

The September 30, 2024 Candidates' Forum,

by the District 6 Neighborhood Leaders Group (D6NLG), the Shasta Hanchett Park Neighborhood Association (SHPNA), and Westminster Presbyterian Church.

Larry Ames:

Is everybody ready? So I welcome you. I'm Larry Ames. I'm the chair of the District Six Neighborhood Leadership Group.

We're the organizer of the event tonight.

We were going to have the Council District as well as the Valley Water District candidate forum tonight. However, we were saddened to learn last night of a personal family matter that demands the full and immediate attention of one of the council candidates. We extend our heartfelt best wishes to them and their family and respectfully leave it to them to say what they wish on the matter when they wish to do it.

It would be unfair to continue the debate without one of them, and so we reluctantly decided to drop that portion of the agenda. It's a pity, too, because we had a whole bunch of interesting questions to ask. But on the other hand, that leaves more time to ask about the Water District.

And also, I invite you to go in the foyer after the event and talk to the candidates and their staff. They have papers and brochures on the topic.

And this event is being co-sponsored by the Shasta Hanchett Park Neighborhood Association, which handled the arrangements for tonight.

Ed Saum:

Good evening, everybody. I see some familiar faces, but some not. My name is Edward Saum. I'm the President and Director for Planning and Land Use for the Shasta Hanchett Park Neighborhood Association.

Much thanks to Larry and the Commission for putting all this together.

I also wanted to take a moment and extend our heartfelt thanks to Westminster Presbyterian Church for co-sponsoring this as well. Anybody who's ever come to a Stroll The Alameda, a trick or treat on The Alameda, et cetera, you have seen over the years how Westminster Presbyterian has always strived to be a true Community Church here in the Alameda and in the center of Shasta Hanchett Park, so we're very thankful to them as well.

And nobody is here to listen to me blather on so I'm going to give the mic back to Larry so we can get to some people far more interesting than me.

Larry Ames:

Thank you, and thank you Westminster Presbyterian.

I'd also like to recognize a few people in the audience: I think I saw one of the candidates, Olivia Navarro back there, and I saw former council member Oliverio out here someplace.

And somebody wanted to talk about different neighborhood associations and groups: Pat

Pat Tietgens:

Thank you Larry. Hey everyone, it's great to see you here. My name is Pat Tietgens. I was actually the Moderator last time. So thank you for stepping up, Maryann. It's great to have you here.

I'm also vice president of The Alameda Business Association.

For those of you local, I just want to encourage you to support our local businesses. We have a number of really exciting things happening on The Alameda.

And if you own a small business yourself or if you work for a local small business, our membership is growing.

You can find us at TheAlamedaBusinessAssociation.com, and we have a lot of exciting things happening. We want to add to the vibrancy of the neighborhood and bring that community feeling so thank you so much for coming thanks for showing up it means a lot.

Larry Ames:

and any other groups?

I will talk about the District 6 Neighborhood Leadership Group, which is an association of the various neighborhood associations, businesses associations, and other involved entities within Council District 6, from Rosemary Gardens up in the north part to the southern end of Willow Glen. And we are now in Shasta Hanchett Park, which is at the center of this area here. So you're at the center of the District six. For years, the District 6 Neighborhood Leadership Group has worked on a wide range of local and regional issues, such as the Google and high-speed rail impact at the Deirdre on Station, the impact at the San Jose Airport, following the issues with the homeless, the development, preservation, and maintenance of city parks. And we also host candidate forms, like this, so thank you for coming. We recognize and appreciate that San Jose is a diverse community and we do not have the resources to have real-time translations tonight. As a second best alternative, we are recording this thing, we will make a transcript of it and then run it through Google Translate to get Spanish and Vietnamese postings of this thing, which we'll post on our website soon.

I want to thank my colleagues on our forum subcommittee. Everybody was helping with this thing, raise your hand, please. There are a number of people out there, so thank you for helping to arrange tonight's event and to help select the questions, which the candidates will see tonight for the first time.

So you will see it at the same time they see it.

Okay, and We looked forward to hearing from the different candidates from District 6 tonight, but we didn't have a chance, so please check out their tables in the foyer afterwards.

Okay, but we do get to hear about the Valley Water District. It used to be called the Santa Clara Valley Water District. Anyhow, and their board of directors, they have districts: they do not line up exactly with the council districts, but there's a large amount of overlap between District 2, which has been served for these past 12 years by Barbara Keegan, and she's resigning now, retiring, and so we get to hear from the two candidates from the board.

But before we do that, I would have a short discussion on how to vote, and so, Aleiah Mims, you want to come up and talk about the Registrar of Voters and how to register.

Aleiah Mims:

Good evening everyone. How are you? I'm just here to give you a few dates of importance.

So, September the 26th your county information guides went out.

You will also if you have went green, which means that you wanted it electronically, you can now access that online.

On October the 7th the vote by mail or the absentee ballot will be going out in the mail, so look forward to that.

Early voting will also begin on Monday October 7th at the Registrar of Voters office and that will go on through November the 4th. Then on October the 26th voting early voting will begin for all of the county. We will have about 105 vote centers that will be open between Palo Alto and Gilroy area. You are free to go to any of the vote centers during that time, drop off your ballot in person, actually vote in person if you would like to. You are no longer assigned to a precinct if you're not aware of that, as far as limiting you where you can actually go and vote so you can go to any of these vote centers and your particular ballot will be printed out for you.

Also our last day for you to be able to register to vote will be October 21st, but the caveat is that we have vote centers and so on October 26 when our vote centers open you can actually come out and register conditionally and vote that same exact day, and actually that can start as early as October 7th when the voter when the early voting begins at the register of voters office.

Oh there we go the whole purpose of me being here is November 5th is Election Day.

Please come out and vote.

Larry Ames:

Thank you. And now I'd like to introduce Maryann Haggerty from the League of Women Voters who will moderate tonight's event.

Maryann Haggerty:

Thank you, Larry, and welcome to you all.

Okay, I'm representing the League of Women Voters in Santa Clara, San Jose, and we're a nonpartisan, non-profit organization of both men and women, established 100 years ago to promote political responsibility through informed active participation in government.

The League does not support, oppose, or evaluate political candidates or parties. So for this, they've chosen me to moderate this forum as a nonpartisan individual.

Okay, so the rules. For the audience, please hold your applause to the end of the forum so everyone could hear, please silence your cell phones, and feel free to stick around after to talk with the candidates after the forum.

For the candidates, these are the rules that we will follow:

You will each get a 90 second opening statement, and a one-minute closing statement.

For the questions, you will each have 90 seconds to answer. Each will answer the same question. Each of you will have 90 seconds.

You will have two challenge cards that are orange that you have, which you can challenge after your opponent answers the question if you feel like you want to challenge raise it up and you'll have 30 seconds to challenge and then your opponent will have 30 second reply also to that.

Okay we have our timer in the front here who will hold up a blue card to tell you that the time is getting close and a red card that will mean that's it, okay?

All right, so do you have any questions?

Okay, I will alternate the questions, so we'll start with Mr. Roth, then we'll go to Ms. Ballard back and forth, okay? Okay,

So, let us begin, and here are our candidates, Bill Roth and Shiloh Ballard. So, we'll start with Mr. Roth, and you have 90 seconds to give an opening statement.

Bill Roth:

Excellent, thanks very much. All right, this is where I say, "Is this thing on?" You can hear me? Excellent. So folks, my name is Bill Roth and as has been said I'm a candidate for Santa Clara Valley Water District. I'll give you an overview of why I want to do this and the experience I have, and then my sort of top three issues so why do why do I want to do this first of all civic engagement.

I've been involved in the political process in one way or another since the 80s, and also for the last 15 years I've worked with an NGO down in Nicaragua working on water systems. I participated in about seven or eight different water systems as well as some of the planning for a regional system in Northwestern Nicaragua. And so it was time to do some water work here. And so that was something about the motivation and this opportunity came up.

That gives you some of the idea about the why I want to do this, but also a little bit of the experience.

When you look at a board position, you really -- there's only two things a member of the board of

directors can do. They can hire and fire the CEO, and then you can vote on budgets. I've been on a number of nonprofits like Gardner and Catholic Charities and Sacred Heart where we've had to deal with in some cases up to a hundred million dollar budgets, and so that gives me the experience to do the job – and I'm done.

Maryann Haggerty:

Okay thank you. Ms. Ballard.

Shiloh Ballard:

And I'll say the same: "Can you all hear me?" Awesome.

Thank you all, first of all, for being here tonight and taking time out of your evening. I'm going to get a little personal to tell you why I decided to do this.

Starting with, I am probably, like you all, very scared about the future. And I have been for a long time. As long as I can remember, I've been scared that we are growing in a way that is going to cause the planet to evict us soon. And I am worried, for our children's children, I am worried that we won't have clean water, that we won't have clean air, that we won't be able to grow food out of the dirt. So that is, from a big picture perspective, why I am running and why I have chosen a career and a profession in environmental policy.

And it was about a year ago that I left my job running the Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition and I didn't have in mind what I was going to do but I knew I needed to take a break, and because of the timing of it people and because I was on the planning commission for a while people were approaching me "Oh, you should run for District 6." "You should run for District 6." And I was like, "No, no, Olivia's going to run." But I was like, "No, that doesn't sound attractive." But people were approaching me about the water district. And I looked at it. I had no desire to be an elected official, but in this place in my life where I was deciding what was next, – and is that the stoplight? Ooh, we're going to have to come back to that. Hopefully that's a little teaser.

Maryann Haggerty:

Okay. Thank you. You told us why you want the job. So the first question for Ms. Ballard will be what are your top three priorities if elected?

Shiloh Ballard:

Top three priorities. So if you go to my site, you will see that there are three things there:

One, to elevate environmental issues and climate change at the district.

Two, to make sure that going forward we're maintaining or minimizing the escalation of water rates.

And three is about agency efficiency.

And I'd be happy to go into each of those. I'm watching Helen here because she's going to give me a sign, but on agency efficiency that relates to cost as well. When I worked for the bike coalition we were a contracting agency of the Valley Water District and so we experienced firsthand what it was like to go through a contracting process and got to see how the agency functions and some of the dysfunction.

And also I have been working with governmental agencies for my entire career and I can tell you which ones are staff driven, which ones are driven by their CEO, which ones the board controls, and which ones are very onerous public agencies to go through.

And so I experienced that with the Water District and as a result, we went to staff and we said, you know what, your process for doing this was really not that great. Are you open to taking some feedback to change it? And the answer was yes. They did a process where they interviewed folks like us and other agencies that do similar work and they took those recommendations to the board. They were adopted and now we're getting systems change and agency efficiency.

Maryann Haggerty:

Thank you. Mr. Roth.

Bill Roth:

Thank you very much. So top three questions, top three issues are:

Number one that making sure rates stay low and assuring that there's affordable water.

The second is a humane response to the homelessness crisis from the Water District.

And the third issue has to do with ensuring our district gets its fair share of flood control and cybersecurity protection. Okay, I know that's four issues, but we can sort of use a conjunction there.

So with regard to keeping rates low, look we all know the nickname of the water district – I won't even use it you can fill it in in your mind

The fact of the matter is they've got a really good set of financials and they don't need to ask for the kind of raises that they're asking for I think that there's other options and there are modifications they can make to their finances to keep our rates low.

Second, their current policy of abating homelessness, abating homeless encampments, without giving the folks anywhere to go, is nigh on immoral, because what it does is it pushes people off Water District land, and in the case in District 6, it takes all those folks from Lelong and pushes them onto Harliss, which is now a city problem.

And third, we'll try and make sure we keep our fair share on the Guadalupe project for flood control and we'll talk about cybersecurity later.

Maryann Haggerty:

Okay, thank you.

Okay, next we'll start with Mr. Roth. Okay, so how does the Water Valley Board prioritize projects and what consideration should go into decisions to move funding from one part of the service to another?

Bill Roth:

There are two principal documents that they use, and frankly the way I've seen them there are a number of things you can complain about I think with the water district but in some of the their processes are actually quite good. There are two main documents that you need to be aware of.

First is the Water Supply Master Plan and the second is their Capital Improvement Plan. So that talks about the types of projects that they're going to do and the order in which they apply them to. How much money does Guadalupe get? How much does Llegas Creek get? How much is for flood control? How much is to make sure that we are dealing with water supply and maintenance of pipes? So they prioritize, actually they tend to do sort of matrix and scoring. I know you weren't, I don't think you were looking for the exact answer, but that's literally the answer. They tend to have a fairly decent amount of criteria and they actually score them in a matrix. You could argue that I really do think that they should consider a little bit more on the fiscal impact and if it makes sense, especially I think there's some marketing programs that they've got which I think could be better used for other things and shifted potentially into dealing with the homelessness issue.

So that was sort of the consideration. One is sort of conservative and the other is fairness because there's a lot of communities of color which actually aren't getting the kind of support they need from Valley Water, especially Alviso and on the east side.

Maryann Haggerty:

Thank you, Ms. Ballard.

Shiloh Ballard:

So you heard a little bit of the answer to that question, so I won't repeat what's been said in terms of the process, but Bill mentioned the Water Supply Master Plan. That's something that's updated every five years. And that's our kind of guiding document for looking 40, 50 years out in the future to say, what are we going to need in terms of water, and what do we need to be doing today to be able to supply that water? And in terms of a methodology for determining what those priorities are, from my perspective I know you're asking how does it get done, but I would let you, you heard from Bill and I would like to tell you how I would like for it to get done. I think the Water District does a good job already, and at a governance and policy level, what I would like to elevate in terms of us screening which projects we're going to prioritize is to prioritize independence.

I would like to reduce our dependence on imported water. I would like to elevate in our methodology resilience and adaptability with climate change in mind, what I mean by that is I kind of liken it to heavy rail versus bus: once you lay track on a BART outline, it's there, we're paying for it forever as opposed to the types of infrastructure projects where if something changes, if our predictions about climate change don't turn out to be right, we can turn on a dime, so flexibility in terms of how we're prioritizing projects.

Maryann Haggerty:

Okay, thank you. And we'll start with Ms. Ballard this time, and you talked about climate change. So how will the changing climate and changing urbanization and development patterns change how the Valley Water designs and bills projects. Do these existing projects need upgrading?

Shiloh Ballard:

Yeah, so as I was just saying, actually, we need to elevate our independence.

We need to elevate resilience and flexibility in the types of projects that we're deciding to pursue and what I'll say I'll dive a little deeper on one of my favorite things which is, as an environmentalist we all preach "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle" and I don't think we spend nearly enough time on the first "R", reduce. How many of you have a rain barrel? and how many of you have a gray water system?

And how many of you have some sort of drought tolerant landscaping? A lot more. I believe there's a lot of room for improvement for us to attack that first "R".

This is the residential sector. On the commercial side, there's a lot of room for improvement as well. So one of my answers to that question is we need to be pushing more on the first "R", and I'll cite data centers as an example.

There are 54 data centers in the city of Santa Clara and they are incredibly water-intensive uses. Now the city of Santa Clara did pass in their climate action plan.

They fairly recently said going forward new data centers will need to be reducing the amount of water that they use significantly. But that's new data centers; we have all these old data centers that we can adjust their water.

Maryann Haggerty:

Okay, thank you. Mr. Roth?

Bill Roth:

This is a great question. Thanks very much. Climate change is very serious. And I was just reading some documents today that it could cost us up to 20% of our water supply by the end of the century. So climate change is real.

I think one of the differences you're going to hear, I think we're alike on a lot of issues, but it's how we look at it and what we prioritize. And so, the big thing that I'm worried about is are we going to have

enough water at affordable prices? How do we make sure that my friends on the east side don't have to pay more than 10% of their income for water. So I think that's one of the major things that's driving what you'll hear from me tonight.

Now, urbanization is interesting. We had an event over the weekend, and someone asked, are we going to be able to handle all of these new buildings that are going up? Well, in point of fact, as we sit here today, Silicon Valley uses, the Santa Clara County uses about 245,000 acre-feet of water per year. We have rights to, depending on how you count, between 310 and 380,000 acre-feet. Short answer is, there is enough water.

But I imagine if we only have rights to 310 and we lose 20% of that, we're right in the area. So we need to focus on conservation, we need to focus on reduction. So, and the projects should be prioritized in things that support water supply.

Maryann Haggerty:

Thank you. Next question, Mr. Roth, you did talk about people living in the creeks. So what are the impacts of these people living in the creek corridors, and what can the Valley Water do to mitigate these impacts?

Bill Roth:

Thank you so much for this question. It's the one issue that drives me from a passion/moral perspective. I've done some work with Catholic Charities as well as Agape Silicon Valley, where we go out and actually interact with the folks that are on the creeks. And the folks have a wide array: their issues are, as the professionals like to say, multi-factorial. And so a number of things that it happens. Obviously, you've got a lot of junk. I was with the South Bay Crane Fleet Coalition and we were pulling shopping carts and pizza boxes and shoes and toys out of the creeks.

The first thing, it actually, a lot of our runoff and our discharge, it fouls that up and that's one of the things that's causing the issue with the city and our stormwater permit in the EPA.

What can Valley Water do? Right now Valley Water does essentially nothing, except they will kick you off the land and fence it off. That's what they did on Lelong. All of those folks actually are now on Harliss, 500 feet up the creek towards the Gardner neighborhood. That's wrong.

,So, one of the things we've got to do and one of the things I'd like to see Valley Water do is more service navigation. I think that they, with the right kind of financial adjustments, could get a team of four doing service navigation to, if someone needs a drug treatment, they could send them to Gardner Health Services. If someone says, we could send them to a wide array. Anyway, so you get the idea, service navigation.

Maryann Haggerty:

Thank you, Ms. Ballard.

Shiloh Ballard:

So I love this question and I know a lot of the folks in the room through the housing world. And so you all know that I spent 15 years professionally working as an affordable housing advocate and then since then have continued to be deeply involved in housing. I was a co-founder of SV at Home. I was on the Housing Trust Board for, I don't even know how many years, maybe 20 years. And so this issue is near and dear to my heart, and I know a lot about it, and I would love to be able to bring all of my years of experience working in housing to the Water District to help the Water District understand: what is the appropriate role for a water agency to play in housing. And one of the answers to that question is, when we're trying to build housing, because the problem is we don't have enough housing. We need to build more housing. That's it. Full stop. So we all need to show up at the community meetings and say yes to

housing. But the issues are we need land, we need money, and we need political will, and we need to speed up the process.

Valley Water has a couple of those things. They have land, and they already have done an inventory of their land to try to figure out, of this land that we have, are there pieces that are appropriate that we can hold up to a municipality and say, hey, we're not going to need this land for like five years. So if you want to do some sort of housing solution on it, we're just going to need it back for this flood control project. They're doing that, and that is one way that the district should continue to do that.

Maryann Haggerty:

Thank you. Okay, so for our next question, how does Valley Water coordinate and cooperate with other entities such as regulatory agencies, water suppliers, other water users, local, regional, and statewide?

Shiloh Ballard:

I love this question too. So I've had a long career working in public policy and working with many, many different public agencies, and as I said earlier, I have gotten to see how they all work and whether they do work together, so I can tell you about the personality of each agency. I can tell you about VTA and how it tends to operate, and I can tell you how the city of San Jose tends to operate, or the Open Space Authority, which is a wonderful agency.

And of all of those agencies, and I will first preface this by saying the water district is a very very good agency with really really wonderful staff that is doing hard hard work. I mean we turn on the water, it comes out. It's safe. It's clean. That is a feat and we should all be very thankful for that.

At the same time, it is a huge bureaucracy, and of all the bureaucracies that I worked with it is one of the most slow and it doesn't have a tendency to pick up its head, look around and understand who it needs to be working with or what other agencies are doing similar kind of work. And I'll give the Open Space Authority as an example.

Out in Coyote Valley, you know, Open Space Authority wants to be preserving Coyote Valley. The Water District wants to be doing flood control. These things overlap and there is a piece of land in Coyote Valley which could potentially, if we acquired it, operate as kind of a sponge and be a part of our ecosystem of doing flood control.

Maryann Haggerty:

Okay, never enough time, right? Okay, Mr. Roth.

Bill Roth:

So it's a tricky question because actually when you understand the web of the number of organizations that are overlapping with Valley Water, it is quite a feat.

One of the biggest collaborations they have is with the City, and that, I think, could be characterized, I think, fraught is too hard a word, but the two organizations need to work better together. Now, that's why there is discussion. You all should show up on October 11th at Santa Clara Convention Center for the Homeless Summit that they're having. I think one of the things that's going to be proposed there is something like a joint powers agreement or some sort of so that a lot of the jurisdictional issues that happen between all of the agencies, there'll be a framework for working through those so that we don't have to worry about not going on Water District Land because it's not in the City and so on. And so I think it's going to be a big challenge, but I actually think it's one of the better solutions out there. It's going to be messy because a JPA is very heavy and requires its own board. But I think it's probably one of the best things to move forward to alleviate some of the tension between those two organizations, which is probably one of its most important collaborations.

Maryann Haggerty:

Thank you. All right, we'll start with you, Mr. Roth, for the next one. What can Valley Water do to help keep our underground aquifer clean and healthy?

Bill Roth:

Interesting.

So first of all, aquifer is kind of a fancy word. We sit on top of the Santa Clara aquifer. All that is a giant limestone cave beneath us. If we don't keep it filled up with water, the ground starts to sink, as it did back in the 1920s: that's why certain parts of Alviso are actually below the waterline.

So a number of the things that it can do involve working with the City on making sure that the storm water that gets pushed back into the bay is healthy, as well as making sure that there's adequate monitoring of various chemicals. Now from what I've seen San Jose water does do a pretty good job of water chemistry in terms of watching various heavy metals, PFOS, PFAS, however, they only follow it to the law. They will follow only what the EPA guides.

So I think one of the things that could be advocated for is slightly stronger monitoring, because we really don't know or have -- the full science hasn't been done on the forever chemicals yet -- but I think we could take a more conservative approach to making sure that if there's a problem there that we're actually monitoring and paying attention to it.

Maryann Haggerty:

Thank you. Ms. Ballard.

Shiloh Ballard:

Yeah. I won't repeat what Bill said. It'd be nice if we were going above and beyond what the baseline requirements are. But I want to take it in a different direction because this is something that I care deeply about, and as someone who ran my own organization of 20 people, I realize and I think we all do the importance of staff, and having highly trained, qualified people in order to achieve the goals of the agency. If we want our groundwater to be awesome, if we want all of our water to be awesome, we need to focus on recruiting and retain high quality staff.

And part of that also goes to the governance of the Board. I think many of you know, if you've been paying attention, there's some dysfunction at the governance level on the Board. And it ends up demoralizing staff.

And so I'm going to take, like I said, I'm going to take this in a totally different direction: if we want the agency to function well and have excellent groundwater, we need excellent board members at the governance level to be able to make sure that our staff want to wake up every day loving their job and wanting to come to work to make sure that again when we turn on the tap clean safe water comes out.

Maryann Haggerty:

Thank you. All right, we'll start with you for the next question and another ecological one. How do bioengineered solutions such as trees and marshes compare with the more concrete solutions such as channels and flood walls?

Shiloh Ballard:

I feel like this is that you decided to throw the softball at the environmentalist.

I mean, I'm someone that takes my cues from nature. I think nature is our best guide. And so concrete channels, yes, they serve a certain purpose, but really, really at the end of the day, if we want to be

managing water, if we want our water to be clean, we have to mirror what nature does on its own and engineer those kinds of solutions. I was talking earlier about the marriage between the Open Space Authority and the Water District on if we acquire this piece of property, naturally this nature -based solution will be a flood control project for us – and we get to preserve Coyote Valley. So it's a wonderful win -win. So I don't know that there's much more to say about that, but nature-based solutions are the way to go, full stop.

Maryann Haggerty:

Thank you, Mr. Roth.

Bill Roth:

So, I was trained by the Jesuits and that Jesuits have a phrase in Latin, "ne quid nemus." That's Latin for "nothing to excess." See, I've got, we've got some head nods, probably some Bellarmine folks out there. I think that in this case there's plenty of good examples for use of both.

I don't know that you'll ever get rid of cement or concrete lined – I was just up along the Calabasas Creek yesterday – because of the way that that is now set up. However, and I think it's a project that I believe Larry was involved in, but if you look at that part of the Los Gatos Creek Trail from the KFC down to Blackford school that used to be sort of devastation and now it's completely replanted. So I think that there's a balance. I would like to see more – Environmentalism only counts for about 5% of the budget of Valley Water; 80% is water supply; 15% is flood control and the rest is environmentalism like environmental stewardship and I'd like to see that increase so we can have more projects like this, and so that's that would be sort of how I would answer the question. And you didn't know you were going to get some Latin, did you?

Maryann Haggerty:

Thank you. All right we have one last question for the finals okay so Mr. Roth: what is the biggest challenge facing Valley Water as an organization today and how do you plan to address it?

Bill Roth:

The biggest – so there's a number of them I think the biggest one that's getting in the way is the dysfunction at the board. If like me you've been watching for the last year or two, you've been watching the meetings they're amazing – and not in a good way. And so I think what we need honestly my pledge is to be a member of the board is to be a no drama member of the board and so that is exactly the kind of thing that and it also sends a message to staff and I think it sends it also gets bad press there's a number of things going on and so there needs to be some board turnover in order to I think affect that so this is not something that's going to happen on January 1, but I think the biggest problem they face is get back to a functioning governing environment.

I won't even use the rest of my time that's it.

Maryann Haggerty:

Thank you. Ms. Ballard.

Shiloh Ballard:

Yeah I agree, and I'll say a little bit more about that, instead of dwelling on the negative, because we have some opportunities. There's some cliffs that we can potentially go off of, but so for example, in the next two years, Tony Estramera is going to term off the board. He's been on the board for a long, long time. Then in four years, Nai Hsueh and Dick SANTOS are going to term off the board. At the end of this year, the clerk is retiring. And in two years, we'll see what happens with the seat in North County.

All of that is an opportunity. There's scary things because we're going to be losing a lot of institutional knowledge, but it also gives us an opportunity today to start planning for that two - to four -year time horizon, and that's part of why I want to be on the Board. This is a critical agency, and we can't just leave it to anyone who wakes up in the morning like, "I could do this." We need experienced people who have a track record in public policy to be running for these positions.

And today, if we start today planning for that, because all these, we're going to be losing this institutional knowledge, that's what, that's where, that's my answer to the question, is like, there's a big challenge and there's an opportunity there for us to be looking ahead and making sure that we're not waiting until that two to four years and going "oh shoot, who are the people that are kind of come in behind and fill these positions"?

Maryann Haggerty:

Thank you

Well, that's all the questions that I have so I'll give you both of you a chance to have a closing remark and perhaps say something that we didn't get to in the questions, or you didn't get to say in your opening statement.

All right, and we'll start with Ms. Ballard. You have one minute.

Shiloh Ballard:

Okay, thank you. - Great. Again, thank you all for being here tonight. I love it when people are civically engaged.

I cut my teeth on doing community organizing, and I'm just, I'm passionate about bringing people together to accomplish good things together. So I love that you all are here.

I just want to highlight my credentials a little bit and toot my own horn at the risk of sounding a little arrogant. But if you look at my endorsements, I have pretty much everybody under the sun. Labor, the environmental movement, under the League of Conservation Voters, Democratic Party. The Mercury News just endorsed me.

All the Congress members in the area, just look, and you'll see that everyone is there, go to my website, also I want to highlight just what I've been doing. I'm not just saying, I want to do this. You can look at what I have actually done and see that I'm trying to on my website relate what I have done to what I would do on the board, so you can see, "oh, here's someone who has done something similar."

So please go to my website, you'll also see – a red card, so I'll stop. (audience laughing)

Maryann Haggerty:

Okay, Mr. Roth, you have the final word.

Bill Roth:

Great, thank you very much. And thank you for this great event. And Larry, thanks for the invitation.

I hope that, I think this has been a great set of questions.

And I think experience matters. I am somebody who has, we're talking about an agency in Santa Clara Valley Water, that is a billion dollar a year organization with 900 employees. And I've been an employee at a 40,000 person company and I've actually run a marketing budget for a billion dollar entity inside one of those companies. I think my experience is different from the folks on the board.

And I think valuable because I can bring a little bit of the Silicon Valley experience, a little bit of the business experience, as well as the values, as well as values of respecting the environment, respecting the workers, and making sure that you and your children have clean, affordable water for generations to come. So thanks very much.

Maryann Haggerty:

Thank you both, and I hope you'll stay for a few minutes, and,

Shiloh Ballard:

yeah, yeah, a challenge. We didn't use our challenge cards.

Maryann Haggerty:

I know, I know. I hope you'll stay and be able to mingle with the audience and if they have any further questions for you. Thank you. Thank you Larry.

Larry Ames:

So I want to thank Westminster Presbyterian for the use of the venue here.

I want to thank Maryann Haggerty for being our moderator. I want to thank the candidates both for coming here and both for volunteering to run for this office. And I want to thank the audience for coming out here, and please go out and look afterwards, tables out there and grab some information and talk to the candidates. So thank you very much and good night.

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