

CC 01-25-21

Commission
Interviews

Planning
Commission

Written Comments

Cyrah Caburian

From: Sonnie & Darrell Nelson <sonnienels@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 10:04 AM
To: Darcy Paul
Cc: Liang Chao; Kitty Moore; Hung Wei; Jon Robert Willey
Subject: Candidate Selection

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

I am asking that you reject the following two candidates for the Planning Commission due to their previous conduct while in office: Ray Wang and Steven Scharf. We need diversity, youth and altruistic people on all commissions who care about the welfare of all people within our city. Thank you for your support on this issue. Saundara M. Nelson, 21651 Lindy Lane.

Cyrah Caburian

From: Munisekar <msekar@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 1:38 PM
To: City Council; Darcy Paul; Jon Robert Willey; Liang Chao; Kitty Moore
Cc: City Clerk; Cupertino City Manager's Office; Munisekaran Madhhipatla
Subject: Planning Commission Applicants Questionnaire with Answers.
Attachments: PlanningCommission.pdf

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Dear Mayor and City Council,

I wasn't sure when I was supposed to get this questionnaire filled out and sent to you; since the interview time slot is only 10 minutes, I thought it would be a good idea to have this in front of you before the meeting so that you know my answers to these questions. This would help an intelligent dialog in our 10 minutes today.

My apologies if I am late in getting these answers to you.

Thanks for your patience and accommodation.

Cheers
Muni Madhhipatla
Cupertino Resident

QUESTIONS FOR PLANNING COMMISSION APPLICANTS – MUNI MADHDHIPATLA

1. What is your vision for Cupertino over the next ten years?

I envision Cupertino being a fiscally sound, sought after lively & thriving suburban community to live and raise family with greater emphasis on education.

2. Where and what type of growth should be encouraged? Discouraged?

We should encourage Community-Net-Positive residential and commercial developments along the major commercial corridors such as Stevens Creek. A Community-Net-Positive development is something that does NOT create long term structural funding deficit to the local government, schools, and public infrastructure. We should evaluate every project with this lens before approval.

We should discourage unnecessary and mindless densification in Single family neighborhoods as that would destroy the character the city. We should also moderate the amount of office space allocation in these projects.

3. What portions of the General Plan do you strongly support?

I like the close alignment between municipal code & the General Plan and the flexibility in the General Plan to amend as it makes sense. In my opinion, General Plan is the guiding document for the city that evolves over time.

I don't like the fact that we have some gaps and grey areas in the General Plan that allows for exploitation by private interests impacting the city and the community negatively. I would like to plug these gaps as soon as possible.

4. What are your views on affordable housing? Where should it be and what sacrifices should be made?

Affordable housing is a mandatory requirement for a lively community where people can get the services from within the community. We should mandate that every development project commit to building affordable housing within the development and discourage in-lieu fee option.

5. How do you view the role of the Planning Commission? If the Council sets a policy that you do not agree with, would you support it?

All commissions are advisory bodies to the council acting as an extended arm of the council to do the due diligence on projects and make recommendations; Planning Commission is no different. I don't expect these decisions and recommendations to be binding in anyway as the commissions serve at the council's behest.

As a commissioner, I would fully support the decisions of the council even if I don't agree with it. I am a firm believer in "Discuss and debate as much as needed but support the decision 100%" philosophy. For example, I did not agree with council's Regnart Creek trail project decision as that money could be spent wisely elsewhere; but fully supported the council's decision.

6. Please describe your understanding of the planning function in local government.

In my opinion, the planning function in the local government has three objectives.

- 1) Strategically plan for next 20-30 years for the city and develop policies and codes for that.
- 2) Tactically approve the projects keeping in mind the long-term goals for the city.
- 3) Act as a liaison between local government, adjacent governments, and state government.

7. Should the planning process in Cupertino be proactive? That is, establish policy based on public objectives or be reactive and merely accommodate present and future economic trends with the least disruption to private objectives?

Yes, the planning process and policy establishment should always be very proactive anticipating the future. We will never succeed just being reactive. There will always be pressure from the for-profit industries for the city to cave-in; it is our job to put community interest and long term well being of the city on top and guide the private interests to comply.

8. Planning Commission decisions rarely involve a black and white issue. There are several shades of gray in making land use decisions. Would you be willing to suppress your personal land use philosophy and design preferences in order to reach consensus, or would you prefer to press on with your personal convictions because compromise may result in mediocrity?

I abhor activists in decision or policy making roles as they put their activism above everything, and they see everything in that singular lens. I am not an activist with an agenda. I am an involved community member caring for the community interests and city well-being. I will put the community interest above my personal interests. A good example is that McClellan Bike lane project – As a Bike Commissioner, I fully supported it and voted in favor of it even though it takes away on street parking for residents including my home.

9. Please describe, as concisely as possible, your basic philosophical position regarding past, present and future growth within the City of Cupertino.

In my opinion, the growth in Cupertino over last 10 years has been mishandled. The people in power back then paved way for this kind of controversial development. We can recover from this by working with the developers to make sure their interests are aligned with the city and community interests. A good example is the Westport development - The initial plan would have created long term negative impacts to the city and Schools; the latest approved project is a Net-positive project.

10. Describe your plan reading skills.

I am an engineer by trade, albeit computer science engineer. The first year for all engineering disciplines is common where we study basics in Civil, Mechanical, Electrical and Electronics engineering. I do have a decent grasp of plan reading skills from there. As an FYI, I submitted the plan for circular driveway in front of my home conforming to the city's requirements.

11. If you could accomplish one thing next year on this commission, what would it be?

I would like to develop a blueprint for Stevens Creek corridor development as the main go-to destination for Cupertino residents and attract nearby towns people.

The Planning Commission is subject to the Political Reform Act and members are required to submit Statements of Economic Interest upon appointment and annually thereafter.

Cyrah Caburian

From: Kiran Kavoori <deepam@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 2:08 PM
To: City Clerk
Subject: Fwd: My CV for the Commision interviews
Attachments: Deepa Mahendraker CV.pdf

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Hi Kristen

Can you please confirm that the city council members received my CV?
I sent this email last Wednesday but I was not quite sure if they received it

I am scheduled for interview tonight and tomorrow
Thank you so much
Deepa

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Deepa Mahendraker <deepam@yahoo.com>
Date: January 20, 2021 at 1:16:59 PM PST
To: citycouncil@cupertino.org
Subject: My CV for the Commision interviews

Dear Cupertino council members,

I hope all is well with each one of you.
I am applying to two commisions and will be participating in the City Council interviews next week.

Ahead of the meetings, I wanted to share my background information with you, so we can make effective use of my time during the really busy sessions

I am quite excited about the opportunity to perform my civi duties in partnership with the City.

thank you
Deepa

Deepa Mahendraker

Background

My family and I have lived in Cupertino for 20 years. We live in a single family home in the Jollyman neighborhood. My son and daughter go to local public schools. I work at Cisco in San Jose. We moved to Cupertino because we enjoy the small town feel and the quality of life. Over the years, I have been very involved in the community and value the opportunity to give back to our beautiful city.

I'm applying to two commissions - Bicycle and Pedestrian Commission and Planning Commission. As the mother of children who have spent a combined 11 years biking to school, and as a dog owner, I know how important it is for the city to have safe and easy biking and walking infrastructure for residents of all ages.

As a homeowner in the city for 20 years, I would like to help ensure that the city plans for growth in a sensible and balanced manner, while still meeting state growth mandates and affordable housing needs within the city.



Community Experience

As a parent, I have been very involved with my son and daughter's Scout activities. I was Den Leader for my son's cub scouts pack for 5 years, then an active volunteer in his Boy Scouts troop. He is now an Eagle Scout. I am continuing as a volunteer with the troop since my daughter is now a Pioneer Girl Scout there.

I have a sweet golden retriever named Ace whom we spoil shamelessly. As dog owners, we walk a lot around the city and have met a lot of other dog owners and residents. I am one of the residents who led the creation of the Jollyman Dog Owners group, a very active group of about 120 local residents.

We worked closely with the city staff and the Parks & Rec commission since 2017 to introduce a collaborative plan between the community and the city, for the trial of a [Dogs Off Leash Area in the Jollyman Park](#) which was started in Oct 2019 and is currently running very successfully.

We have created a very tight-knit community of dog owners. In addition to social interaction, we ensure the safety and security of dogs who sometimes get lost or are abandoned or up for adoption. In the last year alone, we have had dozens of incidents of lost dogs, which our group worked actively to find and restore to their owners.



Professional Experience

I have over 25 years experience in the engineering and technology field as a technology leader in disruptive markets. I am currently working as a Senior Product Manager in Cisco Systems for the Webex family of products (Teleconferencing, business messaging). In my current role, I focus on privacy and security of our user bases. In the past I have worked in other technology companies such as eBay and Sun Microsystems.

Cyrah Caburian

From: Steven Scharf 斯蒂文 夏 <scharf.steven@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 3:23 PM
To: City Clerk; Lauren Sapudar; City Council
Subject: Questions for Planning Commissioner Applicants
Attachments: Planning Commission Applicant Steven Scharf.pdf

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I have prepared written answers to the questions sent to me for the interview tonight.

Planning Commission Applicant: Steven Scharf

QUESTIONS FOR PLANNING COMMISSION APPLICANTS

1. What is your vision for Cupertino over the next ten years?

Maintain the quality of life by ensuring sensible growth and protecting neighborhoods from exploitation by private equity investors seeking to end the American dream of home ownership. New high-density housing should not destroy single family neighborhoods and should be appropriately located in areas with sufficient school capacity and sufficient parkland.

2. Where and what type of growth should be encouraged? Discouraged?

Growth should be encouraged in areas with obsolete and under-used commercial and retail buildings and in areas that will help under-enrolled schools increase enrollment. These areas include Bubb Road between McClellan and Stevens Creek Boulevard, south De Anza Boulevard between Rainbow and Stelling, Stevens Creek Boulevard between De Anza Boulevard and Byrne, and Imperial Avenue between Stevens Creek Boulevard and Alcazar.

We need to figure out how to get existing approved RHNA projects to move forward to construction, including The Hamptons, Marina, Westport, and Vallco. We understand that market-conditions have caused these projects to move slowly or be suspended, and in the future we need to ensure that this doesn't happen again.

For the next RHNA cycle we need to ensure that any parcels that we rezone for new housing are likely to move forward and not be unnecessarily delayed. We should still be open to a project for the Vallco parcels that is better for the City and financially more attractive to the property owner; we are all well aware of what each party desires.

3. What portions of the General Plan do you strongly support?

Height limits in residential zones, setbacks, limits on units per acre, and parking requirements. I would not be upset to see the second floor/first floor ratio increased to 60-70% from the present 50%.

4. What are your views on affordable housing? Where should it be and what sacrifices should be made?

The only way to build sufficient quantities of affordable housing is with funding from the State.

We have seen the cost per unit with the Veranda, and we have seen the objections to inclusionary housing requirements from developers.

Due to the current glut of unaffordable market-rate rental housing, developers are not building their approved projects that include affordable housing and we are not getting even the 10-15% of BMR units that we were expecting. Westport includes zero BMR units for families with children, either rental or for-sale.

The pandemic has aggravated the situation, but this problem existed even pre-pandemic. High vacancy rates, plunging rents, high construction costs, and an exodus of high-paid workers to areas where single-family homes are more affordable will affect the viability of new housing projects for many years.

Absent state subsidies, we should set our inclusionary housing percentages, and our in-lieu fees, at levels that reflect our RHNA requirements, i.e. if we are required to build 5000 units, with 1000 VLI, 1000 LI, 1000 MI, our inclusionary requirement should be 20% VLU, 20% LI, 20% MI, and 40% market-rate so we can meet State mandates.

We should work with mission-driven organizations like Habitat for Humanity to build affordable for-sale row houses on city-owned parcels like the Siefert property, and look at purchasing property for more of this type of housing when it comes up for sale.

We should also continue to work with mission-driven affordable housing developers like Charities Housing.

5. How do you view the role of the Planning Commission? If the Council sets a policy that you do not agree with, would you support it?

The City Council sets policy. The Planning Commission must follow that policy, whether they agree with it or not. Hopefully the City Council will be willing to listen to the views of the Planning Commission when setting policy, but the City Council has the final authority.

6. Please describe your understanding of the planning function in local government.

Planners, and the Planning Commission should follow the direction of the City Council while complying with applicable local, state, and federal laws. Planners on City Staff should be required to follow the direction of the City Council and not try to set policy on their own. For too many years, the Planning Department has not followed the direction of City Council, though in the past few years this has situation has somewhat improved.

7. Should the planning process in Cupertino be proactive? That is, establish policy based on public objectives or be reactive and merely accommodate present and future economic trends with the least disruption to private objectives?

Given the State Legislatures attack on local cities, we must be pro-active. Cities need to work with the League of California Cities, California Alliance of Local Electeds (CALE), Livable California, and legitimate organizations to advocate for the needs of Cities, including allowing ADUs to be counted toward RHNA, preventing displacement, funding BMR and affordable housing, preventing exploitation from REITs. We need to ensure that our General Plan has specific objective standards that prevent bad development.

We need to educate residents with regards to the major and permanent changes in housing, work, and retail that will continue long after the pandemic is over.

8. Planning Commission decisions rarely involve a black and white issue. There are several shades of gray in making land use decisions. Would you be willing to suppress your personal land use philosophy and design preferences in order to reach consensus, or would you prefer to press on with your personal convictions because compromise may result in mediocrity?

I would advocate for the philosophy of the residents of Cupertino, and in gray areas I would tend to not vote for projects strongly opposed by residents, unless the project is clearly permitted by the General Plan. I would strive to reach consensus. In some cases consensus may not be possible. What is not acceptable is for Planning Commissioners to permit property owners to violate State laws when it comes to waivers and concessions for new projects. When it comes to complying with State Laws, we should have 5-0 votes on Planning Commission, regardless of public pressure or pressure from property owners.

9. Please describe, as concisely as possible, your basic philosophical position regarding past, present and future growth within the City of Cupertino.

We need to maintain the quality of our neighborhoods and adhere to our General Plan. Housing growth needs to occur in areas that does not negatively affect our neighborhoods.

We should promote more for-sale housing to allow more people to participate in the American dream of home ownership. For-sale row houses and town houses, such as what the City Council approved as part of the Westport project.

We need to adhere to State Laws regarding ADUs while recognizing the challenges ADUs create in terms of infrastructure, tax revenue, schools, traffic, and parking.

We need to set impact fees at levels that are as close as possible to 100% of what nexus studies show is necessary to fund infrastructure so we are not subsidizing for-profit developments from the General Fund.

We should be encouraging sustainability in the design, construction, and types of projects we approve and work towards energy self-sufficiency in new housing.

I strongly support CEQA. Even though it sometimes causes delays, the goals of CEQA are laudable.

We need to continue to look at L.O.S. when evaluating proposed projects. Even though V.M.T. is now part of CEQA, we can still consider L.O.S. outside of CEQA.

CC 01-25-21

Commission
Interviews

Library
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Written Comments

Cyrah Caburian

From: Sheela Sreekanth <sheela@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 4:56 PM
To: City Council; City Clerk
Subject: City of Cupertino - Library Commission Interview - Candidate: Sheela Sreekanth

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Hi City Council,

My name is Sheela Sreekanth. My husband Sreekanth and I have been residents of Cupertino since early 2005 and our twin boys graduated from Monta Vista in fall of 2020. I have been working at Apple in Cupertino for 10+ years as Product / Program Manager. When the kids were growing up we have always been involved in the community by volunteering and taking leads on major initiatives in schools, cub scout/boys scout troops, science olympiad, destination imagination, FLL, and now neighborhood activities. Along these years we have built a great network in the community.

Given that our boys stepped into college this year, I would like to spend my extra time on hand by giving back to the community. After chatting with my neighbor Shashi Begur I realized that the best way to serve the community is to join the city commission. And my primary areas of interests are Library Commission and Bicycle Pedestrian Commission, mainly because we as a family have extensively used library benefits and I walk/hike a lot in the neighborhood.

I would like to share my inputs to the interview questionnaire prior to tonight's interview as you may not have time to hear my perspective completely. Please see below my responses and I am looking forward to meeting you all at the virtual interview tonight:

Library Commission Questionnaire:

1. How do you and/or your family use the services provided by the Cupertino Library?

- Check out books/videos for the entire family, including for visiting parents
- Book clubs
- Use of facilities for tutoring sessions, group projects etc.

2. Have you attended any Library Commission or other City meetings during the past year?

- Not in person, but I went through the online presentations and agenda recently.

3. What qualities do you possess which make you the right candidate for this commission?

- I am a good long time resident, a patron of the library system, have a lot of friends and very involved in neighborhood activities.

4. What do you see as the role of the library in Cupertino -- how would you improve or change the current operation?

- Library plays a key role in every resident of all ages. It's almost the necessity for kids to grow and learn.
- I would contribute ideas towards some of the areas of improvements like structuring better parking around the library, get involved in library renovation project and participate in other projects where needed.

5. What new ideas or creative approaches for improving library services in Cupertino can you bring to the commission?

- Initiate and facilitate library sponsored programs like speech & debate or homework helpers or any other program where teen commission needs help with.

6. What is your vision for the library over the next ten years?

- Combining the answer for #6 and #7 below

7. If you could accomplish one thing next year on this commission, what would it be?

- Being new to the commission, my initial goal is to learn the existing process, goals and problems well. Once I get on board then I can suggest recommendations for any existing challenges based on feedback from residents that will be beneficial for the residents.

=====

Bicycle Pedestrian Questionnaire:

1. Do you walk or bicycle for:

- Commuting?
- Utility purposes, such as shopping?
- Recreational and/or physical fitness?

- I used to walk to work (one of the Apple campuses) until pandemic work from home scenario. When campuses open up I plan to walk to work. I also walk a lot for b and c.

2. How much have you used alternatives to cars for the purposes listed above?

- I walk about 5 miles per day for recreational / physical fitness, utility purposes.

3. What are some projects in Cupertino that you are interested in?

- Carmen road bridge project
- Reduce cars in the surrounding area for some schools.
- Make is safe for the school kids to bike or walk.

4. What can the City of Cupertino do to encourage more bicycling and walking?

- Make it safe by implementing regulated traffic and put restrictions on pass through traffic.
- Provide separate bike lanes so parents are encouraged to make kids to bike.

5. Are there any special projects we should undertake to help seniors get around Cupertino?

- Junipero Serra trail

6. How do we reconcile the concerns of neighbors about having trails near their homes?

- Plant privacy trees (if needed), install security cameras

7. If you could accomplish one thing next year on this commission, what would it be?

I read about the below current goals of bike commission. I would like to learn the current priority and status of each of these initiatives and provide my support in achieving these goals. If I have to pick one to accomplish I would choose the second bullet here which is expanding middle and high school student bicycle and pedestrian trips.

- Be one of the top 5 cities in California for biking and walking and achieve Gold status from the League of American Bicyclists.
- Expand middle and high school student bicycle and pedestrian trips to 40% of total school commutes.
- Expand intra-city trips for errands and leisure by adults and seniors via bicycle/walking to 20% of trips.
- Expand resident bicycle/pedestrian commuting to major Cupertino employers and De Anza College to 15% of total trips.

Thanks & Regards,
Sheela Sreekanth.
