

August 13, 2014

David J Terrazas
Santa Cruz City Council 2014
Candidate Questionnaire

City Council 2014

1- Please tell us why you are interested in reaching out to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender community.

ANSWER:

Santa Cruz has a commitment to community and a deep respect for diversity. My family and I live here because the values and people who live here are consistent with our own values. I have already met with LGBT community leaders in regards to my campaign for City Council and provide these responses as additional background.

2- Why do you want the endorsement of The GLBT Alliance, Santa Cruz County's grassroots progressive gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender political organization?

ANSWER:

The GLBT community consists of neighbors, families and individuals that make lasting contributions to the vibrancy of our region. As a current Councilmember and in my subsequent service I want to make sure that the City we live in provides opportunity for everyone. The endorsement of Santa Cruz County's LGBT political organization would recognize my commitment to inclusiveness and diversity of views in our City's governance.

3- Please tell us about your history with the LGBT community, and your awareness of issues specific to our community.

a - Have you had any opportunities to address LGBT issues in the course of your community service or professional life to date (i.e., have you helped formulate corporate non-discrimination standards, worked on the board of a non-profit that developed a LGBT outreach program, etc.)?

If so, please tell us about this work.

ANSWER:

In my professional employment and through work at legal clinics, I've seen first hand the impact that discrimination has on our community. Specific to the GLBT community, I dealt with employment discrimination based on sexual orientation or appearance as well as more insidious forms of harassments that prevented equal treatment simply because of ones relationship status. I strongly believe in a community that encourages diversity and support the forceful prosecution of those that commit violent crimes against the GLBT community and the use of hate crime enhancers where appropriate. Additionally, as a current Councilmember I supported continued funding for social services which benefit the GLBT community. During my term on City Council I have made myself available to meet in regards to community issues facing the GLBT community and would continue to do so should I be re-elected.

b - The queer community is diverse, and we work to represent all elements of it. In support of that objective, we'd like to ask, specifically, whether you are familiar, at any level, with the issues faced, specifically, by the bisexual and transgender communities.

If so, what influence would this have on your decisions as an elected official?

If not, what steps will you take to become familiar with the issues, needs and concerns of these communities?

ANSWER:

Our community is diverse and as a councilmember have supported and advocated for positions which ensure inclusiveness and effective leadership for our community. As your Councilmember I would continue to reach out to the Diversity Center and members of the LGBT leadership, to ensure City policies appropriately reflect the needs and concerns of affected communities.

c - As documented in the The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute publication, "Bisexual health: An introduction and model practices for HIV/STI prevention programming" (2007), which is available for download at the URL below, in many cases bisexual people face even greater health risks and obstacles to accessing effective health care and health information than their peers in the queer community, including higher levels of self-harm, suicide attempts and thoughts of suicide. What specific steps would you take to address the issues raised in this report, and elsewhere, that are specific to bisexuals, including "biphobia" and lack of service provider awareness of bisexuality?

http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/reports/reports/bi_health_5_07_b.pdf

ANSWER:

As a community and State we need to address the varied health care needs of our society. Specifically, in regards to this report I support expanded mental health care services and have worked as a city councilmember to ensure that our community program funding better addresses issues raised in this report. Many of the specific findings point to the need to provide opportunities for individuals to access appropriate health services. As a Councilmember, I would continue to work with my County colleagues to ensure that health and human service offerings appropriately reflect the needs of the LGBT community.

A summary of the top ten health issues for the bisexual community, sourced from the above report, can be found here:

http://brown.edu/Student_Services/Health_Services/Health_Education/lgbtq_health/bisexual_health/health_concerns_for_bisexuals.php

4 - Many adults, in and outside of the queer community, express their sexuality in a variety of ways, many of which are not well understood by the general public or the service provider community, and often subject to severe social stigma; this frequently leads to poor health outcomes for the individuals in question and / or complications when interacting with the legal system and social services providers.

What do you know about "alternative" sexualities aka Leather/BSDM/Fetish (often collectively referred to as "kink") and their associated communities? Are you willing to learn more about them and engage in dialogue with people from your community who express their sexuality in this manner, in order to ensure that these constituents are better served by the agencies and institutions that you will be overseeing?

The Woodhull Sexual Freedom Alliance, which "works to advance the recognition of sexual, gender, and family diversity" and "to affirm sexual freedom as a fundamental human right" addresses these issues as part of their larger agenda of supporting "sexual freedom." Their web site is at <http://www.woodhullalliance.org/>
<<http://www.woodhullalliance.org/%E2%80%8E>>

The National Coalition for Sexual Freedom (NCSF) has an introduction to SM that outlines the governing principles followed by responsible individuals and organizations within these communities:

<https://ncsfreedom.org/key-programs/education-outreach/education-outreach-program-page.html>

ANSWER:

I support a diverse community which is inclusive and reflects its many perspectives and viewpoints. As a City Councilmember I am responsible to represent our entire community and remain willing to learn and engage in dialogue with constituents regarding their needs and concerns so that they can be better served by agencies and institutions under my authority.

5 - Many adults, in and outside of the queer community, participate in relationships that do not fit the traditional two-partner model, and in doing so, are subject to discrimination in housing, insurance coverage and access to health care, immigration, custody and parental rights.

What do you know about these “alternative” relationship structures, often referred to by those participating in them as the practice of “polyamory” (defined as “the practice, desire, or acceptance of having more than one intimate relationship at a time with the knowledge and consent of everyone involved”), the people who participate in them, and the communities that have formed around them? Are you willing to learn more about how these types of relationship structures work, and engage in dialogue with people who participate in them, in order to ensure that these constituents are better served by the agencies and institutions you will be overseeing?

ANSWER:

As mentioned previously, I will continue to work with the LGBT community to learn about, receive information and engage in dialogue with all constituents to ensure they are best served by agencies and institutions which are overseen by the City.

You can find out more about these types of families, and the issues they face, on the Family Matters Project website (sponsored by the Woodhull Sexual Freedom Alliance) at <http://www.familymattersproject.org>, which is "dedicated to advancing, respecting and protecting the fundamental human right to family by eliminating discrimination based on family structure and relationship choices."

6 - Have there been any LGBT people who've had a significant impact on your life as role models, inspirations, mentors, friends, etc.?
If so, please tell us a little bit about how they've influenced you.

ANSWER:

As I've stated publicly, I have a deep respect and appreciation for the work of former Santa Cruz City Mayor and former Assemblyman John Laird as both a role model and an inspiration for what it means to serve as a Council member. We each bring our personal story and experience to every decision and choice we make. For me, as the grandchild of Mexican Immigrants and husband to a first generation American who immigrated to California from El Salvador, I understand that we cannot separate our personal character and history from our perspective of issues facing our community. If you don't have the perspective of diverse viewpoints your decisions don't reflect the best interests of the entire community. Mr. Laird's own personal history reflects this ideal which in practice expands the circle of perspectives included in his decision making and leads to better policy today as well as into the future.

7- Please describe your philosophy for working with under-represented communities of which you are not a member and, specifically, how this will manifest itself in your tenure in office.

ANSWER:

My philosophy is simple in this regard; treat others with the same dignity and respect I would like to be treated with and to provide support and assistance to help our community reach its full potential. This would manifest itself in working with the GLBT community by being an objective leader who is able to find solutions to issues facing our community.

8 - Please tell us what you know about current City-operated or funded programs which impact the LGBT community, and what suggestions, if any, you have for improvements.

ANSWER:

Santa Cruz, like most public agencies within California, reviews complaints of discrimination or harassment through internal policies governed by the EEOC (under federal law) and DFEH (under state law) through its City Administrators and by oversight by the City Council. As a City Councilmember, I would advocate for ongoing proactive training to prevent the types of discrimination or harassment that lead to complaints and enact continuous improvement to insure that LGBT issues are incorporated in program training.

9 - Local non-profits that serve the LGBT community, along with other non-profits, have experienced considerable cuts in funding from all sources over the past couple of years.

As a member of the City Council, where would you place funding for health and human services on your priority list?

ANSWER:

As a member of the City Council I have supported and will continue to support funding for health and human services. During the recent term, I have led efforts to increase funding for programs which address mental illness and drug and alcohol rehabilitation. Also, moving forward I would work to further strengthen the City's partnership with County Health and Human Services to better coordinate services for city residents and provide more effective treatment options.

10 - Will you insist that the City not associate with organizations - such as the Boy Scouts and The Salvation Army - that have clearly stated their intent to discriminate against LGBT people, supporting, instead, such inclusive organizations as Girl Scouts or Big Brothers/Big Sisters or Goodwill?

ANSWER:

I would prohibit funding and/associations, if it is determined, after a thorough and objective analysis of the situation, that the agency being supported by the City is discriminating against LGBT people. Conversely, I would encourage funding and associations with inclusive organizations such as the ones listed above.

11 - Will you ensure that medical insurance for City employees covers complete health care for gender reassignment surgery and medical care for transgender employees and family?

ANSWER:

Yes. I would work with City administrators to ensure that health care offerings meet the needs of City employees and provide medical care for transgender employees and family.

12 – If elected, do you intend to take a leadership role with respect to LGBT youth in your city, working to ensure that all schools are safe for all students? If yes, please cite a concrete example of how you would do so.

In particular, did you support AB 1266 (text here: <http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billStatusClient.xhtml>), which guarantees equal access to all school programs and facilities for students in accordance with their expressed gender identity?

ANSWER:

Yes. As a Councilmember I worked with Santa Cruz City Schools to enact safe school zones to provide enhanced safety measures for local students and equal access.

13 – If elected, do you intend to take a leadership role with respect to rights and services for LGBT elders in your city?

If yes, please cite a concrete example of how you would do so.

ANSWER:

Yes. If elected, I would make myself available on a regular basis to meet with LGBT elders in Santa Cruz to ensure that our City's policies appropriately reflect the needs of the LGBT community.

14 - What would you do to support HIV education and services for at-risk communities in your city? Specifically, do you support syringe exchange in an effort to stop the spread of HIV and other blood-borne diseases and will you work to keep the program based on best practices and evidence-based research? Do you support safe needle drop-boxes in public areas, such as parks or bus depots? Will you support the syringe exchange program if it encounters interference? Do you support training for your police department around needle exchange?

ANSWER:

I support HIV education and services for at-risk communities in Santa Cruz through the authorization of expenditures via community programs. In regards to the County's syringe exchange program (SEP), I believe it's important that we provide for a safe and healthy community and prevent the spread of blood-borne diseases. The County has taken a leadership position in managing the SEP and I would look to their leadership in helping to ensure safe needle drop-boxes in public areas. Readily accessible safe needle drop-boxes can also reduce dangers to children and City workers by reducing needles discarded in public parks and open spaces. I would also support continued training for City staff that may encounter this situation.

15 - Do you support marriage equality, and did you do so publicly? Are you aware of a nation-wide movement to create "religious exemptions" to marriage equality and other nondiscrimination laws (e.g.: AB 2237 - text here: http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/13-14/bill/asm/ab_2201-2250/ab_2237_bill_20140221_introduced.html)? Do you have a position on such exemptions?

ANSWER:

Yes. I have publicly supported marriage equality and believe we should respect the rule of law and not allow Court decisions which support marriage equality to be undermined through new legislation.

16 - Have you in the past, and will you in the future, attend LGBT events, such as LGBT Pride, Queer Youth Leadership Awards, or the BAYMEC dinner? If you have not attended, why not?

ANSWER:

Yes, I have attended and marched in the GLBT Pride Parade numerous times (including this year's parade) and really enjoyed myself. I also attended several events at the Diversity Center and met with old and new friends during both cultural and civic events held there. I plan to attend the September BAYMEC dinner in San Jose. As a Councilmember I will continue to make it a priority to attend GLBT events

17 - If you receive The GLBT Alliance's endorsement, will you display it in your campaign literature?

ANSWER:

Yes.

18 - Have you received endorsements which you think might be of interest to the LGBT community?

ANSWER:

Early endorsements to my campaign include County Supervisors Neal Coonerty; Ryan Coonerty; Zach Friend; County Treasurer Fred Keeley; Santa Cruz City Council members Cynthia Mathews; Hilary Bryant; Pamela Comstock; Vice-Mayor Don Lane and Mayor Lynn Robinson. I also have been endorsed by a variety of neighborhood and business leaders including Kate Falconer and Lois Sones, Dan Haifley, Executive Director of the O'Neill Sea Odyssey and Santa Cruz City Firefighters, Local 1716.

19- Is there anything else you'd like to tell us?

ANSWER:

As a Santa Cruz City Councilmember I am committed to representing our city. I look forward to working with the GLBT community to strengthen our City's economic base and to be included in critical decisions facing our community. As a City, we need to expand perspective and identify new opportunities to ensure that the well-being of Santa Cruz continues for everyone.