



Santa Clara City Council Endorsement Interview Questionnaire August 2020

Name: Teresa O'Neill
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Occupation: retired/incumbent council member

Please answer the following questions:

1. Why are you seeking the endorsement of Santa Clara Firefighters Local 1171?

The Santa Clara Firefighters fill a very important role in our community. Our firefighters have a great deal of credibility and respect in Santa Clara. Receiving the endorsement from Local 1171 brings more stature to my re-election campaign and will be looked upon favorably by voters.

2. What have you done to support L1171 in the past, or what do you plan to do to support L1171 in the future?

During my tenure on the council, I have actively supported increasing the budget of the Fire Department to add more firefighters, fund new equipment, and raise salaries of fire personnel. The Council ensured that the Related Company funded remodeling a current fire station and that they will build a new station required by the construction of the upcoming Related Santa Clara project.

3. Have you ever gone on a ride-a-long with Santa Clara Firefighters?

No, but I took the CERT program taught by SCFD some years ago and learned about how firefighters work, particularly in emergency and disaster situations.

4. Have you visited our website, santaclarafirefighters.org?

Yes, in part as I am on the board of the Santa Clara Schools Foundation, and we have been partnering with the Firefighters Foundation for about 5 years in producing The Firehouse Run, which has become our biggest fundraiser in assisting students and teachers in SCUSD.

5. Santa Clara Firefighters do not have the highest compensation in the area. However, we do have contract language that keeps us at 5% above the benchmark average. This language helps to attract the most qualified candidates and helps with retention. Do you support this methodology?

There are many ways to structure compensation for public employees. There can be many ways to attract and retain employees, while salary is obviously the major attraction. I am open to looking at a variety of structures for compensation packages that will ensure that Santa Clara Fire continues to attract and retain top-flight employees.

6. With an ongoing pandemic, our members are potentially putting their lives, and the lives of their families, at risk each and every shift. The city is also facing a budget crisis. What are your thoughts on staffing levels at the fire department during a pandemic?

At all times, but especially during an emergency situation such as the Covid-19 pandemic, public safety is the foremost concern of the residents of Santa Clara and me as a council member. While we always need to be striving to be sure we are managing our departments effectively and efficiently, unless our revenues drop to completely unforeseen levels, I won't support reducing staffing in our fire department.

7. Santa Clara has had 10 Fire Stations since 1986. Because of that coverage area, we are able to arrive on average within 6:00 minutes of a 911 call, 90% of the time. Would you ever support shutting down a fire station in Santa Clara?

I try to make my decisions by examining a number of factors and then coming to a conclusion. I haven't heard discussion of closing any fire stations, and actually, I have been thinking about if we will need to add any fire stations, primarily in the areas north of the Caltrain tracks. If that discussion should come up, I would want to see data on what impact a closure would have on response times, service levels, personnel, quality of service, and what benefits would be achieved. My suspicion is that possible short term financial savings would be outweighed by a range of negative impacts. Thus, I wouldn't be supportive.

Please return to scff1171@gmail.com by August 11th