

# LOCAL BLOGS



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## By Douglas Moran

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About this blog: Real power doesn't reside with those who make the final decision, but with those who decide what qualifies as the viable choices. I stumbled across this insight as a teenager (in the 1960s). As a grad student, I belonged to an org... [\(More\)](#)

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## Considerations on City Council Candidates

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Complaints about difficulties differentiating this group of candidates have become common. Blogger Diana Diamond discussed this in her September 15 [^blog^](#) just after the first of the major forums for candidates. Normally, I would heed the old admonition to *"Pay attention to what they do, not what they say."* However, in the current pool of 7 candidates for 3 seats, this is useful for only 2 candidates: Doria Summa and Ed Lauing.

*Disclosure:* I am working on Summa's campaign. However, I write this in my role as a blogger and not as an advocate for her. I have written blogs on Council campaigns starting in 2014 (section [^Specific Elections^](#) in my index for this blog: It is easier to use than Palo Alto Online's).

There will be another public forum for Council candidates on Thursday, October 13 7-9

pm in the Mitchell Park Community Center's Palo Alto room (the big one). If virtual access (eg Zoom) info becomes available, I will add it here.

The following may help you think more critically about what the candidates are saying.

A major part of my motivation/goal for writing longer blogs has been to provide readers with information and perspectives that they can use in their discussions of the portions that interest them. About 30% of this blog is the footnotes and *Resources* section: links -- mostly to spreadsheets -- and explanation about those links. However, the length of this blog still exceeded both my intent and the indications of my outline.

I will start with my general approach for this election and then step through the candidates in decreasing order of monetary contributions received, each in a headlined section. To ameliorate the length of this blog, my intention is to make my comments on candidates understandable without your having read those preceding sections, and to make it easier to look back by bolding key words and phrasing in those sections. That is, you should be able to **scroll way down** to the sections on the candidates and scroll/search to the background paragraphs as needed. However, the background sections are intended to be useful for this election and for your understanding of future elections. I would have used clickable links to navigate around, but the provided blogging language is intended for short, uncomplicated compositions.

There is a collection of relevant links at the bottom of this blog. I may be adding to this after publication.

I listened to five major forums. The transcripts are auto-generated (by Google/YouTube) and have timestamps. If you want to figure out or confirm a passage you can click on that entry (timestamp or text). This also works when you have toggle off timestamps (3 vertical dots). Those forums are:

- [^Palo Alto Online^](#), (Sept 13): [^City Council Debate 2022^](#) (video and transcript) (1:51:04) - 2022-09-13.
- [^SV@Home^](#) (Sept 15): The forum's listing on their website did not include a link to a video. The organizers are a collection of advocacy groups, and it showed.
- [^Palo Alto Neighborhoods^](#), (Sept 22): [^PAN 2022 CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATE FORUM^](#) (video and transcript) (1:22:13) - 2022-10-22.
- [^LWV of Palo Alto^](#), (Sept 29): [^Palo Alto City Council Candidate Forum for the November 8, 2022 General Election^](#) - (video w/ no transcript) (1:40:50) - 2022-10-01.
- [^Friends of Cubberley^](#), (Sept 14): [^FOC Forum Candidate 2022^](#) (video and transcript) (1:13:34) - recorded 2022-09-14; posted on 2022-09-16 on YouTube

channel *Deborah Simon*.

*Note:* I wish I had skipped this forum. There were lots of "*aspirational*" (= delusional) statements about what could be done. Too often the candidates ignored constraints of funding and available land. Then there was ignorance of the substantial work done by earlier committees that many of the candidates, both PAUSD and City Council, displayed. The most recent effort was in 2019. Also, 3 of the top 5 Council candidates (by money) did not attend: The forum was scheduled in conflict with the regularly scheduled Planning & Transportation Commission meeting. Although Commissioners Summa and Lauing sent statements, the forum's organizers misleadingly stated only that they were not attending. Instead of the normal practice of explaining and/or reading their statements, the organizers said that those statements would be posted to their <sup>^</sup>[website](#)<sup>^</sup>. Candidate Forssell also had a conflict.

*Note:* The FoC website erroneously lists Lauing as having attended.

#### ----General----

**Forums:** Because of their design, you are unlikely to get an understanding of what the candidates might do if elected.

- These events are called "*forums*" and not "*debates*": The rules prohibit candidates from responding to what each other has said, although "*I agree*" appears to be an exception. Neither is there any follow-up, although there was some at the Palo Alto Online *interviews* (also online). To properly evaluate some/many of the candidates, you need to be able to detect what they get wrong and what they don't know. That is, you need to know more about the important issues than they do! You need to be able to distinguish insightful answers from absurd ones, and everything in-between. This is how it has been for my over-two-decades involvement in Palo Alto politics: I have been repeatedly told/admonished that the local political establishment wants to project the appearance of consensus, even when it is anything but. Often this goes under the euphemism of "*collegiality*". This phenomenon has a long history in politics. (1) Studies have found that an emphasis on consensus in corporate decision-making prolongs the process and produces inferior results -- the proverbial "*A camel is a horse designed by a committee.*"

- It is very hard to write questions that elicit responses that show these differences. I know -- I struggled doing this for multiple elections. It is hard when you know the serious candidates' record on the issues, but when the majority of the "*serious*" candidates don't have a record ... Typically, the number of candidates at a forum limits the time allowed for each response to be 30-60 seconds, with opening and closing statements sometimes given all of 2 minutes. The typical question is so broad that college graduates are likely to be able to talk credibly for well over a minute about

something of which they know little. Even worse are questions about complex, multi-faceted, nuanced issues where candidates are restricted to *Yes/No* answers. A remedy? Anyone proposing a question should be asked to give an answer within the allotted time. Often a credible/adequate answer is found to take much longer, and it's "*back to the drawing board*".

In the five forums, a lot of the questions were repeats. This wasn't that surprising because three were on consecutive days -- if the organizers hadn't already prepared backup questions, they likely wouldn't have had time to generate new ones. But then, I didn't hear any indication that the organizers were prepared to adapt.

*Aside:* Forums are necessarily scrunched together because mid-September is when the electorate starts paying attention, with ballots being mailed out 3 weeks later.

One consolation of repeatedly hearing answers to the same questions was that I could see how the candidates improved their answers. For some, the improvement was only in the words used, but there were also some realizations of the problems with their answers.

Example: Last year, the League of Women Voters (LWV) proposed a campaign finance measure that limited donations to candidates and their expenditures. It was immediately pointed out in the comments on the news articles(2) that there can be unlimited money spent on campaigns that is outside the candidates' control. There are many varieties of such *Independent Expenditure Committees (IEC)*, such as *Political Action Committees (PACs)* and *SuperPACs*. From voters' perspective, the biggest -- huge -- difference in the requirements and restrictions on the categories is *transparency before the election*.

In the 2014 election, there was an IEC that heavily advertised in the week before election day against one group of candidates labeling them a "*slate*" and advocating for another group -- their non-slate slate. (^[my 2014-11-02 blog](#)^). In this election, there is an IEC advocating for three Council candidates, and it is spending large amounts on advertising. Three of the five named supporters of this IEC also supported the 2014 IEC. One of them wrote the OpEd for the LWV proposal to limit expenditures (by others) while engaging in the opposite. If I had been on one of the committees developing questions for a forum, I would have wanted to ask about this.

Instead, we got to hear the candidates praise this proposal and argue for tighter limits. Lythcott-Haims and Summa pointed out the IEC problem, and Lauing referenced it indirectly. By the last forum -- hosted by the LWV -- several more of the candidates

were expressing reservations.

**Questionnaires:** I tend to give little weight to a campaign's response to questionnaires -- notice that I wrote "*campaign*" not "*candidate*". Starting in mid-August and extending well into September, candidates receive a seemingly endless stream of questionnaires, with many of them the equivalent of junk mail. After choosing which should be responded to within the available time, the candidate gets help from various supporters in writing what is submitted. Some candidates discuss what they want to say and have the supporters create a draft. Others have their supporters create a draft based on their knowledge of the issue and the electorate. The candidate then rewrites it into their style and priorities. If you listen to discussions by professional speech writers -- especially at the US Presidential level -- you will hear accounts of both patterns.

Recognize that the supporters helping the candidate are not *hired-guns* who will disappear after the election, but will become the candidate's virtual staff -- advisors, researchers, graphics design, tech-support ... Recognize that City Staff reports to the City Manager and that Council interacts with Staff through the City Manager. Thus, a Council member's staff is not the City Staff, but the residents.

**Endorsements:** I give zero weight to endorsements from officials and organizations. I wrote about why in [^my 2014-11-22 blog ^](#) and there have been more confirming accounts. Briefly, this is rife with cronyism, backscratching, unrepresentative endorsement committees, chicanery and exercises in cynicism. Endorsements by elected officials may represent individual choices or they may be entitlements of the Party's endorsement.

Although City Council elections are officially non-partisan, that hasn't stopped political parties and their *clubs* from making endorsements. They likely view such elections as part of their *development league* or *farm system*, with those candidates becoming additional endorsers of the party line. Such recommendations should be viewed as what is good for the Party, not Palo Alto.

When you see a newspaper endorsement, I strongly encourage you to read the associated text. I often find that I strongly disagree with their priorities and reasoning. The people making the recommendations have considerable contact with the political class and reflect their views, perhaps unconsciously: a filter bubble or akin to "[^Regulatory Capture^](#)". Often I find that those endorsements are irrelevant to *people like me*.

*Exceptions:* The term "*Honorary Chair*" designates political prominent people who have volunteered to use their connections to raise funds for a candidate's campaign. This commitment of time and reputation differentiates them from those who were asked for an endorsement and may have said little more than a polite version of "*Sure. Why not.*"

#### ----**What else am I looking for?**----

Before I consider where a candidate stands on various issues, I want to see good evidence that he has **sustained interest and activity** in a substantial portion of the job of being on Council. During the forums, I didn't see evidence that some of the candidates had knowledge of the issues beyond that of being a casual reader of Palo Alto Online, or less. Similarly, some of the bios didn't show commitment to these issues.

My expectation is that candidates don't fully understand how much **time and effort** is involved: I have repeatedly heard Councilmembers describe their duties as essentially a full-time job. Candidates who are close to a current or former Councilmember get some sense of this; others badly underestimate this. I listen for those who seem likely to step up to what is needed.

I have heard that the employers of several past Councilmembers treated their service on City Council as part of their job. Then there are those who have viewed serving as a low-effort position. Somewhere in the early- or mid-2000s, I was talking to a Councilmember about how much work/time it took. He said that he could learn enough to vote on an issue by listening during the meeting to the presentations from the Staff, the public and other Councilmembers. And a certain amount of scanning of the Staff reports, also during the meeting. He said he had quickly learned who he agreed with on specific issues and tended to follow their votes. When I mentioned this to others, I was told that when he was on the School Board, he was infamous for picking up his packet of reports on his way into the meeting.

This ignores that Councilmembers also represent Palo Alto at meetings of other governmental agencies. Council has repeatedly been surprised to learn of those agencies' decisions and actions because the assigned Council member wasn't attending or was attending and not reporting back. Current Vice Mayor Lydia Kou tried to cover for this by voluntarily attending those meetings in addition to her own assignments.

The packets of reports that Councilmembers are given several days before the weekly meeting have recently been 150-400 pages long, but I saw one that was almost 1000

pages. Fortunately (for the trees), packets are currently being distributed in electronic form (PDFs). If you want to sample, they are online at

[^https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/Departments/City-Clerk/Citys-Meeting-Agendas/Council-Agendas-and-Minutes-2021-2022](https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/Departments/City-Clerk/Citys-Meeting-Agendas/Council-Agendas-and-Minutes-2021-2022)^.

**Campaign team:** In the above sub-section on *Questionnaires*, I included the importance of the campaign team and that it will likely become part of the group of residents serving as the Council member's *de facto* staff. I look at the candidate's website and other literature for who these people might be. First, the people willing to work hard to get the candidate elected are the most important and revealing endorsements. Second, the politics of those people says more about the candidate's positions than the candidate's official statements. Only 1 of the 7 candidates provided this.

**Non-delusional:** Many candidates in the forums displayed no awareness or interest in the realities of what they were advocating. First, little/no awareness of the costs or how that funding would be obtained. Among those advocating for city programs or other expenditures, there is a common attitude that *money is no object* and that what is lacking is the will and leadership to do it, and maybe overcoming the "*selfishness*" of Palo Altans. I used to commonly hear the argument "*Palo Altans are so rich that ...*" There is a failure to understand that not all Palo Altans are wealthy -- that there are many, many people who are on tight budgets. Recognize that a candidate lacking such awareness and with such an attitude is unlikely to be able to represent all of the residents. If a candidate doesn't recognize the difference between the *cumulative* wealth of the residents and the money available to government, she should not be elected. And what about endorsements based on this fallacy? Unsurprisingly, the sub-headline for the Mercury News endorsements is "*A city with this amount of wealth needs to move faster to solve its housing, financial issues*".

Second, too many of this year's candidates seemed unaware of the constraints on various resources, especially available land.(3)

**Willingness to dissent, I mean, be divisive:** In the current political culture, condemning someone for being "*divisive*" is the polite way to shut up those that disagree with you, or are even skeptical or ask for explanations that could reveal that your statement has contradictions, logical errors, gaps, ... In the current campaign, one candidate is *falsely* accused of being the lone dissenting vote on various proposals. And it has become only a small step up to labeling disagreement as evil: killing grandmothers, "*with the terrorists*", "*extremist*", "*deplorable*". (Rhetorical: So what am

I? What are you?)

**Resistance to dogma:** We live in a time when expressing even skepticism about someone's political beliefs on an issue can be met with anger and invective. For example, their treating homelessness (unhousedness?) as a single problem when studies have found and confirmed that there are at least three major categories that have starkly different needs and treatments. But "*Bureaucratic Convenience*" often triumphs over expertise and effectiveness in both public and private agencies.

In the 2020 controversy over opening Foothill Nature Preserve to people from outside Palo Alto, the advocates painted those who disagreed as being racists. Unfortunately, but unsurprisingly, many of our "*community leaders*" collaborated with this approach. I can't remember any who *publicly* said this was wrong -- much less condemned it -- although a few would go so far as to privately say it was unfortunate (snark). Yes, I know that accusations of "*racism*" have been routinely used for many, many years as generic, baseless, meaningless invective -- the equivalent of "*I disagree*" when they can't/won't explain -- but many people still take such accusations seriously. Ask yourself how many times you have seen someone stand up against a false accusation. How many times have you done so yourself?

Housing policy and programs at the state and federal level have underlying assumptions that suburbs are predominantly White and un-welcoming to non-Whites. (4) It is not uncommon to hear Palo Alto's political elite -- including multiple current candidates -- describe Palo Alto as lacking "*diversity*" and needing to become "*welcoming*".

*Show me the data!* From the 2020 census, these are the demographics of Palo Alto, Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties, and the overall US:

.....	Whites	...	Asian	.	Multi	.	Hispanic	..	Black	
PA:	.....	53-56%	...	33%	....	7%	.....	06%	.....	02%
SCC:	..	29-51%	...	41%	....	4%	.....	25%	.....	03%
SMC:	.	37-58%	...	32%	....	5%	.....	24%	.....	03%
US:	....	60-76%	...	06%	....	3%	.....	19%	.....	14%

The wide range in percentage of Whites shows the meaningless of the categories, most notably in how "*Hispanic or Latino*" choose to self-report. (5) Similarly, the category Asian is itself a highly diverse collection of categories, as anyone who spends much time in public spaces would know. Reminder: Asia is much more than just China and India. The ancestral countries of Palo Alto residents that I have encountered include Turkey, Iran, Tibet, Mongolia, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar, and probably some I don't remember.

I used to regard mentions of "*diversity*" as ignorable obligatory declarations of acquiescence to political ideology. However, diversity is now affecting Palo Alto city government. Reportedly, part of the failure of the North Venture Coordinated Area Plan (NVCAP) was the importance of diversity of the appointed committee members: ethnicity, age, gender? This was more important than being knowledgeable, interested, committed ... There were attendance problems and there were attendees who were on their computers/phones -- shopping, mail, games -- rather than participating meaningfully.

Some candidates talk about wanting *economic* diversity. This has been a desire expressed for decades but what hasn't been expressed is a feasible plan, or even an unrealistic plan that doesn't require infeasible housing subsidies. I haven't heard of anyone discussing the *how* after having done the math.(6)

^**Don't know much about history**^ (2:10) (Lou Adler, Herb Alpert, *Sam Cooke*) or "*Those who don't know history are doomed to repeat it*" (Edmund Burke) or maybe it just doesn't matter: "*We learn from history that we do not learn from history.*" (Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel).

The forums had breath-taking displays of the *Dunning-Kruger Effect*: Candidates making confident pronouncements on issues where they display little/no knowledge about the studies and other work that had been done and the lessons learned. If they are on Council, I expect that they will want to reconsider alternatives that have been studied and rejected as infeasible financially or physically.

**Boosterism? Vanity? Prestige? Bragging rights?** Beware candidates who want to use public moneys to satisfy their own vanity, although they will say they only want what is best for the city. Palo Alto has a long history of advocates, including Councilmembers, engaging in this. They want Palo Alto to be a leader, if not *the* leader, in the US, if not the world, and to inspire other communities to follow Palo Alto's lead. My favorite from some years ago was that Palo Alto needed to be "*A Lighthouse to the World*". I guess "*A Shining City on a Hill*" was taken (snark). I have seen projects where becoming eligible for an award from a national advocacy group seem to be a significant factor in the decisions -- which was the likely intent of the award. And I have seen the opposite, where the literal textbook solution was pushed despite it being a poor match to the specific circumstances. Perhaps safety in conformity.

When candidates say **I just want to give back to the community** or **doing my civic duty**, cynical me wonders whether

- they are displaying (expected?) humility?
- they want to avoid questions about their qualifications and intentions?
- they have little/no interest in the position and its *duties*, but are seeking the status that the *title* confers.

**Does a candidate see City Council as an entry-level position??** City Council is the highest position in Palo Alto government, but for someone considering a career in politics, it is an entry-level position. The position gives them access to meetings and events where they can network. The title produces contacts with advocacy groups that are seeking to add the *names* of elected officials to their list of supporters. In return, the official gets another organization's name for padding their bio for their next election, potentially for a higher office.

**Visionaries** At least one of the forums asked the candidates what was their vision for Palo Alto. This was a question to which the organizers shouldn't have expected meaningful answers, and they didn't get any. My experience has been that there are those that are (self?) declared "*visionaries*" at the time of their pronouncement and then there are those that are acknowledged retroactively. For the former, I am reminded of a passage from *The Great Gatsby* (chapter 9, pg 170) by F. Scott Fitzgerald: "*They were careless people, Tom and Daisy -- they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made.*" Or maybe the statement by the Chief of the Revolutionary Police of the Paris Commune (1871) about famous anarchist <sup>^</sup>[Mikhail Bakunin](#)<sup>^</sup>: "*On the first day, he was a treasure. On the second day, he should have been shot*" (improved translation). "*Visionaries*" can impede progress by trying to constantly talk about "*The Vision*".

Most of what Council actually does is *working the details*, or more accurately checking them: They listen to critiques of the Staff recommendations. Have the facts been *cherry-picked* or otherwise misused?? Are the Staff's recommended priorities consistent with the City's?? Are the tradeoffs fair?? Are the problems in a recommendation immediately fixable, or does it need to be sent back for reconsideration by Staff??

Each year, Council has a day-long retreat where they consider what the priorities for the coming year should be. Often there are continuations of the previous years. That's about as close to "*Vision*" as they seem to get.

**Government is different from private corporations:** A long line of successful CEOs have attempted to take on elected executive positions, such as mayor and governor, and they typically failed. The organization politics they encountered was very different, and the independent power of the bureaucracy, advocacy groups, other special interests, and other governmental agencies is well beyond what they previously experienced. As are the requirements for transparency in decision-making. ...

^**Credentialism:**^: Having the university degree/certification/license/... is more important than what the credential is supposed to represent: knowledge, skill, experience, mastery ...When a person emphasizes their own credentials, there should be concern about whether their assessment of others will treat credentials as a substitute -- in whole or in part -- for their *track record*.

A warning sign is when someone mentions credentials and moves on. Common advice for writing resumes is to indicate why the credential is important for the job being applied for. For example:

*"MBA from Harvard. I also learned so much from six friends whose fathers manage sovereign wealth funds."*

### **--An Independent Expenditure Committee (IEC) is in this election--**

The IEC *Committee to Support Lythcott-Haims, Forssell, Veenker for Palo Alto City Council 2022* is going to great expense for ads for the candidates named. The people behind this committee are -- from an early ad -- Jennifer DiBrienza, John Kelly, Larry Klein, Gail Price and Steve Levy. Their endorsement for those three candidates are the vacuous *"Build more housing for all income levels in all parts of Palo Alto"*, *"Accelerate impactful climate action"*, and *"Strengthen local economy & raise city revenue"*.

If I were an intrepid journalist, I would want to ask the supporters -- without expecting a credible response -- why they are collecting money to spend on advertising rather than contributing directly to the candidates for them to enhance their own advertising strategies??

Likely motivations:

- Traditional: Obscure who is contributing and/or how much. Or get contributions above the legal limit of \$4900 for each candidate. For perspective, with only 6 maxed-out donors a candidate would be very close to the \$30,000 total that is being bandied about as a reasonable limit for campaigns.
- Traditional: Campaign activities that the candidate's allies want to avoid him being associated with: smears and other false accusations, misrepresenting the targeted candidate's record or quotes, and various other *dirty tricks*. The "I" in IEC is

for "*Independent*" and there is a basic legal requirement that an IEC not coordinate with the candidate being supported or opposed. (*wink, wink*)The intent of an IEC can be to provide the candidate with (plausible?) (legal) deniability.

- How about advertising for multiple candidates?? Candidates have long done joint advertising, so what's the impediment? Is there at least one of the candidates who is just too difficult to work with? That bodes badly if that candidate is elected.
- Or could it be that the IEC disagrees with the candidate's advertising and is doing what they believe the candidate should do?? If they disagree that much with a candidate, why are they spending big money to get her elected??

#### ----Notes from Forums by Issue----

I consider taking my notes from the forums and organizing a useful differentiation. I did a small test and found it could itself easily become a long blog. Part of the difficulty was that too many of the responses were vague and lacked crucial knowledge. To be meaningful to the typical resident, explaining would take too much space and time.

#### ----Candidate Assessments----

My process: I did not attempt to have a "*balanced*" accounts for each of the candidates where the measure is the words written. Instead, I wrote about each candidate separately, starting from what I remembered most, and then looked at the notes I took during the forums and consolidated them (cut-n-paste) by the issue.

Candidates are listed in descending order of reported contributions received from Palo Alto sources. A [^spreadsheet showing this^](#) is available, and is also listed in the *Resources* section below.

#### --Julie Lythcott-Haims--

Palo Alto: \$31,845; Elsewhere: \$34,2418

One of Lythcott-Haims' biggest negatives is that she advertises herself as having a personality that is a horrible fit to what is expected and needed from a City Council member. Not only does she explicitly describe herself as a visionary (see above for elaboration), but she demonstrated that in her performances in forum after forum. One response to a question was that for a controversial issue, she would lead a march.

She also emphasized that she sees herself as having strong persuasion skills, that being

important in reaching decisions. My observation is that it is important for Council members to first listen and try to understand the many perspectives and circumstances before assessing that the proposed tradeoffs are appropriate and for the best of the whole city. Projecting "*I know what's best*" has repeatedly been a disaster.

Her presentation style reminded me of a motivational speaker who flies in, gives a speech, and then flies out.

During the forums, JLH was the only candidate from whom I didn't see any growth. She didn't seem to benefit from the discussions that candidates should be having with residents as a normal part of campaigning, nor did she seem to learn from what was being said in the forums.

She was unaware of high-profile Palo Alto news. To forum questions on grade separation, she gave three different answers. Two had already been carefully studied and rejected: tunnel/ditch -- inordinately expensive and ecologically damaging (shallow ground-water flow from the mountains to the Bay) -- and a viaduct. The third (PAO forum) was to answer what *should be done* with a statement of what *should have been done*, which she said would have been to do what San Mateo did and put the tracks on a berm (between El Camino Real and Old Country Road/Pacific Blvd - [^map@street view^](#)). Never mind that the situation there and here were very different.

At no point did I hear her aware of -- much less concerned about -- details. For example, a repeated talking point was about the 2013 proposed project on Maybell Avenue. She said she regretted wasn't built and implied knowledge of it by saying it was in her neighborhood. She characterized it as affordable housing when in fact somewhat over half the parcel was to be used for market-rate housing. Nor did she seem to be aware that its layout would likely make worse a designated *Safe Route to Schools* (Gunn HS and Fletcher Middle) that was already deemed unsafe. The city-wide referendum that blocked that specific plan for the project was a watershed event in local politics: It was the cumulative result of Councils' dismissing and disparaging residents' input on a succession of important projects. The breaking point may have come when the project's advocates began characterizing non-support as racist. *Note:* The Maybell controversy itself is off-topic -- comments will be deleted.

To a later forum's question on the LWV campaign finance proposal, part of her response was to find a way around IECs. But the very basis for IECs is the famous/landmark US Supreme Court's 2010 [^Citizens United^](#) decision which was based on freedom of speech. JLH received a Law Degree from Harvard -- but since follow-up questions were

not allowed, we don't know how she thinks one could get around the First Amendment.

She also doesn't seem to have much interest in politics in general. In an [^ad running in the rotation on Palo Alto Online^](https://bit.ly/3fGPdLA) (<https://bit.ly/3fGPdLA>) her entire message is to "VOTE BY MAIL!" (*Aside: I have seen a subsequent brochure where this is also a prominent part*). This has been much remarked about. In this election, all registered voters are being sent Vote-by-Mail ballots. And a very high percentage of Palo Altans -- over 80%?? -- have long been using VBM in previous elections. If she were aware of this, why the need to urge people to vote by mail??

*Request:* If you are inclined to defend her, think if what you would be saying was that she was speaking without thinking.

There was a strong whiff of *credentialism*. If she learned valuable lessons in her years at Stanford as the Dean of Freshmen, she didn't hint at it.

I suggest reading JLH's blog on why she decided to run: "[^The Day I Said Fu\\*ck It And Ran^](#)" - 2022-08-02. If your browser's SPAM-blockers or security settings prevent this article from displaying, try [^bit.ly/3RKhyOG^](#).

I can't see how JLH could work effectively on Council, rather I would see her as a constantly disruptive presence.

**--Vicki Veenker--**

Palo Alto: \$29,825; Elsewhere: \$14,750

In contrast to Lythcott-Haims who provided a plethora of memorable statements, be they all negative, I only remembered three things about Veenker before consulting my notes. The first was her being a "*recovering litigator*", reportedly for patents. I didn't hear how she thought this would be relevant to being on Council.

The second was that she was a mediator in high-level situations. Mediation is typically conducted in private because publicity can cause positions to harden. In contrast, transparency is the requirement for the conduct of most public business. I know of several times over the years when the City got into trouble because the City Manager and the Mayor (and maybe some Councilmembers) had private (aka "*backroom*") discussions with developers on proposed projects that were then portrayed as agreements/commitments/deals. She is running an [^ad titled "A Track Record of Getting to 'Yes' "](#)<sup>^</sup> with a quote "*Vicki is skilled, experienced, trained, and committed at getting to 'yes' "*". This and the accompanying quote read to me like *damning with faint*

*praise.*

By the time a proposal reaches Council, it is the equivalent of the *result* of mediation. It should have gone through public-outreach meetings conducted by City Staff and/or consultants. I would then have become a Staff recommendation, hopefully containing assessments of legitimate alternatives. It then passes through Commissions & Boards whose appointed members are residents. The proposal then goes to Council to make decisions on a few remaining issues, but Council doesn't have time to make any significant adjustments.

Veenker expects her mediation skills to help move various long-standing difficult issues forward. The obvious and unanswered question is "*Where were you during the previous work on these issues??*"

The third that was memorable to me was her saying that she played a significant role in protecting Buena Vista Mobile Home Park (BVMHP) ([^map^](#)) which is in my Barron Park neighborhood. For at least two decades before the 2014 crisis, residents had kept protection of BVMHP on the City's list of important objectives (the Comprehensive Plan = CompPlan), but there were too many obstacles to get it to being important enough to actually do something about. When the crisis erupted, many residents came together to make it a *must do*. I decided to not try the list the important contributors here because I was afraid of omitting some people who were very important to the effort. As the situation became prominent, County Supervisor Joe Simitian stepped in and played a crucial role. I do remember there were lawyers and law firms playing a peripheral role, seemingly on a separate track.

*"Public sentiment is everything. With it, nothing can fail; against it, nothing can succeed. Whoever molds public sentiment goes deeper than he who enacts statutes, or pronounces judicial decisions."* - Abraham Lincoln

In 2016, Veenker ran for the State Assembly and narrowly lost to Marc Berman (a lifetime term limit is 12 years in any combination of the Assembly and Senate). One of Veenker's biggest goals on Council would be to remove racial-restriction covenants from those deeds that had them. This has been considered by lawyers and it was decided that doing so would be expensive. Instead, it would be good enough to add a sheet to the deed stating that that restriction was now illegal and was not part of the deed. Veenker said that she worried about the mental impact of homeowners knowing that that null and void covenant was still occupying space in their deed. To me, this would be an "*accomplishment*" to be pitched to potential supporters that were unaware of the tradeoffs.

**--Ed Lauing--**

Palo Alto: \$29,380; Elsewhere: \$650

I have serious reservations about Lauing, but if it were not the case that 5 of the 7 other candidates don't have what I regard as enough knowledge and experience, I would be strongly considering an alternative to him.

My biggest reservation is that he repeatedly talks about the need to work collaboratively, using various similar words. He has often been viewed as having been too accommodating of others. This was emphasized by his Facebook post (of Thursday 2022-10-06) citing what he saw as the two most important quotes from the Mercury News endorsement editorial. The first was *"strong advocate for offering greater incentives to developers to increase the city's affordable housing stock"*. Palo Alto has been beset by Councils giving obviously outsized *"incentives"* to developers. If they said that the project wouldn't *pencil out*, Were they told *"Show us your financial model"??* No. It was as if Council's reaction to something that was clearly in the developer's financial interest was *"He wouldn't lie to us, now would he?"*

For example, Palo Alto's ordinance for *inclusive zoning* requires larger developments to have a percentage of the Below-Market-Rate (BMR) -- aka *"affordable"* -- units and that they be intermixed with the Market-Rate units and indistinguishable from them. What if the developer not only wants them to be separate and inferior but also to serve as a soundwall for the market-rate units? A previous Council had no problem accommodating that.

His second self-highlighted quote was that his *" business experience running startups would help the city work through its financial issues."* Does the City not have business expertise on its professional staff, with the ability to hire consultants? If not why? Did anyone ask why and in what way he thought his experience would be of value? The City government's biggest expense involves personnel. Did Lauing's startups have politically powerful unions? Humongous pension fund deficits?

My next several comments are about following dogma, in this case race-based. With Covid, we saw leaders pushing a dogma that they knew was contrary to the best available science. We even saw Fauci at least twice declare that he was *"Science"*. The result was massive harm to people, our economy and our society.

My second big reservation about Lauing is that I have repeatedly heard him say in prepared remarks that Palo Alto needs to improve its ethnic diversity. On the <sup>^</sup>[Priorities](#)<sup>^</sup> page on his website, of the four listed, the first states "*As we plan for new housing, we need to focus on truly affordable housing so we can welcome new neighbors who will increase our social and economic diversity.*" To me, this smacks of the too-common dogma that equates ethnicity with significantly lower economic status.

In response to a question on Public Safety, Lauing advocated for more diversity in hiring, gender and ethnicity. An interesting follow-up question would have been that PAPD is having difficulty hiring and retaining anyone well-qualified, should that position be left unfilled if a candidate doesn't enhance diversity? This is not a hypothetical: Google managers were not hiring needed people because they were non-diverse, and that would hurt their score and their bonuses.

A question at the SV@Home forum stated that Palo Alto has a well-documented history of discrimination: Red-lining and Covenants. Lauing's response was to agree. These were outlawed at least 53 and 63 years ago, respectively. (8) Acquiescing to such outdated dogma is worrying (above). I would hope for a leader who would stand up against it, or at least dodging agreeing with it.

While I strongly agreed that Palo Alto would greatly benefit from more *economic* diversity, this has been a local aspiration that has gotten further and further away over at least three decades. During the 1990s, multiple friends realized that if they wanted a child *and* a house, they would have to move out of the area. One is now President of an Ivy League University.

A question at the PAN forum (#8) was how to "*empower renters*". Three candidates -- Lythcott-Haims, Veener and Forssell -- replied that Palo Alto needed to encourage renters to apply for commissions and boards and run for Council. This after Lauing led off by reminding everyone that renters are 2 of the 7 current Council members.

On the issue of housing, I was surprised to hear Lauing say that density was needed and that meant we needed large projects to benefit from density. But he didn't give examples of where they could be. He should have been able to rattle off multiple sites because he was chair of the committee tasked with identifying sites that could be developed that way. Recognize that if the City's Zoning Ordinance says that a parcel is *eligible* to have 30 housing units per acre, that doesn't mean he has to build that many.

For me, all these reservations are offset by the huge gap in knowledge and experience between him (and Summa) and the other 5 candidates.

**--Lisa Forssell--**

Palo Alto: \$26,194; Elsewhere: \$11,480

Before I read my notes from the forums, I couldn't remember much that Forssell said. I do remember being surprised that a serving Utilities Commissioner wasn't strong on the expected issues.

Red flags on credentialism (above) went up with naked mentions of her *"three Master's Degrees from Stanford"*.

On the topic of increasing housing, Forssell stated in multiple forums that the City needed *area plans*, and mentioned that the plan would include bicycle and pedestrian paths in the complex, a plaza, and green space.

==; Even if you are building tall, that requires lots of land. A persistent problem has been putting together enough continuous parcels. I know of several examples of combining two small lots that were thwarted because one of those lots was owned by a trust for the (great?) grandchildren. Or one of the family members who owned the land would reject any deal simply out of spite for the other(s). One developer who wanted to do such a project claimed he wasn't allowed to deal with the lawyers for the many part owners of that trust, he had to communicate through the trust's lawyer. He claimed this was not that uncommon of a problem.

== Experience is that area plans take roughly 8 years to complete an area plan -- the plan, not the building of anything. That is, assuming that none of the property owners decide they aren't going to cooperate, for example, a new owner who wants to build something quickly or that is not consistent with the plan. Palo Alto's assigned target is to have 6,000 units built by 2030, 8 years away.

Several times, Forssell dodged questions on what she should have been very familiar with from her time on the Utilities Commission.

For example, to a question about electrifying Palo Alto she said that she was excited to get to clean electric energy (a close paraphrase if not a quote). Notice that the below is about the amount of electricity needed -- it's being clean is irrelevant. The issue of electrification involves replacing gas-powered equipment -- such as hot water heaters with heat pumps.

== It requires very expensive upgrades to the electrical infrastructure to support the

increased demand.

== Installing a heat pump is much more than buying it and plopping it down. I hear people say they considered it and were shocked by how much all the associated upgrades would cost.

== Remember that not everyone in Palo Alto is wealthy. Assistance/subsidies will be needed. Estimates?

== Upgrades are needed to California's electrical infrastructure, but Palo Alto has no control over that. With heat pumps, the peak electrical demand could be on the coldest days of the winter.

Forssell expressed *hope* for state and federal funding for housing. Palo Alto has long had problems getting such funding because too much of that money gets taken by the cost of land. The funders recognize that they get more *bang for the buck* elsewhere.

### --Doria Summa--

Palo Alto: \$24,867; Elsewhere: \$200

*Re-disclosure:* I am part of Summa's campaign team.

That creates a difficult situation for me in writing about her in this blog. I could easily come off as shilling for her, or damning her with faint praise.

*Note:* She is the only candidate who acknowledge her campaign team (and did so without prompting). See above for elaboration.

She was the only candidate in the forum who, from the beginning, was talking about the complexity of the issues. For example, while the other candidates were speaking as if cities build housing she reminded the audience of the long-standing *caveat* that "*Cities don't build houses, developers do.*"

When most of the candidates talk about needing to give incentives to developers, Summa pointed out that the housing on the former VTA lot (corner of El Camino and Page Mill) got built without the usual giveaways -- I mean incentives.

To a question about Renter Protection, the other candidates called for new programs, some already under consideration. Summa agreed and add that a serious problem was the lack of enforcement of existing ordinances.

### --Alex Comsa--

Palo Alto: \$1,200; Elsewhere: \$0; Loans to self: \$21,900

In the forums, Comsa displayed curiosity about various issues, mentioning that he had talked to the City Manager about it. While that is a good attitude, it is a long way from being prepared to serve on Council. For example, he mentioned in one forum and in an ad that Palo Alto should use the airport and surrounding land for high-density housing. This has multiple problems:

- The airport is only 4 feet above sea level and routinely floods during King Tides.
- It is former marsh land and likely seismically unsuitable for taller buildings.
- That housing in an area would be isolated from most of Palo Alto by both distance and 101.

But this was only slightly more unrealistic than what some of the other candidates seemed to be proposing.

### **--Brian Hamachek--**

Palo Alto: \$1,920; Elsewhere: \$0

He is a software engineer and during the forums, his approaches to issues imbued by that profession came through (I appreciate and approve). This differentiated him from all the other candidates.

Hamachek became involved in local politics via the City's persistent mishandling of Castilleja School situations, and the City's mistreatment of the neighbors. This is good experience for a candidate, but is very limited.

### **----Links to Resources----**

### **--Candidate websites--**

But first, a musical interlude: [^I Wanna Grow Up To Be A Politician^](#) (2:04) - The Byrds (1971)

- [^Alex Comsa^](#)
- [^Lisa Forssell^](#)
- [^Julie Lythcott-Haims^](#)
- [^Brian Hamachek^](#)
- [^Ed Lauing^](#)
- [^Doria Summa^](#)
- [^Vicki Veenker^](#)

## --Forums: Online videos--

- [^Palo Alto Online^](#): [^City Council Debate 2022^](#) (1:51:04) - 2022-09-13.
- [^Friends of Cubberley^](#): [^FOC Forum Candidate 2022^](#) (1:13:34) - recorded 2022-09-14; posted on 2022-09-16 on YouTube channel *Deborah Simon*.
- [^SV@Home^](#): The forum's listing on their website did not include a link to a video.
- [^Palo Alto Neighborhoods^](#): [^PAN 2022 CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATE FORUM^](#) (1:22:13) - 2022-10-22.
- [^LWV of Palo Alto^](#): [^Palo Alto City Council Candidate Forum for the November 8, 2022 General Election^](#) - (1:40:50) - 2022-10-01.

## --Candidate Disclosure Forms in spreadsheets--

Another musical interlude: *Money (That's What I Want)*: recommended: [^Barrett Strong^](#) (2:39) (1959) or one of many covers such as [^The Beatles^](#) (2:49) (1963)

The reporting of candidates of their *monetary* contributions on FPPC Form 460 Schedule A (*460A* here).

### Details:

- The reporting *period* ended on 2022-09-24 with a *reporting deadline* of 2022-09-29. The data here is as of Close-of-day 2022-09-30 -- it will include any contributions reported on FPPC Form 497 through that date. 497's are required for contributions of \$1000 or more and are required to be filed within 24 hours of receipt.
- All the files here are stored on Google Drive. Except when noted, these files are all Microsoft Excel spreadsheets (XLSX). If you click on these links, most browsers will open them as *view-only* spreadsheets -- I have tested this in Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome and Microsoft Edge. If you want to make your own modifications, you can download a copy to your computer.
- There are a few annoyances in the 460s that can cause minor discrepancies. For example, the total for *Unitemized monetary contributions* (less than \$50 each) appears in the summaries but if you simply add the listed (itemized) individual monetary contributions, you can get a different total.

For my purposes, these discrepancies are too small to bother with.

### Spreadsheet with the entries for all candidates:

- [^460A sorted by Candidate Name^](https://bit.ly/3EqCK9a) (https://bit.ly/3EqCK9a)

This is provided in case you want to start fresh.

- [^460A sorted by Donor Name^](https://bit.ly/3RTpmha) (https://bit.ly/3RTpmha) :

People who contributed to multiple candidates are highlighted with orange/yellow-ish backgrounds. This can be **very** interesting to see the patterns of combinations of candidates. People who made multiple contributions to the same candidate have green/blue-ish backgrounds to avoid inadvertent inclusion in the former.

- [^ 460A sorted by ZIP code, includes all candidates](https://bit.ly/3VclwBu)^ (https://bit.ly/3VclwBu).
- To see other 460 Schedules, they have not been separated out of the [^ "massaged" master spreadsheet \(explanation below\)](https://bit.ly/3RLTwTd)^ (https://bit.ly/3RLTwTd):
  - == Schedule C: Nonmonetary Contributions Received.
  - == Schedule E: Payments Made.
  - == Schedule F: Accrued Expenses (Unpaid Bills).
  - == Summary: Combining totals from specified lines in the Schedules.

**Spreadsheets for individual candidate's Monetary Contributions:** The below files contain three worksheets each:

- (1) The block of entries for a candidate extracted from a spreadsheet where the entries were sorted by the candidate names. Useful if you want to start over cleanly.
- (2) Sorted by the amount of each donor's contribution, from highest to lowest. Unverified marking of the *median* and *average (mean)* contribution.
- (3) Sorted by contributors' self-reported ZIP codes.

The third worksheet is of interest because it shows the contributions that candidates are receiving from Palo Alto and from elsewhere.

The third worksheet also contains a breakdown by ZIP code within Palo Alto. I don't know if that would be interesting, but since it was easy to produce, I did it.

- [^ ZIP file containing the below](https://bit.ly/3RLTwTd)^ (ZIP) (https://bit.ly/3RLTwTd): If you want to download all/many of the contained files, it is fewer clicks to download the ZIP file and then unZIP it on your computer.
- [^ The totals from the worksheets for individual candidates sorted by ZIP code](https://bit.ly/3MguZ7G)^ (https://bit.ly/3MguZ7G).
- From above: [^ 460A sorted by ZIP code, includes all candidates](https://bit.ly/3VclwBu)^ (https://bit.ly/3VclwBu) A saved state for a clean restart.
  - 460A's for each candidate:
    - == [^ Forsell](https://bit.ly/3VeNttX) ^ (https://bit.ly/3VeNttX).
    - == [^ Lauing](https://bit.ly/3T2p748) ^ (https://bit.ly/3T2p748).
    - == [^ Lythcott-Haims](https://bit.ly/3rEOiOZ) ^ (https://bit.ly/3rEOiOZ).
    - == [^ Summa](https://bit.ly/3Va0Mex) ^ (https://bit.ly/3Va0Mex).
    - == [^ Veenker](https://bit.ly/3rHgWys) ^ (https://bit.ly/3rHgWys).
    - == Alex Comsa: too few entries to warrant a separate spreadsheet. Use the [^ 460A sorted by Candidate Name](https://bit.ly/3EqCK9a) ^ (https://bit.ly/3EqCK9a)
    - == Brian Hamachek: also too few entries to warrant a separate spreadsheet.

**If you want to look at earlier source materials:**

- [^ ZIP file containing PDFs of the Form 460s submitted by candidates for the reporting period ending September 24. These are as they would have appeared if manually filled in on paper](https://bit.ly/3CiiuUB)^ (<https://bit.ly/3CiiuUB>).

**FPPC Form 497** is used to report contributions of \$1000 or more in the 90 days before the election. Ones before the end of the reporting period (September 24) are included in the Form 460 reporting. Those reports received between then and when I downloaded the NetFile spreadsheet (2022-09-30 Close-of-day) are in a worksheet within that download. I have separated it out and performed various sortings and bundled them in a [^ZIP file](https://bit.ly/3T3iizk)^ (<https://bit.ly/3T3iizk>)

If you want to see the spreadsheets leading up to this:

- [^ My massaging of the spreadsheet downloaded from NetFile into a state where I could start paying attention to the contents \(explanation below\)](https://bit.ly/3RLTwTd)^ (<https://bit.ly/3RLTwTd>).

There were multiple incremental saved-states on the way to this.

- [^The downloaded NetFile spreadsheet on 2022-09-30 after Close-of-day](https://bit.ly/3SMX8FM)^ (<https://bit.ly/3SMX8FM>).
- [^FAQ for the downloaded NetFile spreadsheet](https://bit.ly/3T7iihG)^ (TXT) (<https://bit.ly/3T7iihG>).
- [^More detailed listing and description of the headings in the downloaded NetFile spreadsheet](https://bit.ly/3yN2itN)^ (<https://bit.ly/3yN2itN>).

**You DO NOT need to know this unless** you want/need to know how the above files are related, and why you probably want to start with those files rather than taking the time to reproduce them.

- I downloaded the spreadsheet database for reporting by Palo Alto candidates (NetFile).
- I heavily massaged it.
  - I removed empty and irrelevant columns to help it fit on a screen.
  - I changed some column headings to be more intuitive.
  - I did a lot of formatting to improve readability and scan-ability.
- I did various sortings on columns that might show interesting patterns.
- From the massaged workbook, I extract the worksheet for *monetary* contributions to candidates (FPPC Form 460 Schedule A) and put it in a new workbook. I then did several sortings on its worksheet.
- I took the workbook/worksheet for contributions and sorted it by ZIP code.
- I did a separate sort on the candidate names and extracted the blocks of entries for each candidate into a new workbook.

- I was primarily interested in separating donations from Palo Alto from those from outside. As a bonus, because it was easy, I added the sums for each Palo Alto ZIP code.

----End Notes----

### 1. Projecting consensus phenomenon:

Two "recent" examples:

- *"If you want to get along, go along."* - Sam Rayburn, Speaker of the US House of Representatives 1955-1961(death). This and its companion -- *"Go along to get ahead"* - does much to explain why mediocrities and screw-ups tend to *fail upward* once they have proven themselves.
- *"Larry's tone was in the friendly-advice category. He teed it up this way: I had a choice. I could be an insider or I could be an outsider. Outsiders can say whatever they want. But people on the inside don't listen to them. Insiders, however, get lots of access and a chance to push their ideas. People--powerful people--listen to what they have to say. But insiders also understand one unbreakable rule. They don't criticize other insiders. I had been warned."* - Elizabeth Warren recounting an April 2009 conversation with Larry Summers. From her book *A Fighting Chance*, section *Insiders Don't Criticize Insiders*, pp 105-106 (final two paragraphs).

### 2. Articles about the League of Women Voters' proposal for campaign finance measures:

For the comments about PACs and SuperPACs:

- "[^Opinion: Local campaign donations and expenditures: Enough already^](#)" by Gail Price - 2021-12-03.
- "[^Is Palo Alto ready for campaign finance reform? :: As League of Women Voters proposes limiting campaign donations, City Council members have other ideas^](#)" - 2022-05-19.
- "[^Is Palo Alto ready for campaign finance reform? :: As League of Women Voters proposes limiting campaign donations, council members have other ideas^](#)" - 2022-05-20. This is the print version of the previous day's online version. They seem to have a common/shared set of comments.
- LWV Proposal: "[^Campaign Finance Reform in Palo Alto: Limiting Donations and Expenditures, and Increasing Political Ad Disclosures^](#)" - update of 2022-04-27 of proposals of 2022-01-11 and 2021-11-04.

### 3. Constraints on land and other resources:

As I listened to statements about supporting increases in Palo Alto's population by substantially increasing the density of buildings -- building taller with smaller units -- I asked myself where was the land to come from add parks, expand/build community

centers ...To create parking lots for occupants of large buildings where state law eliminated requirements that developers' provide realistic amounts of parking? To avoid overloading streets. Before the Covid lockdowns, several of our key intersections were projected to reach *Failing* status based upon what was already approved and being built. We need to avoid something like what happened to south El Camino Real, that is, the land along it was originally divided to have narrow and deep lots to accommodate more businesses having frontages. Over the years, El Camino was successively widened to the current 6+ lanes, leaving narrow, shallow lots that abut single-family homes.

#### **4. Suburbs non-diverse and un-welcoming:**

The nationwide campaign to eliminate single-family homes often goes under the claim that the zoning for such homes represents *exclusionary zoning*, focusing on aspects, such as minimum lot size, that somehow make houses there too expensive for non-Whites but afford to Whites with very similar jobs. It's telling about the advocates' background and insulated existence that their presentations of a suburb with *exclusionary zoning* show large houses on lots of at least one acre each with gorgeous views.

In the 2020 Presidential Debate, Joe Biden broke with Democratic Party orthodoxy and said that the suburbs were integrated (as part of a claim about Trump's racism). This was likely a <sup>^</sup>[Kinsley gaffe](#)<sup>^</sup>, that is, a politician telling the truth -- some obvious truth he isn't supposed to say.

#### **5. Range in statistics on Whites:**

This is a result of the malleability of the designation. For example, there are significant populations in Central and South America from migrations from Europe in response to poverty, famine and war-ravaged economies. For example, to increase the population of the Argentina colony, large numbers of Italians were shipped there.

Demographers were surprised to find that families that originally identified as Hispanic might change to identifying as White as early as two generations in the US.

#### **6. Doing the math on "increasing diversity" with Below-Market-Rate (aka affordable)housing units**

The City may raise the number of Below-Market-Rate (BMR) units for inclusive zoning from the current 15% to 20%. If the target of 6,000 new housing units is met, that would be 1200 BMR units. The Census Bureau estimates Palo Alto's current population at roughly 67,000, so each 1% of that is 670 people. Assuming only 1 person per unit would yield only a 1.8% increase in population; an average of 4 per unit produces a 7.2% increase. The biggest differential between Palo Alto and Santa Clara County in the US Census' racial demographics is for Hispanics: 6% to 25%. A 19% increase is 12,730

people, which would be an average of 10.6 people for each of those BMR units (note: I am not adjusting for that population increase -- this is good enough for my purposes here). Far past *unacceptable*.

### **7. My relevant background for listening to the forums:**

At forums and similar events, I am far from the typical attendee: I am listening carefully to what is being said by "my" candidate and her competitors and watching for audience reaction. I am listening more carefully and more critically than the typical attendee.

I note what the other candidates say to think of ways she can be prepared to either build off of what they say or use it to differentiate herself.

Probably my most important role on a campaign comes not from my scientific/engineering background but rather from doing presentations to get and keep that work funded. I listen to the candidate and make suggestions on how to get more of what she wants to be said into the 30-60 second time that she is likely to be constrained to. I then focus on suggestions on how to make that more attention-grabbing and memorable. Notice that I said "*suggestions*": Some get rejected outright; some help the candidate get to something that is natural and authentic to her; a few actually get used. Most serious campaigns have people doing this.

### **8. Red-lining and Racially restrictive Covenants:**

Racially restrictive covenants were only in some Palo Alto tracts and were outlawed by California's [Unruh Civil Rights Act](#) of 1959. As for *red-lining* "must" have occurred in Palo Alto because it occurred in other cities in the area, but they have not provided a single example for Palo Alto. Red-lining is when a business decides to not provide its services to areas that it regards as too risky, for example for poverty or racial reasons. For people trying to buy a house in red-lined areas, this practice would prevent them from getting a mortgage or the insurance required by the mortgage.

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An [abbreviated index by topic and chronologically](#) is available.

## Comments

Posted by **James Gleason**, a resident of Community Center,  
5 hours ago  
*James Gleason is a registered user.*

With the exception of Ms. Summa, it sounds like you have reasonable doubts (or second thoughts) about the other PACC candidates.

All things considered and regardless of who is elected, private developers and upper-tier City Hall administrators run the show in Palo Alto.

The PACC is a weak, almost ceremonial municipal committee that simply goes with the flow and in the long run, it doesn't really matter who is elected.

[Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **mjh**, a resident of College Terrace,  
30 minutes ago  
*mjh is a registered user.*

As Doug Moran appeared to attend Ed Lauing's campaign kickoff as a supporter, I think it unlikely Doug has too many doubts about Ed being qualified to serve on council, as implied in the first post.

[Report Objectionable Content](#)

Posted by **Ferdinand**, a resident of Barron Park,  
3 minutes ago  
*Ferdinand is a registered user.*

Thank you for letting us see inside your mind regarding the civic process and the time invested in that effort. My simple mind has distilled/clarified the following take-aways:

1. Growth is inevitable but design quality follows values: Whether someone is no-growth, slow-growth, or rapid-growth seems irrelevant now that the state has dictated the housing element increases. What matters is people who have experience and the desire to craft housing "if not neighborhoods" integrated into our city which provide meaningful connections with neighbors and the larger community. This includes safe traffic flow, adequate bike connections, sufficient parking to keep streets safe for peds/cyclists, community rooms in their complexes, and proximity to (hopefully) walkable services.

2. Experience really matters AND sometimes newcomers can do the job well. I agree that "sustained interest and activity is a substantial portion of the job of being on Council" and it appears only Lauing, Summa, and Forssell have shown this. The others might have it too, but would be better prepared by first demonstrating their skills on our Human Relations or Planning & Transportation commissions. This shows some needed humility and respect for the process, both of which are powerful tools when collaboration is needed and to promote some broad constituent trust.

3. Rate of Change: Closely related (to 2 above) is how to regulate and plan the rate of change in ways that are safe for peds, cyclists, and drivers, minimizes loss of quality, AND has climate targets in the bullseye. The process needs to move more quickly AND with far improved clarification for our constituents. We do need to come together with all the facts on the table so we truly understand what existing residents are giving up to promote a more economically balanced city.

[Report Objectionable Content](#)