

POTRERO HILL MAYORAL CANDIDATE FORUM
Tuesday, August 30, 2011

Questionnaire for candidates for the office of
Mayor of the City of San Francisco

Candidate/Campaign Information

Candidate name: Terry Joan Baum
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Anticipated budget: \$50,000
Funds raised to date: \$5,400
Percentage of donations \$100 or less: 60

Thank you for taking the time to complete the Questionnaire for the Potrero Hill Mayoral Candidates Forum. Note that your responses to this Questionnaire will be used as one of the criteria by which candidates will be invited to participate in the event ; completion of the Questionnaire is not a guarantee that you will be invited to participate.

Please write a brief response (fewer than 200 words) to each question.

1. Why are you running and why should we vote for you?
I'm running to make San Francisco the first truly Green city in the US. I reject the current "realism" that has led our city government to give tax breaks to corporations, at the same time it forces people to pay more to enjoy Golden Gate Park. The way we are living and doing politics right now is not sustainable.

2. What sets you apart from your opponents?

I'm the only progressive woman running, the only artist, the only lesbian, and the only member of the Green Party (or any other non-corporate party).

3. Have you qualified for public financing? If not, do you plan to do so? If you do not plan to seek public financing, why not?

No; although I would like to have public financing, it is realistically too difficult to collect sufficient donations from my base of artists and activists during this economy.

4. What do you view as the top three issues facing San Francisco? Please describe your solutions for those issues.

The first problem is the corruption of municipal government that has resulted from one-party rule. One party rule didn't work in the USSR, Egypt, or Syria, and it doesn't work here. There is a "pay to play" policy in SF that has continued at least as far back as the days of Willie Brown. City contracts go to corporations, non-profits, and individuals who make the right "donations" or pay off well-connected political consultants. Outrageous contracts, often with "golden parachute" clauses, are given to politically connected cronies (some of whom were called "special assistants" under Willie Brown and "municipal executives" today). Many City contracts serve as shields to avoid Sunshine laws and appropriate public oversight of funds. One-party corruption has directly led to many of the other major problems in SF: environmental racism, crumbling infrastructure and public transit, and unsustainable development.

The solution is to build a strong opposition party, such as the Green Party. Greens do not take corporate donations (i.e., bribes). We fight for stronger Sunshine laws, audits of all City contracts, and an end to the current culture of corruption.

The second major issue is a lack of good public transit, in an era of Peak Oil and the resulting rise in gas prices. We need transit so good, most residents won't need a car! I support an elected MTA board (to avoid corruption and patronage). I also support significant increases in Muni funding via a local gas or carbon tax, sale of "park in front of your own driveway" permits, transit assessment districts, and more developer fees. I also support making Muni more fast and efficient by adding more traffic signals that give priority to buses, allowing boarding on all doors, and eventually eliminating fares altogether to speed boarding.

The third major issue is lack of affordable housing, which is driving poor people, artists, and other vulnerable residents out of the City. We need a moratorium on most new market-rate development (i.e., only more affordable housing), more City support for cooperative housing and community land trusts, and legalization of in-law units.

5. What are some specific public safety strategies currently being implemented in San Francisco that you agree or disagree with?

With these strategies in mind, what do you intend to do about public safety if elected mayor?

I'm strongly opposed to "sit/lie," which is a violation of civil rights and a tool for police profiling. I also oppose cooperation with ICE. I support community policing and foot patrols, and I would mandate more of these as Mayor. I would let neighborhoods set priorities for police time (e.g., prioritizing burglaries or murders, rather than harassing homeless people). I would replace ROTC in schools with similar leadership program built around "1st responder" and earthquake response skills--this will also encourage more SF kids to join our police/fire rather than the military. I would create incentives for 1st responders to live in SF, since bridges will be down in an earthquake. I would put police under control of the elected Sheriff. I would relocate police from the airport to neighborhoods that need more foot patrols. I would also save money by "civilianize" jobs that don't require special training (i.e., desk jobs), as well as eliminate money that's spent on toys for police (such as segways and tasers).

6. What does the term "affordable housing" mean to you? What, if anything, will you do to increase the quantity of affordable housing in San Francisco?

"Affordable" means that a single person holding a typical service sector job in San Francisco can afford to pay rent or mortgage on a safe place to live. As detailed above, I support a requirement that ALL new housing built in SF be affordable, and I also support community land trusts (which allow people to pay for only the building, not the land) and City support for cooperative housing.

7. In the 2000 census, San Francisco was the second most racially diverse county in California. In the 2010 census, we were twelfth. What issues do you see in the changing demographics of the City, and how as mayor do you plan to support racial, economic and cultural diversity?

Ethnic cleansing of African American communities has been the unofficial City policy since the days of Willie Brown, and it continues today with the Lennar development. To counter these trends, we need more affordable housing, support for small businesses (as opposed to multi-billion dollar corporations like Twitter), and real local hiring / contracts with local businesses (not just the current system of political patronage).

8. What is your position regarding privatization of the public sector, i.e., contracting out public land and services to for-profit or private entities? Please explain with specific examples.

Greens have vigorously opposed privatization of the Presidio, Yerba Buena Park, fees on the Arboretum (including the "temporary" fees originally enacted by Supervisors Chiu and Avalos), leases of public playgrounds to for-profit sports franchises, formula retail in public parks, golf course giveaways, and private parking garages in public parks. The current head of Rec & Park should be fired. We will continue to oppose such policies in the future.

9. Do you support reforming the 1932 Refuse Collection and Disposal Ordinance to allow the City to contract out its garbage services through competitive bidding?

Yes. However, we must then choose a contract that is environmentally sound and just, rather than dumping our garbage on poor communities of color on the other side of the state.

10. Do you believe that San Francisco should be a Sanctuary City, and will you remove San Francisco from the Secure Communities Program?

Of course. I oppose all cooperation with ICE.

11. What will you do as mayor to fulfill the promise of Hope SF and improve substandard public housing conditions? What changes, if any, would you make to the San Francisco Housing Authority?

The SFHA is hopelessly corrupt, a den of political patronage, and is a disservice to the residents of public housing. As Matt Gonzalez suggested in 2001, it should be taken over by the Board of Supervisors in order to bring more accountability to the agency.

12. Complaining about Muni is a local pastime. That said, we have seen repeated decreases in service while the City has approved plans to substantially increase the population of zip code 94107 over the next 20 years. What, as mayor, will you do to fulfill the City's Transit First Policy for today's San Franciscans? How will you prepare for tomorrow's Muni riders?

See my answer above to question #4.

13. Likewise, the San Francisco Unified School District provides an often-cited reason for families to leave the City and is a source of stress for those choosing to remain. What are the biggest issues related to public education in the City, and what factors contributed to these issues? What will you do in your term as mayor to improve education in the City?

There are almost no public preschool slots available for middle class families, even for parents willing to pay for them. The current school assignment system requires middle class parents to enroll their children in the nearest elementary and middle schools, even if the child would prefer to join a program available at a different school. The change from the old lottery system is the fault of the School Board, but the Mayor's office could work with the School Board to provide additional funds and more enjoyable programs (such as the 1st responders training program mentioned in Question 5).

14. How, as Mayor, would you facilitate better dialog and collaboration between City departments, such as SFMTA or Recreation and Parks, and neighborhood organizations?

Greens support decentralization of power, and the empowerment of communal councils such as those exist in Venezuela. SF should pass laws the formalize the creation of such councils and empower them with authority on local issues (e.g., local development and zoning, policing priorities as mentioned in Question 5). The councils would be an improvement over existing neighborhood organizations, which often are not representative of the opinions of the local residents, and which do not cover all neighborhoods.

15. Please review the policies and programs you have advocated in your responses to the questions above. Given forecasts of difficult budgets for the next several years, how do you propose that we fund the aforementioned policies and programs while maintaining other vital City services and programs?

Two major new source of public revenues would be Public Power and the creation of a City-owned, City-run Municipal Bank of San Francisco. The benefits of (and revenues from) public power have been extensively discussed in the Bay Guardian, so I don't need to review them here. A Municipal Bank is an old idea whose time has come again. It would bring in revenue by investing public pension money, allow borrowing by City residents at below market rates, and fund local business development. The presence of a state-owned bank in North Dakota helped shield that state from the current economic collapse, and a similar bank here in SF would do wonders for both our economy and City finances.

Other possibilities for increased funding include the creation of a Downtown Transit Assessment District. Businesses downtown benefit disproportionately from MUNI, which is structured as a commute system, to get people to and from jobs downtown. Therefore, it would be fair for downtown businesses to contribute more to MUNI operations. Also, at this time, many San Francisco corporations avoid increased property taxes by failing to report when a commercial building changes ownership after a corporate merger. We could increase property tax revenue \$15-\$50 million by rigorously investigating this area of all corporate mergers in the city.

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*Please return your responses to this Questionnaire by **Thursday, July 7, 2011**, to contact_us@phdemclub.org. Thank you again for your participation.*