, and tracking and investigating declining PHS graduates going to prestigious STEM colleges, and school closures and reopening. My input was backed up with research, data analysis, and sometimes surveys designed to ensure all students, parents, and taxpayers benefit.

2 – Educating students about the diverse fabric of the American experience will definitely help reduce racism and bring us together as a nation. An earlier bill, AB 2016, required the district to develop a high school Ethnic Studies elective to be implemented by 2020. Piedmont High School’s Ethnic Studies course is UC A-G approved and was taught the first semester of the 2019-20 school year, a year before the deadline.

I support the passage of AB 331 which allows any school district in California to locally decide whether to make this course a graduation requirement or not. Since the course is brand new, we don’t have dedicated funding just yet. Before making Ethnic Studies a graduation requirement in PUSD I would want to see how many students choose this elective voluntarily and hold hearings to get public feedback and discuss which graduation requirement it would replace.

CORY SMEGAL, Incumbent

1 – As a School Board member for the last four years, I have important, relevant experience, I’ve made strong connections and I’ve shown that

I am collaborative. During my term, the Board has faced a host of issues -- from challenging budgets to new curriculum to large construction projects. We’ve written and modified policies to improve the student experience. More recently, we’ve worked on student stress, teacher morale, and pandemic operations.

Throughout this time, I’ve counted on the connections I’ve made. I’ve worked closely with every member of our administrative staff. I’ve built relationships with students, teachers, staff and parents at all levels to learn about their concerns. I’ve also worked closely with board members from other districts, sharing best practices.

In all of my efforts, I am collaborative. I’ve learned during my term that Board members have to work as a team to solve complex problems. I think my experience is important and can strengthen the Board over the next four years.

2 – AB 331 would require completion of a semester course in ethnic studies for graduation beginning nine years from now. It just passed the legislature on Monday and is on the Governor’s desk.

In 2019, the Board approved a semester-long ethnic studies course brought forward by an enthusiastic teacher at PHS. To quote the request, “PHS faculty have identified a need for students ... to develop a greater understanding of the experiences of people whose identity is not part of the dominant narrative in the United States... there is no opportunity in our current curriculum offerings where topics of identity and race are discussed in depth allowing students to compare historical narratives, social movements, and critical comparisons of various underrepresented racial groups.”

I was thrilled to approve this course, which 27 students completed last year. It’s a vital addition to the course catalog and requiring this for graduation would be a good step.

NANCY BOSTROM

No reply received.

Letters to the Editor

Continued from [page 2](#)

the cooking surface, and that is wasted energy, which is dissipated after cooking as the stovetop cools down. Gas is instantly on, and the heat instantly gone when the burner is turned off.

3. Gas cooking is more precise than electric. You can vary the amount of gas more directly and immediately than the electric digital settings (and you can't sear peppers or eggplant).

The Reach requirement for electric ovens is probably OK, but an electric stovetop is an inferior cooking method than gas. It uses more energy (e.g. wastes energy), and it pollutes more (when considering the total CO2 footprint from power plant and transmission lines).

Please take electric stovetop requirements out of the proposed Reach regulations.

Thank you for giving this your consideration.

—Bruce Joffe

Urging the re-election of Smegal and Cavanaugh

Editor:

Cory Smegal and Jen Cavanaugh are both running for re-election: Smegal for School Board and Cavanaugh for City Council.

During my eight years on the School Board, I've had the privilege of working with many people. I've seen what it takes to be an effective board member, to work through unexpected challenges, to bring people together, and to move a vision forward.

Cory and Jen are each extraordinary in their own ways, and they share many qualities that make them exceptional leaders:

- They listen.
- They question.
- They advocate.
- They are not afraid to say what they think.
- They prioritize collaboration and communication.
- They take leadership seriously.

Both have MBAs, are financially prudent, and research best practices to make data-driven decisions. Both have endless energy for service and a deep commitment to Piedmont.

In this time of unprecedented challenges we need experienced and agile leaders. We know that we can count on Cory and Jen to provide outstanding leadership and representation.

Please join me in enthusiastically re-electing Cory Smegal to the School Board and Jen Cavanaugh to the City Council.

—Sarah Pearson, *Piedmont Board of Education, 2012 - 2020*

Why I am voting for Veronica Thigpen for School Board

Editor:

I met Veronica Thigpen last Thanksgiving. She adopted our family at the last minute when our plans fell through, and included us at her already full table. I was immediately impressed with Veronica's easy-going nature, her intellect, and humor.

One month earlier she and her daughter hosted young black girls from Piedmont for an afternoon social. Veronica engineered the gathering to help our girls find support in this homogeneous community. As a newer Piedmont resident, she jumped into action with a constructive solution to address the isolation our daughters' experience in this community.

Since then, I have watched Veronica exercise the same resourcefulness in all of her engagements. I know she will bring the same resolve to her role as a school board member. More importantly, I believe she will provide the kind of perspective the Piedmont School Board needs.

When my daughters started elementary school in Piedmont there were more black children in attendance. By high school many of these kids chose to leave the Piedmont school system. I think we have to ask ourselves why?

And then we need to do something about it.

Please join me in voting for Veronica for Piedmont School Board on November 3.

—Annemarie O'Brien

City Council should adopt the Reach Codes

Editor:

Every Piedmont homeowner knows the city actively ensures all building, rebuilding, and remodeling are at a certain level. So this city has ample precedent in ensuring every home is safe, the city remains beautiful, and the overall house stock quality is high.

The Reach Codes are just the next step. Good energy performance (efficiency and solar) will continue to grow as a fundamental aspect of home quality. It would be decidedly *retrograde*, in my opinion, to think the measures in the Reach Code go too far or are simply not an appropriate focus for city codes. They are a logical next step, and a necessary next step, to sustain Piedmont as a beautiful and livable city.

As the world addresses the crisis of climate change, let's get on the right side.

—Jonathan Becker

Jen Cavanaugh

Editor:

We are fortunate to currently have Jennifer Cavanaugh on City Council and residents will be well represented by electing Jen for the next four years.

Jen's objective, critical and detailed examination of the many challenges facing Piedmont is no surprise given her business management and IT skills.

Her ongoing concern of addressing Piedmont's aging infrastructure will be much needed as we move forward. Yet she seeks to balance our growing needs with a realistic view of ever increasing fiscal demands placed on Piedmont residents.

I know Jen is also aware and concerned about the significant retired segment of our population.

See Letters on [Page 29](#)

VIEWPOINT

What exactly is the job of a school board member?

By Hari Titan, Ph.D.

Campaigning during a pandemic is really tough. Candidates should not shake hands or throw campaign kickoff parties. Is meeting a masked candidate on a street corner or your front door appealing? You can't tell what their face looks like. Lawn signs would not be fair to less well-known candidates, and I recommend we collectively abstain from using them.

What's left for voters to decide amongst the candidates? Endorsements from friends or prominent individuals?

Perhaps a best practice might be to look at the actual job description of a school board member and measure candidates for that job. The California School Board Association created a white paper on the duties and responsibilities of a school board member. They are summarized below.

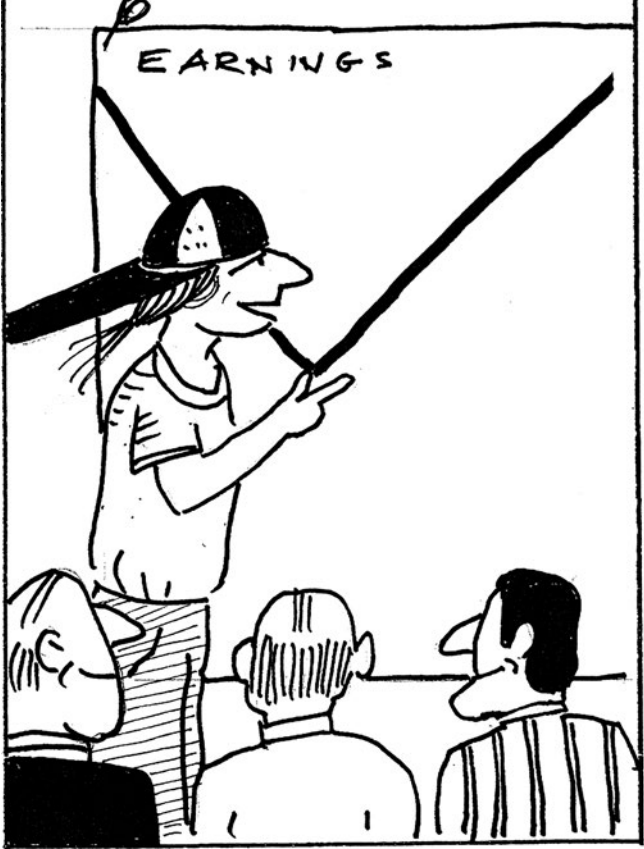
School Board Duties and Responsibilities

- Ensure the school district is responsive to the values, beliefs, and priorities of their communities.
- Helping establish a long-term vision as to what students need in order to achieve their highest potential.
- Employing a superintendent and setting policy for hiring other personnel (e.g. teachers).
- Overseeing the development, revision, and adoption of

- bylaws and policies for the school district.
 - Setting a direction for and approving the adoption of the curriculum.
 - Establishing budget priorities, adopting the budget and LCAP, and overseeing facilities issues.
 - Providing direction for and adopting collective bargaining agreements and monitoring progress.
 - Acting with a professional demeanor that models the district/county BOE beliefs and vision.
 - Making decisions and providing resources that support mutually agreed upon priorities and goals.
 - Ensuring a positive personnel climate exists.
 - Being knowledgeable enough about district/county educational efforts to explain them to the public.
 - Evaluating the superintendent and setting policy for the evaluation of other personnel.
 - Serving as a judicial and appeals body.
 - Monitoring student achievement and program effectiveness and requiring program changes if indicated.
 - Monitoring and adjusting district finances.
- I went one step further to create a nomination form based on these duties and responsibilities which can be found on my website, [HariTitan.com](#). In consideration of this pandemic and distance learning, we might need additional criteria to consider.

READ IT IN THE POST

Dude by Herb Stansbury



"This is when the president's sales manager's son left to seek a career in musical comedy."

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The Post has returned to print and is delivering the paper weekly to households throughout the city each Wednesday. For inquiries, call the *Piedmont Post* at 510-652-2051.



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Election Preview – City Council candidates Q&A

By Allyson Aleksey

Part 4 in a series

In advance of the municipal election on November 3, City Council candidates were asked two questions:

1) *What are your priorities, if elected?*

2) *Are you in favor of Measure TT? Why or why not?*

The Post will ask each candidate two questions every week. Responses are listed below.

JEN CAVENAUGH, Incumbent

1 – As a City Council Member for the last four years, I have made it my priority to balance fiscal responsibility with a commitment to improving Piedmont’s aging infrastructure and enhancing public services. We are a small city with limited resources and staff, and it is essential that we budget conservatively and address past unfunded liabilities, including our streets and sidewalks, parks, and recreation facilities.

This current crisis has made it clear that we must invest in community health and public safety including wildfire prevention and disaster preparedness. It is essential that we employ industry best practices, workforce readiness, and community education and

participation for the health and safety of the entire community.

In working for solutions for Piedmont, I will leverage my deep community connections, including with school district partners, to engage and promote diverse perspectives, develop mutually beneficial solutions, and increase equity and inclusiveness.

2 – As a member of Piedmont’s Budget Advisory and Financial Planning Committee before joining the City Council in 2016, I worked with my colleagues to develop a comprehensive Facilities Maintenance Plan, which identified millions in deferred maintenance and unfunded liabilities. The work of this committee has provided independent budget oversight, transparency and in-depth understanding of city finances. By implementing recommendations of this committee, the city has strengthened its financial position. Measure TT generates much-needed resources to take care of the city’s old and ailing infrastructure and facilities. The proposed transfer tax increase brings Piedmont’s rate in line with neighboring Berkeley and Oakland rates. The is a one-time tax which occurs at the point of sale of a home and is generally shared by buyers and sellers alike; few homeowners will pay this tax. The proposed increase will provide necessary funds for maintaining and improving city facilities, streets, sidewalks, and parks. I strongly

support it as do all of my colleagues on the City Council and the members of the BAFPC.

CONNIE HERRICK

1 – My top priority will always be to listen to the citizens of Piedmont and bring their input to the Council. That includes transparency in communication. Gathering and reporting diversity of opinion is critical to widespread representation and also to the making of good, solid decisions.

From an issue standpoint, I believe I will not have the luxury of picking one top priority. An excellent decision-maker must be able to assimilate large quantities of quickly changing data, work with a constantly shifting landscape and all the while staying focused on the most optimal end result. So I expect there to be many top priorities. From attending City Council meetings and reading staff reports, I see the following areas currently floating to the top: new community pool, Reach Codes, essential building upgrades for police and fire, City budget requirements (transfer tax increase,) diversity and BLM, increased crime and emergency readiness.

2 – Yes, I support Measure TT. Property related taxes (comprised of property, parcel and transfer taxes) account for 72% of our City’s revenues. In the 2020-21 City budget, we are anticipating a decrease of \$414,000 over the

2019-20 projected actual. The decrease is mainly in transfer tax revenue due to slowing home sales in a COVID-affected market. Since 1968, the transfer tax rate has been set at \$13.00 per one thousand dollar of the sale.

Every year we budget to receive \$2.8M in transfer taxes. The amount we receive fluctuates based on number of home sales and sales prices. The surplus, designated for general use, can be used to fund facilities maintenance. We have \$38M in needed major capital improvements – fire/police/veterans/recreation buildings, Coaches/Linda fields and the pool. Raising the transfer tax from \$13.00 to \$17.50 will create much needed additional revenue with minimal impact to our residents.

CONNA MCCARTHY

1 – My priorities are determined by the needs and interests of our residents:1.) Public Safety is consistently identified as a primary concern. We must continue to maintain high level police and fire services and, during the current pandemic, we must be vigilant to protect our vulnerable residents; 2.) We must continue to exercise fiscal responsibility to maintain high quality services including well-tended parks and good recreation programs; 3.) We must address aging infrastructure. Years of deferred maintenance and coping with outdated facilities is untenable in light of the changing needs of

our residents. It is time for important community conversations challenging us to define our vision of Piedmont for present and future generations, and to determine how we will act upon that shared vision; 4.) Enact consensus driven policies for sustainability and energy conservation, and; 5.) Actively work for inclusiveness and equity in accordance with the August 3, 2020 Anti-racism Resolution.

2 – I favor Measure TT which allows for an increase in the Real Property Transfer Tax (RPTT). Piedmont has not increased the RPTT in 27 years. If approved, Measure TT will provide additional needed funding for ordinary current expenses of our City including, but not limited to, maintenance of city facilities, streets, sidewalks, and parks. And, the RPTT is one of the few ways Piedmont is able to generate income for essential services like police and fire. Estimated revenues will generate approximately \$948,462 annually. Piedmont’s current RPTT rate is lower than neighboring Berkeley or Oakland. Moreover, the proposed increase in the RPTT impacts a minimal number of residents on a one-time basis. Local Real Estate agents advise that an increase in our RPTT will not have an adverse effect on real estate values or demand.

NANCY BOSTROM

No reply received.

School Board Election – Candidates Q&A

By Allyson Aleksey

Part 4 in a series

In advance of the municipal election on November 3, School Board candidates were asked two questions:

1) *What are your priorities, if elected?*

2) *What are your views on the Alameda County elementary school re-opening waiver process?*

The Post will ask each candidate two questions every week. Responses are listed below.

VERONICA ANDERSON THIGPEN

1 – I am committed to three priorities. First, we must maintain educational excellence during these challenging times. The pandemic has thrown us for a loop and all of us – parents, educators, students – are having a tough time. Our focus must remain fixed on ensuring that students continue to learn and grow. Second, I believe equity must be a core value. There is so much more we can do in Piedmont to elevate equity to ensure that our students are prepared for the complex and increasingly diverse world that awaits them.

Third, we need to create more spaces and structures for students to feel welcomed, heard, understood and empowered. Our students are already leading the way to create spaces where they can connect and make sense of what’s happening around them. We must support them and provide opportunities for them to find their voices when they are young.

2 – Parents of elementary school children are struggling with distance learning and childcare. And like the rest of us, parents of younger children want schools to open as soon as it is safely possible. It’s important that the process to reopen elementary schools in Piedmont is transparent and that parents are kept informed every step of the way. This is particularly important over the next few weeks as the Alameda County Office of Education kicks off a reopening process. This

Friday is the deadline for districts to submit an in-person learning readiness survey. (PUSD has already submitted its response.) Districts that the county deems eligible to reopen will then receive a formal application to apply for a waiver. Those will be due September 17. Meanwhile, a much-anticipated fast track to get students with special needs back to school may be discussed at this week’s School Board meeting.

HILARY COOPER

1 – My priority will always be the students. Re-opening our schools safely and effectively is going to be the most significant challenge our district has ever faced. It is incumbent on all stakeholders to come together at this moment to find a solution. I am very aware of the anxiety and fear that constrain our decisions, but we must continue to move forward with action. If we can acknowledge that there may not be a perfect solution for quite some time, then we can work on finding a solution. Beyond that, I think that our children’s social and emotional well-being must be addressed because no child can learn when they are struggling with motivation or self-esteem. Our students are missing the personal interaction of being in the classroom with their peers and teachers -- most especially our young learners. It is imperative that we find a way back into the classroom.

2 – Returning to in-person learning is a priority of my campaign. Many schools in the state have already applied for a K-6 waiver and that could afford us the opportunity to learn from each other and implement best practices. It’s important to let science drive our decisions, and studies have suggested that children under the age of 16 are far less likely to spread COVID than adults, and that it is unlikely for someone to contract COVID from surfaces. As we learn more and develop guidelines to ensure the safe return of our students to the classroom, I support applying for a special waiver for our youngest students. I am also interested in exploring how we can provide COVID testing for our students and teachers. We should strive to secure funding for such a program. We need to create a safe environment and get our kids back in the classroom.

JASON KELLEY

1 – I’m running to:

- Protect the whole community – students, teachers, families, and all Piedmont residents – by opening schools safely when the time is right. Families need as much stability as possible to plan for work and child care.
- Make sure there’s a welcoming place for every learner in Piedmont schools. I want to see every student nurtured and challenged, whatever their ability, background or trajectory after graduation.
- Plan carefully for what education will look like in the years to come. Students learn best in the classroom and need to be with peers to thrive, but lessons we’ve learned this year – and continue to learn – should help us prepare students for colleges and careers that may increasingly rely on remote learning and working.

2 – To apply for waivers to open in-person learning for elementary grades, schools must demonstrate compliance with a broad set of criteria designed to maximize safety. Applications must also show administrations have consulted with all parent and labor groups at each school site for which an application is being submitted. I think that consultation should be underway and ongoing. The principles that would guide me in making decisions about return to in-person learning if I were elected to the school board are:

1. Safety – ensuring schools have the resources to comply with health regulations to protect students, families, educators and the whole Piedmont community, 2. Stability – finding ways to make transitions stable and lasting so families can plan for work and childcare, and 3. Consensus – engaging in ongoing consultations to ensure all parties are heard so that any waiver application can be supported by the broadest range of stakeholders possible.

HARI TITAN

1 – My focus would be a safe return to educational excellence. The spring 2020 incarnation of distance learning was more “crisis learning”. The new distance learning is working much better, however I see many issues needing a follow-up.

I would focus on the correct scientific evaluation of the new distance learning model and would fight against positive spin. My focus would be on measuring learning loss of distance learning compared to classroom instruction as well as the social and emotional impact on students.

After we got placed on the Governor’s watchlist, I began focusing on alternatives, like outdoor spaces and using larger rooms to teach subjects that need it most. Piedmont epidemiologist, Dr. Steve Sydney proposed that we do a small pilot study so we can figure out if students will actually comply with social distancing and masking rules in the classroom. I would work towards these goals while maintaining parent choice between hybrid and distance learning models based on what works best for each household.

2 – The Alameda County Public Health Department (ACPHD) announced Wednesday, September 2nd that it will begin the process of accepting waivers for classroom instruction. Alameda County waiver applications will have to pass through the county education office, the county health department, and then the state health department. The waiver process is rigorous (see: covid-19.acgov.org/schools. page. Applicants must involve labor, parent, and community groups in the reopening process. The entire process is expected to take weeks. In contrast, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) reports many applications processed, mostly from independent schools. As of September 4, a total of 332 elementary schools applied for waivers and all but 9 were approved. The CDPH approved 16 schools in Marin, 15 schools in Santa Clara, 10 schools in Contra Costa, and 5 schools in San Mateo. No school district in Alameda County has applied for CDPH approval.

CORY SMEGAL, Incumbent

My priorities are: 1) Maximizing safe learning environments, 2) Creating opportunities to improve mental health, and 3) Maintaining fiscal responsibility.

I believe it is critical during this crisis to focus on both student learning and mental health. From an educational

perspective, many changes have been made to our distance learning process this fall that have improved the experience for our students. There is a consistent schedule, clear assessments, and accountability. While all would agree that in-person learning is preferred, teachers and administrators are working extremely hard to maximize student learning during this time of physical distance.

We must not lose sight of the fact that distance learning is very hard on students and teachers from a mental health perspective. We need to create opportunities for all members of our community to make safe in person connections. I’ve suggested opening Witter Field for controlled student activities, such as small club meetings and more.

My final priority is to maintain fiscal responsibility during and after the pandemic.

2 – I have been consistent and public in my views that we must prioritize bringing our youngest learners back for some in-person instruction. To apply for a waiver for elementary schools, districts must provide information that will show the ability to open sites safely. PUSD will detail the many precautions it plans to have in place that will protect both students and staff. For example, all students, even our youngest ones, plus teachers and staff, will be required to wear masks at all times. Students will be split into two cohorts to facilitate social distancing in classrooms. Extra cleaning protocols and proactive symptom screening will be diligently enforced. These precautions and others will help PUSD open our tri-schools safely so that our youngest learners, who may have the most challenges with distance learning, can safely receive some in person instruction.

NANCY BOSTROM

No reply received.



Election Preview – City Council candidates Q&A

By Allyson Aleksey

Part 5 in a series

In advance of the November 3 municipal election, City Council candidates were asked two questions:

1) *If elected, how would you make yourself available for questions or comments from Piedmont residents?*

2) *How optimistic are you about the passage of Measure UU?*

The Post will ask each candidate two questions every week. Responses are listed below.

JEN CAVENAUGH, Incumbent

1 – When I was campaigning in 2016, I knocked on every door in Piedmont to introduce myself and to listen to resident concerns and ideas. Deep community engagement continues to be at the heart of my role as a Council Member. I read every email communication I receive and try to respond to them all. I also share them with city staff so they are informed of residents’ concerns and can follow up as necessary. When residents provide phone numbers I often follow-up with a call as I prefer the two-way dialogue available through person-to-person interactions.

I am also actively involved with many community organizations to

hear their perspectives and support their efforts including PUSD School Board, Piedmont Connect, League of Women Voters, Piedmont Appreciating Diversity Committee, Parent Clubs, Piedmont Community Service Crew, Appreciating Diversity Film Series, Piedmont Parent Network, Piedmont Racial Equity Campaign, and others.

2 – Measure UU is a very important ballot measure for Piedmonters. It’s about whether we want to continue to have a local pool facility for Piedmonters to learn to swim, for exercise, relaxation, injury rehabilitation, youth employment, school PE programs including adaptive PE, and HS sports teams. Or Not. It’s that simple.

I’m volunteering with the campaign to reach voters so they know our 56-year-old pool is broken and is due to be permanently closed. The City has run out of cost-effective repairs, and it makes no fiscal sense to spend even more money on a failing pool that no longer meets the needs of our residents. Measure UU provides an opportunity for us to come together as a community and design a safe, affordable, and sustainable pool facility for our children and grandchildren to enjoy for the next 50 years. I am optimistic that voters understand what is at stake, and will vote Yes on Measure UU to rebuild the pool.

CONNIE HERRICK

1 – I will have several ways residents can reach me:

- Phone calls: I will have set office hours and be available for phone calls. Residents can also leave voicemails without requiring a call back.
- Email: Residents can email me at their convenience and I will answer within 24 hours.
- Zoom Chats: My website will continue to offer individual or group chat sessions with easy online scheduling.
- Town Hall Forum: A Zoom event where I give my Council report and City issues can be discussed in a public forum. These events can happen as issues arise or on a scheduled basis.
- Monthly Newsletter: After the Town Hall, I will post the event highlights to my website and email a newsletter to subscribers. There will be links in both to contact me.

Post-Covid, I would love to meet in person with any Piedmont group or resident during my office hours.

2 – I am cautiously optimistic. The Community Pool For Piedmont group is doing a great job communicating with residents. They have a good website, informative flyer and a hard-working phone banking team. Everyone I’ve talked with is supporting the measure. Those

who were undecided have changed to a “yes” vote after we talked it through.

This is a difficult time to ask residents to pay more property tax. I understand and am sensitive to that. Non-users of the pool are initially reluctant to support the measure. However, after discussing, most agree the return on investing about 75 cents/day (median Piedmont home) for a new pool is a good one. We don’t want to be the only school district in Alameda County without access to a pool. Our schools are why people move here and why our property values stay high. I remain hopeful that we will vote “yes” on Measure UU.

CONNA MCCARTHY

1 – An upside to sheltering-in-place is that almost everyone is now expert in scheduling and participating in zoom conversations. Throughout my campaign, I have engaged residents via zoom. I became adept using Facetime and What’s App when one son was in Peace Corps in Ukraine and another son served with the US Navy in Yokosuka, Japan. I am easily contacted through my personal email and cell phone. If modern technology proves problematic, I have a home office and live near the center of town. Constituents are welcome to visit me post-pandemic. I do not foresee any barriers

to making myself available to residents. I welcome and want to hear all thoughts, concerns, ideas and questions.

2 – Although passing Measure UU presents unique challenges, I remain very optimistic. While City Council candidates must achieve a plurality, passage of Measure UU requires a supermajority of almost 67%. Dozens of committed volunteers are spending their weekends walking door-to-door addressing voters’ concerns and convincing two-thirds of those voters that Piedmont’s 56 y/o pool has unfixable problems, is unsafe for public use and, most importantly, if Measure UU fails, the pool will permanently close. Piedmonters want a community pool. A survey taken months before Measure UU was placed on the ballot revealed 61% of Piedmonters consider our pool a valued community asset. As more voters understand that our pool must be replaced or permanently closed, we will reach two-thirds approval. ‘Yes on Measure UU’ signs are on display throughout Piedmont evidencing widespread community support. Review the facts at www.communitypoolforpiedmont.com We can’t let Piedmont become the only public school district in Alameda County without access to a local pool.

NANCY BOSTROM
No reply received.

School Board Election – Candidates Q&A

By Allyson Aleksey

Part 5 in a series

In advance of the municipal election on November 3, School Board candidates were asked two questions:

1) *If elected, how would you make yourself available for questions or comments from Piedmont residents.*

2) *How familiar are you with plans for the new Alan Harvey Theatre?*

The Post will ask each candidate two questions every week. Responses are listed below.

VERONICA ANDERSON THIGPEN

1 – As a School Board member, I would be available to constituents who have questions or who are seeking information about school policy. I would also seek opportunities to include community and youth perspectives in decision-making. I experienced the efficacy of this approach when I engaged with community advocates from the Piedmont Anti-Racism and Diversity Committee (PADC) and the Piedmont Racial Equity Campaign (PREC) joining with teachers, youth and district administrators to craft racial and educational equity policies that have gained widespread support. I see this as a template for board practice.

2 – The new Alan Harvey Theater will be the result of a years-long campaign to revamp the aging PHS/MHS campus. It is one of two new facilities that will be built for the \$66 million project, which also includes updating five existing buildings and remodeling the outdoor amphitheater. The design for the new Alan Harvey Theater addresses shortcomings of the

original building in that it will be accessible and will include offices, expanded lobby space and classrooms for drama and set design. An initial effort to build a new theater fell through, but a subsequent measure that included building a new science and technology facility was approved. The new Alan Harvey Theater was originally scheduled to open at the start of the 2021 school year; however, pandemic related construction delays may mean a later completion date.

HILARY COOPER

1 – I am deeply committed to serving our students and am happy to make myself available to Piedmont residents for questions or comments. I believe that listening is a critical component of serving on the school board. As Parent Club President at PMS & PHS, I worked with teachers, parents and administrators and made myself available to all of them. I also hosted many parent and administrator coffees, and I have always valued opportunities for our community to come together. If elected, I hope to continue to be a resource for all of our community members. I will have a designated email, and if some prefer to speak to me directly, I am happy to chat in person or over the phone. I look forward to working with our community and I will always be just a phone call or email away.

2 – Our school district is in the midst of two new building construction projects, a new STEAM building and the new Alan Harvey Theater, both at PHS. Both projects are funded by the \$66M improvement bond (Measure H1). Over the past few years, I have had the opportunity to substitute teach at PHS and I have seen the need firsthand for infrastructure improvements. I was thrilled when Measure H1 passed and I am excited to see the new STEAM building, and in a year or so, the new Alan Harvey Theater. Alan Harvey Theater was

one of our district’s most heavily used venues -- from speaker series to assemblies to musicals, it was packed multiple times a week. Once completed, I believe the new Alan Harvey Theater will be a source of great pride for our community.

JASON KELLEY

1 – In addition to being available by email and phone, I would make a point of reaching out to school and community groups, to attend group meetings, and to solicit feedback and input from residents. As a parent who is in almost daily contact with teachers and other parents at all three school levels, I am already aware of many of the day-to-day concerns about our school district. It’s important for Piedmont residents to be able to easily communicate with their elected representatives and to know that their concerns are being heard and addressed. Being accountable to the voters is especially key in a small community such as ours.

2 – Alan Harvey was one of my teachers in high school and I performed in school musicals under his direction at the old theater, so I’m very excited about the new building. Arts education is so important to help students learn confidence and creative thinking. I’m proud that Piedmont has a strong tradition of supporting arts education and want to ensure that continues and grows. As a producer for four years of the biggest performing arts event in Piedmont, Beach Revue, I got to see first-hand how children learn from performing on stage. They become more comfortable speaking in front of groups and more confident in their own abilities. The new Alan Harvey Theater will allow more Piedmont students to gain those skills before heading to college or work, and it will be a great training facility for students who want to pursue careers in the performing arts.

HARI TITAN

1 – I would make sure my email and cell number are published in the student directory and available to the local press and school district. The most convenient form of communication these days is email, however, emails sent to influence public officials are part of the public decision-making record and subject to disclosure. For confidential matters, it is better to make an appointment and discuss those matters over the phone. For school district policy matters, I would like to start moderated online wiki pages that would allow residents to quickly get up to speed on anything the board or district is working on and also make it easier to contribute to the decision-making process at a time that is convenient to each resident. This Web 2.0 facility should also reduce the volume of multiple emails to the board with the exact same advice.

2 – I have many articles on my harititan.com/search/node/aht website presenting financial arguments for a new Alan Harvey Theater. In 2014 the school board presented a plan to renovate and add classroom space to the old Alan Harvey theater. Through articles in the Piedmont Post, I discovered that our renovation cost estimate was comparable to what other school districts were paying for a brand new theater. The benefits of designing a brand new theater included 2-stories with more stadium-style seating, much better acoustics, handicap access, net-zero energy, and earthquake safety. I also analyzed our 2014 cost estimate for a brand new theater and discovered it was nearly double what other districts paid. Since labor and material costs were independent of Piedmont as a job site, I promoted getting competitive guaranteed maximum price bids for a new theater. In 2016, the district obtained much lower bids and added a new Alan Harvey Theater to Measure H1.

CORY SMEGAL, Incumbent

1 – Over the past four years as a School Board member, I’ve tried to make myself very accessible to all constituents. As Board correspondent for two years, I responded to all emails received on behalf of the Board. I also responded to all emails that I personally received. Pre-pandemic, I met with people in person. I’ve also reached out to people that have spoken at our Board meetings to get clarification on their views. I’ve talked to people on the phone and I’ve gone on walks with people. I am very happy when people provide input to the Board. I really try to listen to all viewpoints because I think that is the best way that decisions get made.

2 – I am very familiar with the new Alan Harvey Theater. For the last two years, I’ve served as Board liaison to the Facilities Steering Committee. This committee reviews all aspects of the current construction program and makes recommendations to the Board. Construction began in earnest on the new Performing Arts Center with the Alan Harvey Theater this spring once the schools had closed to students. It will be completed in the Fall of 2021 and includes a 487-seat auditorium, (459 fixed, 28 movable seats; the original AHT had 442 seats), a green room with dressing rooms, a separate drama classroom to minimize wear and tear on the main stage, a drama department office and a conference room. If you would like to see some renderings of the new theater, please go to: <https://measureh1.org/background/updates/09-2018-update.html#new-harvey-theater-update>.

Once the new Performing Arts Center is completed, it will be an amazing school and community resource.

NANCY BOSTROM
No reply received.

Election Preview – City Council candidates Q&A

By Allyson Aleksey

Part 6 in a series

In advance of the November 3 municipal election, Piedmont City Council candidates were asked two questions:

1) *Are you prepared to answer residents on controversial items that you will likely face in the next four years?*

2) *Are you using lawn signs in your campaign? If so, how many are out, and what do you believe is the value of lawn signs in a local campaign?*

The Post will ask each candidate two questions every week. Responses are listed below.

JEN CAVENAUGH,
Incumbent

1 – Of course! When I was elected in 2016, I was able to reach out directly to every homeowner so they could share their concerns directly. That’s a bit more challenging in today’s environment, but I’d still like to hear from homeowners, renters, workers, business owners and visitors about their experience in our community. It’s my favor-

ite part of the job. Piedmonters, please call me. I’d love to hear from you!

2 – After my election in 2016, I saved any campaign materials I thought I could reuse if I ran for reelection. This included my kids’ “vote for my mom” t-shirts and of course my lawn signs. Well, the shirts don’t fit my kids anymore and the signs are surely showing their age as well; but they still get the message across. Reuse helps keep my campaign costs to the bare minimum. While I know many residents don’t love the aesthetic, and I agree with that sentiment, during campaign season the signs allow residents to share with undecided voters who they support. I’m not printing any new signs for this campaign so my apologies to my supporters who requested a sign but didn’t receive one since I ran out early.

CONNIE HERRICK

1 – Yes. Answering our residents on any item, controversial or not, is the crux of a Councilmember’s job. My nature is to be thoughtful and thorough. I enjoy completing the necessary due diligence to understand an issue and its impact on our City. I will always present the facts as

I’ve researched them and welcome discussion on any issue with any resident. We have a City of exceptionally bright, critical thinkers, with many experts in a variety of fields. I expect to learn a lot from our interactions.

Debates on “controversial items” can become uncomfortable. This is to be expected when people care deeply or feel strongly about an issue. I have no expectation that I will be able to obtain agreement every time. But I will always listen, seek out diverse opinions and be open-minded to change. Most important, I will bring all resident feedback to the Council.

2 – No lawn signs. I am respectfully running my campaign differently. Soliciting donations to pay for lawn signs doesn’t make good financial sense to me. It’s a wasteful process. When I ask a resident for money, it will be through our bond measure/tax process, and because I believe there will be a benefit to them and our City. What benefit do we derive from these campaign signs? None that I can see. Studies show they do not impact a voter’s decision. They are difficult to recycle properly, and visually, they are a blight on our City.

My campaign is self-funded. No donations, no lawn signs. If anyone wants a “Vote Herrick” sign, there are window posters available for download on my website. Meanwhile, I trust our residents to do their research and pick the candidate they feel will best serve our City. If that is me, I will be ready to work.

CONNA MCCARTHY

1 – I am well prepared to deal with controversy. As a 30+ year resident of Piedmont who has spent most of those years engaged in issues of concern to residents, I understand Piedmont values, needs, and the expectations of residents. Before I “answer residents on controversial items”, I will engage in opportunities to understand all concerns. I will also listen to experts and seek advice from people I know to have relevant insight or experience. I understand from a lifetime of partisan politics the importance of affording citizens an opportunity to participate, that citizen involvement in decision-making builds trust, and, most importantly, that compromise is vital.

Overall, residents agree more often than disagree. Public safety

is consistently the number one area of concern along with strong fiscal management and oversight of how tax dollars are being allocated.

2 – Yes, I am enthusiastically campaigning with lawn signs. Voters need to know the names of candidates who seek their support. Lawn signs have been a valuable part of elections for over 200 years. The practical value of lawn signs is especially important because the Covid pandemic presents barriers to in-person one-on-one voter outreach.

Most importantly, Piedmont residents want to be involved in local elections. They want to know who their friends and neighbors are supporting. I have found lawn signs a successful way of introducing myself to voters, engaging voters in topics of particular concern and ultimately, earning their support.

I am especially appreciative of Sean Wong, PHS 2010, who spent many hours developing the crisp, clean, simple design of my campaign materials, including my lawn sign. I have placed almost 250 signs.

NANCY BOSTROM
No reply received.

School Board Election – Candidates Q&A

By Allyson Aleksey

Part 6 in a series

In advance of the November 3 election, Piedmont School Board candidates were asked two questions:

1) *Are you prepared to answer residents on controversial items that you will likely face in the next four years?*

2) *What extracurricular activities do you think should be developed or improved in the district?*

The Post will ask each candidate two questions every week. Responses are listed below.

VERONICA ANDERSON THIGPEN

1 – School Board members are accountable to their constituents. That means keeping the lines of communication open, especially in times of crisis and controversy when transparency is essential. No one knows what the next four years have in store. At the very least, we can be reasonably certain that the impact of the current pandemic will reverberate for some time and will continue to require schools and their governing boards to keep key stakeholders regularly informed.

2 – Right now, there is a huge need to adapt existing extracurricular activities to virtual spaces or create new ones. Our children and teens are cut off from the day-to-day social interaction they would normally have by attending classes in person and participating in lunch clubs and after-school sports, debate and other extracurriculars.

Some groups are finding ways to keep kids connected and engaged. Anticipating a string of hot days, the Piedmont Makers group shared on social media an idea to construct solar ovens with pizza boxes, aluminum foil, duct tape and other

easy-to-find household materials. Beyond the pandemic, I would like to see more experiential learning and civic engagement opportunities – especially for middle school and elementary students – like Model UN and interdistrict community action projects.

Programs like these open the door for students to connect with real world issues, tap their creativity to solve real problems, and find ways to amplify their voices.

HILARY COOPER

1 – I am absolutely prepared to answer tough questions and I welcome them from the community. It has been my experience that when change occurs, it is difficult to avoid controversy as diverse opinions are part of human nature. I imagine discussing challenging issues with the community will be part of my job as a school board member. I have had experience with controversy as a parent club president, from adopting a block schedule at the middle school to confronting hate speech at the high school. It is so important to be able to bring people together during difficult times and I am not afraid of taking on issues in order to improve our schools and better serve our students.

2 – Extra-curricular activities are very important for developing the “whole child” as each child has different interests. I am proud of Piedmont’s tradition of offering a wide range of extra-curricular activities that appeal to as many different interests as possible. From the chess club at Havens, to the Rubik’s cube club at PMS to a capella at PHS, and all of our amazing athletic programs, there is an activity for everyone. To build on our offerings, one program I would love to see developed at our high school is Youth & Government. This program could work nicely with our current Junior States of America program and would tap into the incredible student activism

that I have witnessed this year. It is a wonderful opportunity to encourage our students to exercise their voices and develop a sense of civic responsibility.

JASON KELLEY

1 – I am prepared and uniquely positioned to answer residents on controversial issues. The Board of Education serves as a bridge between the community and the schools. As a parent supervising the learning of kids in elementary school, middle school, and high school, I have day-to-day contact with other parents and first-hand knowledge of what is happening at all levels of our schools. As well, I have the endorsement of the Association of Piedmont Teachers, who, along with school administrators and other staff, are experts in education. As someone who has been in Piedmont for decades, I understand the community’s interests, including the interests of residents who do not currently have children in our schools. I am committed to bringing all of these groups – parents, educators, and the community – together to find the best way forward for our schools.

2 – Extracurriculars, including sports, arts, STEM-related clubs, and a wide array of other activities that our schools and parent groups offer, allow kids to explore and pursue interests that may open up new paths for their lives after graduation. The more opportunities we give kids to try something new – or to try something old again – the more ways they will find to succeed in the world. I am committed to working to provide the broadest array of extracurriculars possible so all students can explore their interests. Unfortunately, most of these activities have been cancelled or severely limited by social distancing requirements. To the extent it is safe and feasible, I would like to see the schools support virtual or safely-distanced extracurriculars until normal meetings can resume

HARI TITAN

1 – Absolutely. I am not a stranger to finding and explaining controversial topics to the public. Moving to extended day kindergarten was the right thing for parents and students but not good for City revenues. I was proud to promote it and I did explain the controversy to the public. Likewise, bond investors were profiting from creative financing that deferred property taxes at the expense of Piedmont taxpayers. I wrote a number of articles about CABs on my website and in the newspaper to explain the issue to the public. I also surveyed readers and over 95% agreed with my assessment. In this election cycle I’ve been writing viewpoints that explain current issues pertaining to the school district.

2 – The coronavirus pandemic has halted extra-curricular activities on school grounds. Sports have been delayed until next semester. The Piedmont pool is shut down, but other pools are open with precautions. Witter Field has been reopened for limited community use.

Would the school allow parents to utilize it for track and field, with precautions like social distancing, mask use and not sharing equipment? Infectious disease doctors and epidemiologists have already written to the school district to recommend various precautions for sports and extra-curricular activities. Anything held on school grounds may require a supervising teacher and that requires negotiation with the teachers union.

I am not sure the school district is currently in a position to expand outdoor activities even though students need them. Families are having to find alternatives. Some student clubs have moved online. I see many kids biking or walking with their families or social bubbles. The Piedmont Recreation Center currently offers tennis, pickleball, and skatepark activities with precautions.

CORY SMEGAL, Incumbent

1 – During my term on the School Board the past four years, there have been some controversial issues that the Board has had to tackle. At all times, I’ve appreciated the input from Piedmont residents because at the end of the day, one of the most important jobs of a Board member is to represent all stakeholders and make decisions in the best interest of the Piedmont schools. Those who have watched recent Board meetings have seen that I am not afraid to say what I think, even if it might be unpopular. It’s important for the public to know that the only time Board members can discuss ideas all together is publicly at meetings. For those public discussions to be effective, Board members must be direct in their communication, willing to listen and at all times, respectful.

2 – One of the earlier questions asked by the Post was about what students are missing during distance learning. I answered that it is the ability to make in-person connections. During the pandemic, it’s important for students’ social and emotional health that the District help facilitate COVID-safe activities to create meaning and connectedness. The District has recently opened Witter Field and will be able to use that large outdoor space for “athletic pods” -- small groups of students from our sports teams who will have opportunities for supervised conditioning. Similarly, through our strong partnership with the city, the Rec Department has started to offer “play pods” for our youngest learners. These activities are designed to give our students an opportunity to make in person connections and get outdoors. We need to continue to expand these programs so that students with varied interests can benefit.

NANCY BOSTROM
No reply received.