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Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
Started: Friday, August 24, 2018 4:04:00 AM
Last Modified: Friday, August 24, 2018 5:56:59 AM
Time Spent: 01:52:58
IP Address: 63.249.98.22

Page 1: Questionnaire

Q1 Candidate Information

Candidate Name: Justin Cummings
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Q2 What office do you seek to be elected to?

Santa Cruz City Council

Q3 Please choose the option best describing your candidacy: Open Seat

Q4 Do you identify as LGBTIQ? No, but I strive to be a LGBTIQ ally!

Q5 Are you a member of the GLBT Alliance? No, but I'd like information on how I can become a member.

Q6 Please describe your qualifications for the elected position you seek. Include your main issues, priorities if elected, key endorsements, plus anything else that you'd like our members to know about you and your candidacy.

City Council member need to be able to work with people from a diverse spectrum of disciplines and perspectives in order to meet the needs of the community as a whole. It requires strong communication skills, being able to understand budgets and long term economic impacts, and scientific knowledge to understand how decisions will impact our natural landscape. I possess the qualifications necessary to ensure that I would represent the most marginalized populations in Santa Cruz and work to ensure that marginalized voices and voices of working families are included in the conversation so that we make decisions that ensure their safety and security while preserving our natural environment. As a professional, my background is in Ecological Research, Spanish as a foreign language, and Non-Profit Program Administration. I hold a Ph.D. in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology and a Designated Emphasis in Environmental Studies from UCSC, and a BS in Biology and a BA in Spanish from Eastern Illinois University. Currently, I am the director of the UCSC Doris Duke Conservation Scholars Program, which local non-profit that seeks to prepare early college career students from diverse backgrounds to become future leaders in the environmental conservation movement (conservationscholars.ucsc.edu). As program director, my role is to oversee the administration of program activities, budget, staff, recruitment of Scholars, marketing, and reporting to the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. In addition to these skills, I work with a variety of students from different racial, cultural, gender, and socioeconomic backgrounds, which requires competency around how needs may vary across these demographics. Furthermore, through program development and internship placement I work with a very diverse group of professionals from a variety of sectors including government, academic, and non-profit as we try to increase diversity in the field of environmental conservation. My administrative skills, combined with my academic training, and experience working with people across a wide range of demographics and sectors has positioned me to be able to critically address local issues surrounding city growth and the impacts that it will have on the environment, how to approach this in a fiscally responsible way, and work with people from diverse backgrounds and perspectives. I have currently received the following key endorsements: Chris Krohn: Council member, City of Santa Cruz Sandy Brown: Council member, City of Santa Cruz Jane Weed-Pomerantz: Former council member & mayor, City of Santa Cruz Tim Fitzmaurice: Former council member & mayor, City of Santa Cruz Bruce Van Allen: Board of Education Trustee Area 2 & former council member & mayor, City of Santa Cruz Gary Patton: Former supervisor, County of Santa Cruz Kristen Peterson: Council member, City of Capitola Ron Graves: Former council member & mayor, City of Capitola The top priorities I hope to address as a city council member include the following:

- Protect the parks and natural open spaces from commercialization and development.
- Implement and support rent control and just cause for eviction
- Increase the availability of affordable housing for socioeconomically disadvantaged workers and students.
- Stronger contracts for people who are employed by the city
- Pay and compensation equity
- Increase funding for social services that address homelessness, mental health, and addiction rehabilitation
- Require all developers to meet affordable housing obligations
- Ensuring our public sector employees have the best benefits and compensation possible.
- Encourage community friendly union constructed development that will support and maintain local business in the Santa Cruz area
- Ensure that all market rate constructed housing meets the minimum affordable unit requirement and the highest green construction standard put forth by the state of California.
- Implement eco-friendly solutions to reduce traffic, including bike trails and increased access to public transportation.

Q7 Why are you seeking the endorsement of Santa Cruz County's grassroots LGBTIQ political organization, the GLBT Alliance?

I believe that in order for a community to be strong it needs to represent and include the perspectives of everyone in the community. Historically, people from the LGBTIQ community have been discriminated against and their perspectives have been largely left out of the decision making process. Although as a society we continue to make strides towards overcoming gender bias, there is still a lot of work that needs to be done so that we have a truly inclusive society. As a long time ally and accomplice to the LGBTIQ movement I would continue to work towards ending discrimination against people who identify as LGBTIQ and would work towards ensuring that they receive the same rights as every other citizen in our community. We need to continue to provide the LGBTIQ community with a voice on the city council and we need members on the city council who will take action on their behalf, and I am a person who would do that.

Q8 Please tell us about any past or current experiences or involvement you've had addressing LGBTIQ issues or work you've done to support the LGBTIQ community.

Ever since I was a teenager, I have openly defended and supported rights for people who identify as LGBTIQ. Much of this has included being an ally to, and supporting, friends who identified as LGBTQIA, attending Pride Parades, advocate for marriage equality, and stand against gender discrimination. Recently I finished a diversity, equity, and inclusion certification program at UCSC, which had a component that addressed working with LGBTIQ students on campus. It focused on some of the struggles that these students face, which can negatively impact their performance and as staff how we can work to better support those students so that they feel included in our community and are able to perform at their highest potential. As the director of a diversity, equity, and inclusion program, I also continue to work with our students who identify as LGBTIQ to ensure that the program is an inclusive space for them and also work to better understand how they feel they are represented in the field of environmental conservation and how we can continue to make the field more inclusive.

Q9 What historic political or civil rights struggles are you familiar with that impact LGBTIQ equality?

In general, there has been a long ongoing struggle for people to openly identify as LGBTIQ. People who identify as LGBTIQ have long been victims of violence in our society, which has left them silent and marginalized in our community. However, the LGBTIQ community has been fighting back against the system and as generations shift, more people have begun to support these members of our community as they fight for civil rights. It wasn't until college when I began to learn about the history of the gay rights movement in our country and this was largely due to a lack of access to information. One of the first events I learned about was the 1969 Stonewall Riots, which was a very socially active year in American history. Over time I have continued to learn more about people and issues that LGBTIQ people face. Some of the more recent issues include people who identify as LGBTIQ being able to openly identify themselves in the military, making it illegal for employers to discriminate against someone on the basis of their sexual orientation or identity, and marriage equality. Harvey Milk has been a very inspirational person for me because he stood against adversity, during a time when being gay was not accepted in our society, to become the first openly gay elected official in the state of California. In recent times, we are seeing increasing support of LGBTIQ candidates such as Christine Hallquist and Danica Roem, which suggests that there is increasing support to ensure that LGBTIQ voices are included in political conversations. Although the LGBTIQ community has been making strides towards LGBTIQ equality, there is continual push back, especially under our current administration. Recently the supreme court ruled in favor of a baker in Colorado who refused to bake a wedding cake for a same sex couple, which can set a precedent for discrimination against same sex couples, and the Trump administration has attempted to ban trans troops from the military. These are just two examples of how the fight for equality for people who identify as LGBTIQ is not over and we need to continue to work towards a more inclusive society and make sure those rights are upheld.

Q10 What is your philosophy about working with minority communities of which you are not a member, and how will this manifest in your future work with the LGBTIQ community?

I currently run a diversity, equity and inclusion program that seeks to prepare early career college students from racial, cultural, and socioeconomically diverse backgrounds to become leaders in the environmental conservation field. This includes students who are US citizens, but also includes students who are DACA and undocumented. My philosophy is that in order for decisions to be effective we need to have decision makers be fully representative of the groups they are making decisions for. This requires that we increase access for people who are generally left out of the conversation so that their perspectives are included in the decision making process. As an ally to the LGBTIQ movement, I would make myself accessible to people who identify with that community to ensure that their needs are met if elected to city council.

Q11 Please describe any programs you know of that impact the LGBTIQ community and that are governed by or funded through the elected office you are running for? Include any suggestions you may have for improving these programs.

Though I am not very familiar with programs around Santa Cruz that are governed by or funded through elected office, I am very open to learning more about what programs have been under funded in the past or are in need in our community. I am familiar with the LGBT Community Center, and would work to ensure that this center is able to provide the most services possible to members of the LGBTIQ community here in Santa Cruz. These types of places are critical in our community so that people who identify as LGBTIQ have a place where they feel safe and can seek advice and support from professionals and peers in their community.

Q12 If elected, how would you use your position to help further issues of importance to the LGBTIQ community?

As members of the LGBTIQ community continue to fight for equal rights, I want to be an ally on the city council who works to help them achieve these rights. I would like to learn more about what are the major issues that they are facing in our community and work with the other city council members to make sure that these needs are met. Everyone in Santa Cruz deserves to feel safe and welcome in our community and we need a city council that will work to support the rights of all it's citizens.

Q13 If you receive the GLBT Alliance's endorsement, will you display it in your campaign literature?

Yes, please send me the GLBT Alliance's logo (jpg file) so I can proudly announce the endorsement on my campaign literature, social media and website!
