

## Sustainable Mill Valley Candidate Questionnaire

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October 5, 2007

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### The Issues

#### 1. Affordable Housing

Affordable Housing means different things to different people. ABAG quotas aside, how do you define affordable housing and what do you think our obligation as a community is to provide affordable housing? What are your ideas to implement affordable housing?

#### The Definition:

Affordable housing is a way of describing or quantifying a ratio that expresses how much of a person's income should be devoted to housing. By and large, it is assumed that people can afford to pay about a third of their income on housing. The relationship of household income to housing costs is key to understanding whether in fact housing is affordable. We need to ask ourselves who needs housing in our community and why is it important to provide this housing at affordable levels?

The Overview of Housing Needs In Marin County, published in February of 2002, set out a few examples of **very low income jobs**: cashier, cook, recreation worker, retail salesperson, childcare worker, emergency medical technician. **Low income jobs** included: open space ranger, children's librarian, street maintenance worker, custodian, elementary school teacher and emergency dispatcher. **Moderate income jobs** included: fire inspector, entry level firefighter and police officer, pharmacist and nurse practitioner.

Providing affordable workforce housing is a social good and helps address one of Mill Valley's *chief environmental problems* – our lack of affordable housing. People with service jobs make our community a safe and pleasant place to live. Service workers in Mill Valley should be able to live here, if they desire. Furthermore, to the extent that service workers live in Mill Valley, their lives *and ours* are healthier and more sustainable: We all enjoy cleaner air and less traffic congestion from the influx of a commuting workforce. Our local workforce should be part of the community it serves and should not have to commute long distances to work here. It calls us to reawaken to

the village concept that brought us Mill Valley in the first place. Mill Valley has always prided itself on the inclusiveness and diversity of its residents with workers and the wealthy living together in harmony and goodwill.

**Actions:**

On the Mill Valley Planning Commission and as Aide to Supervisor McGlashan, I have met with affordable housing developers and advocates to learn about the challenge we face and to support their initiatives. I have attended affordable housing seminars and education sessions. I see the mixed use development on Miller as providing some units of affordable housing as a result of the city's inclusionary housing ordinance. On the Commission, I have advocated for going beyond the 20% inclusionary housing requirement in larger projects (4 units +) that have come before us. I consistently urge applicants to stretch to provide housing for very low and low income residents, as these categories are not well served by our current housing choices.

**Ideas:**

My vision for Mill Valley includes a commitment to provide affordable housing ~ an essential community resource that ensures diversity. This will not be easy. Land prices are high and development costs are climbing with resources and materials costs escalating. But, there are many roads to the top of this mountain. The creation of affordable housing deserves a comprehensive approach that looks at many methods, only one of which is building.

A comprehensive approach considers a range of ideas, including creative re-use of current structures, units along streets served by transit, sponsorship/incentives for deed restricted second-units, second unit amnesty programs, *commercial inclusionary units* for workforce housing and single family homes for families. Depending on the specific site, additional housing units on a single parcel next to transit can be a good part of an overall plan. Thus far, second units have served to meet a large portion of our current housing allocation. However, second units on hillsides and remote areas (away from existing transit and services) add to parking and traffic impacts to the neighborhoods and our City. They are not the complete solution.

I will work to explore ways to bring more affordable housing into existence by inviting community partners to the table for a plan we can put in place in Mill Valley. I will invite residents to meet with the Marin Community Foundation, the Marin Builders Association, the Marin Association of Realtors, the Marin Environmental Housing Collaborative, and nonprofit housing developers, like the Ecumenical Association for Housing, to pursue local housing trust fund monies, state and federal funds, and our own city funding strategy to strengthen and diversify Mill Valley's housing portfolio to include more affordable housing.

**Footnote to the Affordability question:**

In Marin, the level of affordability is pegged to the median household income for a family of four: median income is now **\$86,500**. A very low income family makes 35% - 50 % of the median income (\$30,300 to 43,250); low income makes between 50% - 80%

of median (\$43,250 – 69,200) and a moderate income family makes between 80% - 120% (\$69,200 – 103,800) of the median income.

## **2. Local Business**

Much concern has been expressed about Mill Valley losing its locally based business character. Do you share this concern and how would you address it?

Yes, I am concerned about the recent loss of many locally- based businesses. Businesses are going through a period of unsettling change, and we are all feeling it with a growing sense of unease. I wish I had a crystal ball to help solve this troubling issue. I suspect businesses have left for a whole host of reasons, not the least of which might have been our own tendency not to shop locally if bargains were to be had elsewhere.

### **Actions**

I suspect that change is happening for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is high land values. I make decisions based on solid information. I would work to find out why businesses are closing, including talk to recently departed ones to find out what happened and look to see what, if anything, the city could do going forward.

### **Ideas**

There are things a city can do through its power to write policies in the commercial section of our city's constitution, known as the General Plan. We can create a robust set of business-sustaining policies and programs, including:

- flexible planning and building advice and approvals to help sustain businesses
- a small business emergency loan program (to help tide over the ,
- a business improvement district created by and for merchants to address their needs,
- streetscape amenities, and
- closer ongoing city council communication with the Chamber and non-Chamber merchants.

Our own shopping choices and patronage are vital to having a healthy business community. I would like to see a strong “support our local businesses” campaign and perhaps weave in some activities on the Depot plaza to help promote local business. How about teaming up “box dinners” from our local markets and restaurants for those concerts on the plaza?

We all benefit from a strong commercial and business sector. We don't want a mono crop of businesses when variety and a healthy mix is vital. I believe that a plan for Miller Avenue that gets more people out walking around will help give current merchants more sales to help make them more profitable. Over time, increasing the supply of small retail space available on Miller will help increase the overall stock of rental properties thereby easing rents. The goal of a sustainable village of the 21<sup>st</sup> century , like Mill Valley, will

be shopping right in town or close by ~ from a hammer to a pair of girls soccer cleats, at a good price.

### **3. Traffic Congestion and Safety**

Local and regional transportation account for over half of Marin's greenhouse gas contribution and much concern has been expressed over traffic congestion and safety both locally and regionally. What solutions are you considering for our local traffic problems, including pedestrian and bicycle pathways, Safe Routes to Schools, shuttles, etc.? What would you do to make sure that Mill Valley has a presence in regional transit planning?

#### **Actions:**

I am a transit advocate and have raised my children to use transit and their feet as their primary means of transportation. My 17 year old daughter takes transit to high school in San Francisco and has not yet learned to drive. My 14 year old son walks home from Tamalpais High School and back up the Dipsea Stairs to our home every day ~ a 3 mile walk.

I initiated and negotiated a private transit arrangement with the U.C.S.F. Marin Commute Club buses to bring Marin high school students to the Urban School of S.F. This program has served over 100 families with students commuting to S.F. The program was so successful that the Urban School of S.F. now runs the program in-house as the UCSF club bus system, due to fuel and labor costs, became uneconomic for our families. Ultimately, I created a private transit service that has a life of its own.

My work at the County of Marin has given me the chance to initiate programs that have reduced neighborhood traffic in unincorporated Mill Valley including street design, traffic calming devices, safe bike lanes and paths, pedestrian and school walking paths, and better transit, including the Muir Woods Shuttle, a successful 3 year pilot program that took well over 25,000 passenger trips off our roads this year. I have been an active member of the Safe Routes to School Committee helping to increase the numbers of school children walking, riding bikes or carpooling to schools.

On the Mill Valley Planning Commission, I have pressed for better pedestrian safety and bicycle infrastructure on both residential applications and larger developments. I have consistently advocated for the inclusion of international best practices for paths and bike lanes, including colored paving, raised lanes at intersections, and protected cycle tracks along Miller Avenue.

#### **Ideas:**

My strong commitment is to integrate our city's land use decisions, most notably with the plan for Miller Avenue, with a bold and forward-thinking plan for local transit alternatives. This is the most significant and effective way we can address greenhouse gas

emissions on a local level. Our goal should be to get people out of their cars and onto shuttles on the flats and jitneys on the hills, and on feet and bikes. I will work to bring a pilot shuttle to the triangle and a jitney to the hills. I will advocate for better transit for our city and for the entire county.

I will help Mill Valley restore and improve the priority paths in our historic legacy of steps, lanes and paths. Mill Valley started out as village nestled next to the slopes of Mt. Tamalpais. People used to get around and downtown on this network of paths to the train that brought them where they needed to go. I will work to bring forward protected bike lanes and cycle tracks (wide bike lanes inboard of parked cars near the sidewalk), bike storage and lockers, wide sidewalks with resting places and water fountains. I will invest in infrastructure built for people not vehicles. We can make transit choices of all types more inviting while serving practical needs and addressing urgent environmental imperatives.

To assure that Mill Valley has a presence in regional transit planning, I would assure that the Mill Valley's representative to the Transportation Agency of Marin and Marin Transit attends meetings and provides vigorous advocacy for Mill Valley's transit needs. Transit throughout the County and the region is woefully under funded. We must work at the local, state and national level with our elected representatives to press for more funding for transit. This is an imperative if we hope to beat the climate clock.

#### **4. Water Supply and Conservation**

MMWD foresees future supply reductions and increases in demand that may require building an expensive and energy intensive desalination plant or pipeline. What is our local responsibility to address our own water use and our community's contribution to increasing demand? What do you think the City's leadership role should be with respect to water conservation?

Individual residents and the community of residents in Mill Valley have a significant role to play in the use of water resources. We need to make a strong individual and collective commitment to the goal of conservation of water, a precious resource.

##### **Actions**

The City should lead the way in the conservation of water by adopting policies and programs for water and energy conservation that encourage, incentivize and communicate this urgent need to reduce water consumption by residents, businesses and by the city departments themselves. I'd like to see the lead by example. The City can do that by assessing its internal water and energy use by its own departments and services. With a baseline reading of current use, we can map out and target reductions and then monitor progress toward meeting goals.

##### **Ideas**

One example for leadership in water conservation would be for the City to establish a demonstration garden on City property, featuring native, low-water plants and vegetation

showcasing best practices in mulching, soil amendment, plant choice and irrigation. .Of all cities in the county, the city of Mill Valley posts the largest percentage increase in water demand over the summer. Primarily, this is due to cultivated gardens that use large amounts of water during the dry summer months. We must find ways to encourage the use of more appropriate, native vegetation that thrives under low water conditions. A demonstration garden can educate and inspire homeowners to save water and plant appropriately. The City does have design review guidelines for new homes and significant remodels that require water conservation for landscape irrigation meet Marin Municipal Water District specifications and that landscape plantings be native species that use less water. It would be instructive to have a low-water use garden in the city for planning staff and commissioners to refer applicants looking for inspiration in meeting these guidelines. Documentation of water savings at a demonstration garden would also help spur homeowners to adopt bay-friendly gardening practices that conserve water and save money.

The most powerful method for spurring behavior change comes when we have a personal relationship with our use of a resource that makes manifest our own responsibility to it. The County of Marin, fairly quickly, achieved record setting waste diversion goals after we started sorting our own trash to extract the recyclable materials. Water meters on the outside of homes seem to be giving meaningful metrics only to the meter reader. Bills for water use on a periodic basis allow comparisons only after the fact.

We should employ real-time ambient metrics to document both water usage, shortages and reminders to use less. The energy orb is a globe that sits on a desktop and flashes red when peak hours signal when power costs more. As a friend and energy expert opined recently, it could be as simple as a fountain in the City running high (see the reward here) when conservation goals are met and low (spurring us onto greater conservation) when we are missing the mark.

## **5. Ecological Footprint**

The ecological footprint of Marin is higher than the U.S. average, and is unsustainable. Do you think we as a community have a responsibility to reduce our ecological footprint? If you believe this is important, what steps have you taken to reduce your own?

Yes, we all share the responsibility to reduce our unsustainable ecological footprint. My fervent belief is that local government has within its repertoire some of the most powerful tools to reduce our ecological footprint, by reducing our resource use. I will step up to this responsibility and sponsor this change.

### **Ideas**

I support the following measures:

- integrated *land use and transportation planning* to build compact, mixed use and beautifully designed and appropriately scaled neighborhoods at locations that provide transit and get people out of their cars

- a *bold vision for transit* that puts the person and not the car at the center of our city's decision-making framework.
  - I will put a pilot shuttle on our streets and work with the School District to examine a comprehensive “94941” solution by bringing back school buses
  - I will secure better local transit
  - I will champion safe, protected wide bike lanes, bike storage, cycle tracks (wide, separated bicycle tracks, near the sidewalk and inboard of parked cars) and pedestrian walkways,
  - I will bring back our historic legacy with a commitment to restoring priority steps, lanes and paths.
  
- *Watershed sustaining, green building approaches* that are written into our development code. I am passionate about green building and watershed design, assuring that building anywhere ~ from the top of the watershed to the lower flood plain ~ is done integrating the highest level of green building possible and best management watershed sustaining practices that provide flood protection.
  
- *Promotion of local, organic food production and consumption.* We need to help Marin (and those of the local region) farmers, growers and producers sell and market their products. We need to consciously buy local, organic products and remember that the premium we pay comes back in saved fuel, embedded energy in production, promotion of local family farms, better nutrition and vitamin content and less packaging and waste.
  
- An *energy policy* for the city that is systematic in that it looks at both internal energy use for city services and functions and external energy use by our community of households and businesses.
  - I would like to see the promotion of solar energy, via technical assistance, incentives and the proper sizing of systems to allow for meeting current and anticipated needs.
  - In addition, the development code for the city should include energy efficiency requirements for proposed larger homes, to help mitigate their size, that make them meet the energy efficiency benchmarks required of a smaller home. .

### **Actions**

I have become much more mindful of my resource consumption and am taking steps to reduce my ecological footprint. *Here are some of the measures my family practices:*

When Jim and I got married, we decided that 2 kids was a sustainable family size for us. When we moved into our home, we reduced the driveway by 50% and returned the

ground to permeable native fescue. Five years ago, we replaced lawn in the backyard with California low water, native plantings. Rather than tear down an old 1950's house, we remodeled it in 3 stages over time and kept essentially the same footprint. In our recent home remodel, we reused existing materials (existing footprint and structure, wood, tub, low flush toilets) and re-incorporated them into the remodeled structure. We used low VOC paints and green materials, including ceramic tiles. We purchased a very low water Toto toilet.

Recently, we were the first family in Marin to be fired by our gardener (told our job was too small). We have taken both housecleaning and gardening in-house. No more outsourcing of those jobs ~ reducing the number of service people driving to our home. We purchased an electric lawn mower to replace the old gas-powered vehicle. We have planted 20 native trees on the property since moving here 18 years ago and keep them well cared for and maintained.

We compost our food scraps and use the compost on fruit trees/garden. The garden and plants, largely native and low water, have drip irrigation on timers. We replaced all of our outdoor lighting with CFL and much of the indoor lighting is low voltage.. We replaced our old washer and dryer with efficient, Energy Star appliances. We keep the thermostat on a timer and keep heat off during the day and at 65 degrees when in use. We use canvas bags (most of the time when shopping) and I re-use small paper bags for loose produce. I buy more from bulk bins and reuse the containers. I buy more local and organic produce and meats. Straus Milk in bottles exclusively. I check my fish list for the sustainable catch. We eat more grains, veggies and tofu and less meat. We use cloth napkins exclusively and we carry our stainless steel coffee mugs and water Nalgene bottles.

We have given up the 101 shuffle to Target and Costco to put our money where the community is; we shop locally, save fuel and try to keep our local businesses in business. We take camping and hiking vacations in California to save money and to keep our travel budget down. We try to trip chain for errands. Jane, my 17 year old daughter, is an expert transit user, commutes to her SF high school by bus (mostly) and has not learned to drive. My son, Nate, walks from Tam High up the Dipsea Stairs to home daily. We eat dinner by candlelight and turn the lights off or down. I have given up driving my Honda Pilot (albeit a low emissions vehicle with reasonably good gas mileage for a sport utility) and am trying to figure out how I can have a "time share" vehicle to serve several families/investors that might need an SUV for long haul trips, snow driving and hauling.

We can do much more. *To be continued.*

## **6. Cities for Climate Protection Campaign**

The Mill Valley City Council has passed the Climate Protection Campaign resolution committing the City to determine a baseline and set targets to reduce our community's greenhouse gases. Will you support setting targets and how will you implement them?



Yes. I will support setting targets for the City. At the national level, our leadership has simply refused to address climate change and is not stepping up to the challenge. As a result, addressing climate change on a local level is imperative. The Cities for Climate Protection Campaign is a well-documented step-by-step approach that sets up an elegant framework for undertaking this vital work.

### **Actions**

After analysis, we need to move onto the other steps including:

- Setting reduction targets
- Developing a local action plan
- Implementing a local action plan and
- Monitoring progress and reporting results.

By recently passing the Cities for Climate Change resolution, the city of Mill Valley added its voice to the growing number of cities calling on our federal government to step up to the urgent need for addressing climate change. So far, the U.S. ~ the largest contributor of greenhouse gases in the world ~ has been absent on the world stage and has refused to sign the Kyoto Accord and to participate in the current effort underway at the United Nations. Mill Valley spoke up by joining this initiative. It is time to put a program in place for the City's greenhouse gas reduction. A Draft Report has been undertaken by the City in the fall of 2006.

I applaud the current council for doing this work and I will support taking the next step. I will ask the council to work with staff to get this issue on the city's front burner and made a part of the city's official work plan. Then, I will ask the council to convene a citizen task force to work collaboratively to set the stage for arriving at a successful community-supported action plan for greenhouse gas reduction. The goal is to develop a local action plan that sets forth the policies and programs that the city will take to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and achieve the targets. As with all strategic plans, this one must include a timeline, financing, and the party responsible for taking action. A broad public education and awareness outreach would include a process for dynamic public input and involvement with the goal of building the kind of commitment that brings success.

### **7. Community Choice Aggregation (CCA)**

CCA is the state law that allows municipalities to competitively procure power on behalf of ratepayers. Initial studies for Marin have shown that we may be able to substantially increase the use of renewable power (e.g., wind, geothermal and solar) while remaining at or below PG & E rates, promote local renewable generation and provide greater price certainty and stability to ratepayers. Under a CCA, homes and businesses would have a choice to buy power from the CCA or PG&E and PG& E would still maintain the power lines and billing. Mill Valley along with the other cities and the County of Marin is in the process of investigating the creation of a CCA. What is your commitment to promoting the increased use of renewable energy and to continuing Mill Valley's participation in this investigation?

As you are aware, Supervisor Charles McGlashan in conjunction with Supervisor Hal Brown is pursuing the possibility of a CCA for the County of Marin and the eleven cities. This is an exciting venture. I enthusiastically support Mill Valley's continuing participation in this investigation.

### **Actions**

It is responsible for Mill Valley to look at increasing the amount of renewable energy that it uses in the service of its residents. The goals of a local CCA are truly worth our most serious and immediate investigation:

- putting more green electrons into our 21<sup>st</sup> century energy portfolio,
- lowering rates over the long term,
- increasing local control of rate setting, and
- spurring responsible renewable energy choices and economic growth nationwide

We need to study the benefits and risks carefully. The biggest risk is that in fact rates may be higher than under existing utility provider. However, the idea is that power purchasing done under the guidance of professional management can and will mitigate that risk. The mechanism to mitigate risk includes both short and long term power contracts to procure stable rates over the long term. In addition, the field of CCA includes opportunities for local employment, and even local power generation. For Marin, that might mean solar energy production and possible methane digester at the local landfill to produce energy needed for the CCA. The upside is very exciting. This is true energy security and a model for the nation, as well. Marin can and should pursue this energy model with rigorous study and united commitment from our collective communities.

### **Prologue**

Thank you for inviting me to participate in answering this questionnaire. It has helped me examine these issues carefully and thoughtfully. The people of Mill Valley need to know where candidates stand on these and other issues. I appreciate the chance to explore this range of issues with you. Please feel free to let me know your thoughts. I welcome our constructive dialogue and would appreciate your support and endorsement.

Respectfully submitted,

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**October 4, 2007**