

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:	Dennis Herrera
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Anticipated budget:	\$1.475 million
Funds raised to date:	\$1.107 million
Percentage of donations \$100 or less:	32%

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?

For nearly a decade, I've been more than a lawyer as your City Attorney. I've been a leader.

I've done the heavy lifting behind the scenes. I've shepherded projects to create thousands of jobs. I've negotiated tough agreements, and drove hard bargains to maximize the public benefits to San Franciscans. I've defended our City from fraud and corruption. I've protected our neighborhoods from gang violence and worked to make neighborhoods safer. I've done more than anyone else in the race for Mayor to take on powerful interests — and even other governments — to protect our interests and values. I filed the first government lawsuit in history for marriage equality, and I negotiated the shutdown of Mirant's filthy Potrero Power Plant.

Leading an award-winning law office for nine-and-a-half years has given me an opportunity unique in this race to prove my mettle for executive leadership. I know local government — run honestly, and well — can earn the trust of the people it serves. In fact, I think San Francisco can be a model city for the 21st Century. But it's going to take a Mayor who's experienced enough to lead it. That's the leadership I've demonstrated, and that's why I'm running for Mayor.

2. What sets you apart from your opponents?

As City Attorney for almost a decade, I've led an office that *American Lawyer* magazine praised as “one of the most aggressive and talented city law departments in the nation.” I've been recognized among California's top

lawyers, and the American Bar Association honored my office with its prestigious lifetime achievement award for outstanding excellence.

There aren't many City departments that are nationally recognized for excellence and professionalism. But mine is, under my leadership. More than anything else, that's what sets me apart from every candidate in the race for Mayor.

Every day, I represent City departments, boards and commissions in cases with millions of tax dollars at stake. I've brought groundbreaking litigation, and won landmark decisions. Yet despite all the cases I've won, what I've told voters since announcing my candidacy is this: don't just judge me on the cases I've won—judge me also on the cases I've resolved. Because the leadership skill I've demonstrated again and again as City Attorney is my ability to sit down with the toughest adversaries, and resolve differences.

That's exactly the skill San Francisco needs in its next Mayor to solve the problems we face, and create a City that works.

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?

Yes, I have qualified for public financing. I think it's a system that has largely liberated me and the other publicly-financed candidates from the need to focus primarily on fundraising, so we can meet voters, hear their concerns, and make our campaigns about what we can do to best serve all San Franciscans—not simply about appealing to donors.

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

Having talked with thousands of voters over the last several months, and having worked as the chief legal counsel to three different mayors and 26 members of the Board of Supervisors over the last decade, these are the three preeminent challenges I think are facing the next Mayor of San Francisco.

- To create jobs and expand economic opportunity;
- To govern more effectively and run a City that earns back the confidence of the people it serves; and
- To have an honest, forward-looking conversation about the kind of city ours will be—because we are failing future generations by not doing so.

Now, it would probably be simpler and more predictable to list a few poll-tested discrete issues with pat answers—let's balance the budget, let's address homelessness, etc. But the reality is we will make little progress on any single issue if we don't meet the larger challenges of growing economically, governing more accountably, and pursuing a forward-looking vision of a San Francisco that starts living up to its potential as a model American city for the 21st Century. Within 200 words, I can't expand on that, but it begins with my Jobs Plan at <http://herreraformayor.com/issues/jobs-plan/>.

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? As City Attorney, I've worked hard to make San Francisco streets safer by taking on criminal street gangs, and securing civil gang injunctions that have made real progress in dramatically reducing gang-related violence and nuisance conduct in several City neighborhoods. These injunctions bar known gang members from engaging in intimidation, graffiti vandalism, trespassing, and associating with other gang members inside of court-ordered "safety zones."

I've also pursued lawless, violence-plagued nightclubs, and stood up for the vast majority of San Francisco's entertainment venues that take the public safety of their patrons and neighbors seriously. I've worked with regulators and law enforcement to protect nightlife and tourism, and I've been an active collaborator with the Mayor's Office, District Supervisors, the District Attorney, Police, and state ABC regulators to keep San Francisco a safe, vibrant entertainment Mecca.

What I've learned as City Attorney—and what a Herrera Administration will reflect in the public safety

strategies it pursues in Room 200—is that effective public safety strategies require collaboration and engagement. Not just among other law enforcement offices, but also among neighborhood stakeholders and community organizations.

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?

In a public policy context, I understand “affordable housing” to mean housing that is economically accessible to a broad range of income categories. And I believe our efforts to make housing more affordable to San Franciscans must recognize that affordable housing policies range from protecting habitability conditions in SRO hotels and public housing developments for low-income residents, to protecting rent control and expanding infill development for middle-income families.

Among the current mayoral candidates, no one has fought harder or more successfully to protect affordable housing, broadly defined, than I have. I’ll be a Mayor for whom affordable housing is a top priority because it has clearly been a top priority of mind as City Attorney.

I filed suit against CitiApartments, one of the largest, most corrupt landlords in San Francisco, to successfully end their outrageous pattern of corporate lawlessness.

I defended San Francisco’s Hotel Conversion Ordinance, which protects long-term residents from being evicted in favor of tourist rentals, all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. And I won.

I doubled the size of my office’s Code Enforcement Unit, to aggressively police violations of building, planning and fire codes and protect tenants and neighbors from abusive landlords.

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?

As Mayor, I intend to build consensus around a unified urban and economic strategy that recognizes racial, economic and cultural diversity as one of San Francisco’s most critical assets. I support development policies that will protect the unique character of individual San Francisco neighborhoods, provide economic opportunity for all San Franciscans. I want to pursue an economic development strategy that does more to encourage diverse employment opportunities across the socio-economic strata—not just the new and trendy sectors for high-wage earners.

That’s why creating jobs will be job number one if I’m elected Mayor. I’ll use every tool at our disposal to revitalize our economy. That means getting people back to work who are unemployed, and also creating better, more rewarding opportunities for those who are underemployed. Our city needs to do more to provide long term, sustainable economic opportunity for people with many different skills. That will help ensure that families of all income levels and cultures can continue to live and thrive in San Francisco.

For more than 150 years, San Francisco has drawn its character, creativity and economic vitality from its diversity. It is deeply disconcerting to see that trend reverse. Fixing it must be a priority.

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.

I categorically oppose the privatization of basic public services. There is no place for the profit motive when it comes to the essential functions of protecting and serving San Franciscans. Privatization brings significant problems in terms of lack of accountability and diminished effectiveness. Indeed, my experience as a City Attorney who has pursued numerous cases of public contracting fraud has made me deeply suspicious of privatization generally. It too often shunts public responsibilities to private concerns whose interests are not shared with the public.

Of course, San Francisco supports many worthy private community-based organizations. Yet even here, accountability can be a cause for concern. That’s why I served as co-chair of the 2009 CBO Task Force along with the San Francisco Foundation’s Dr. Sandra Hernandez.

We offered numerous recommendations to enhance the performance and effectiveness of city-funded nonprofits that fulfill public interest services, including improved oversight and closures to eliminate wasteful overlap. I am glad to see Interim Mayor Lee implementing some of those recommendations currently.

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?

While I am generally supportive of competition, I have not yet been convinced by arguments I've seen on the City's Landfill Disposal Agreement process that reissuing RFPs is warranted or advisable, especially given the already-extensive RFQ/RFP process and the relative urgency of securing a new landfill for the City and County's use by 2015.

While procedural changes for these contract bids may well have merit in the future, the amount of time necessary to begin a wholly new bidding process would put the City and its taxpayers in an extremely disadvantageous negotiating position with regard future bidders, given the City's 2015 deadline.

My understanding of the Budget and Legislative Analyst's two-fold recommendation on the Recology waste disposal contract was: (1) that the existing process, though different from other bidding processes, was both proper and an appropriate policy decision for the Board; and (2) that the Board may consider presenting future changes for voter approval, though not necessarily before awarding the current proposed contract. I think this may have been an appropriate reform to initiate earlier. But the urgency of securing a new landfill for City use by 2015 risks putting us over a barrel to reopen the process now.

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

I support San Francisco's Sanctuary City policies, and will protect them if elected Mayor. I support Sup. David Campos's 2009 amendment to that ordinance to restore due process rights to undocumented juveniles, and I believe it correctly affirms the principle of confidentiality that has been a cornerstone of our juvenile justice system since it was first established. I intend to implement that, too, if elected Mayor, while assuring that necessary steps are taken to protect city employees from criminal prosecution similar to what federal authorities threatened two years ago.

I also believe San Francisco should be more than a sanctuary for immigrants, but a national advocate. As Mayor, I will join with other mayors throughout the United States—in much the same way that I've successfully enlisted the support of attorneys general, county counsels and city attorneys for dozens of issues as City Attorney—to aggressively drive immigration reform to the top of the national agenda. The injustices of our immigration laws are seen with particular clarity in our cities—and cities must inform the debate.

I'm the son of an immigrant, and I take this issue seriously. It's a responsibility I intend to lead as Mayor of San Francisco.

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?

As Mayor, I will be fully committed to seeing through the important mission of HopeSF, and my appointees to the San Francisco Housing Authority will reflect that commitment.

As City Attorney, I worked closely with Sup. Sophie Maxwell (who has endorsed my candidacy) and the San Francisco Department Building Inspection to assert for the first time in City history San Francisco's local authority to inspect and hold SFHA accountable for code violations that threaten the safety and health of residents.

Because SFHA is a legally separate entity that carries out state and federal functions at the local level, it was previously considered immune from local authority. And while its board members are Mayoral appointments, the Mayor has limited ability to directly change the authority itself. That said, the Mayor has enormous power to unite parties and identify HopeSF as an important citywide priority, and I will do so as Mayor.

I have great hope for HopeSF to revitalize eight of San Francisco's most distressed public housing sites by creating thriving, mixed-income communities. It is based on successful, proven models that have benefited whole communities—by investing in schools, services, safety, and support—beyond simply new construction.

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?

Public transportation is a core public function that will succeed or fail by City leaders' ability to govern effectively, and fund it adequately. San Francisco's transit-first policy establishes public transportation to be an economic and environmental policy imperative. San Francisco's voter-enacted policy is to recognize reliable public transportation as an environmental linchpin to improve air quality, limit suburban sprawl, arrest global climate change and more. It's also a cornerstone of our economic policy to create a City that attracts jobs, retains middle-class families and remains livable for generations to come.

If we can create a problem-solving culture in San Francisco City Hall — from the Mayor on down — I'm convinced we can fix anything, including bringing our budget and revenue into balance. Including meeting the core obligations of our local government. And including having a public transit system that offers a reliable, accessible alternative to driving. As Mayor, I will vigorously advance the City's transit-first policy and prioritize intelligent transit planning in all future development projects.

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?

We must certainly fix what's broken with our public schools, but there's also a lot that's working and we should recognize that. As City Attorney, I helped the SFUSD eliminate its dysfunctional student assignment system, which frustrated many young families into leaving the City in search of a public school system to better serve their needs. My office provided guidance to the District in the creation of its new system—being implemented this year for the first time—which makes a greater effort to place children in their neighborhood schools while maintaining a commitment to countering racial isolation.

SFUSD and the City are separate entities, and the Mayor's power to change schools is limited. Still, as Mayor, I'll work with school officials to secure greater resources from the state and federal government to recruit, retain, support and empower high-quality teachers and administrators for schools that need improvement. I'll also propose a ballot measure to extend Proposition H after it expires in 2015, and perhaps increase its allocation to \$90 million per year. The \$90 million could provide support for multilingual programs, teacher retention and development, preschool programs, SLAM and still retain an undedicated tranche for contingencies and pilot programs.

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

As much as any other candidate in the race for Mayor, I know the intricacies and operations of city government. And *more* than any other candidate in the race for Mayor, I have the proven record of success over many years to facilitate dialogue and collaboration between City departments, neighborhood organizations and other diverse interests.

I've done it as City Attorney for nearly ten years, and I did it as president of the San Francisco Police Commission, too.

The fact is, it would be impossible to succeed in either role—as I've done—without a well-honed ability to bring multiple, often resolutely hostile stakeholders to the table to reach agreements, resolve differences, and find common ground. That's exactly what San Francisco's next mayor needs to do solve our problems, and I'm the candidate with the proven record of accomplishment to lead the kind of collaborative problem solving City Hall needs.

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?
I'll concede up front that accomplishing this won't be easy. But we should acknowledge, too, that the roadmap isn't especially complicated, either.

Assuming we enact pension reform in this election to begin getting a handle on spiraling retirement and health care costs, I'll pursue three reforms as Mayor to bridge San Francisco's persistent gap between its expenditures and revenues.

First, I'll push all the proposals from my Jobs Plan to grow the economic pie—because more and better jobs are our most effective strategy to grow the City's *revenue* pie, too. The plan is too lengthy to summarize here, but it's on my campaign website at <http://herreraformayor.com/issues/jobs-plan/>.

Second, I'll implement zero-based budgeting to justify every expenditure against our priorities. That'll include taking a hard look at bureaucracies and having the political courage to merge functions to improve efficiencies and cut costs.

Third, as I've mentioned, I'll push to reform our business payroll tax, which is too unfair to the 10 percent of businesses that pay it, and too unstable for discretionary programs first in line for budget cuts. We need business tax reform that makes everyone pay a fair share.

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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.