



2022 Mayoral & City Council Elections

Candidate Questionnaire

Topic: Sonoma-Marín Fairgrounds Lease Extension

Issued by the Friends of the Sonoma-Marín Fairgrounds

The candidates elected in the 2022 Petaluma Mayoral and City Council elections will make decisions that have the potential to dramatically impact the future of the Sonoma-Marín Fairgrounds. The Friends of the Sonoma-Marín Fairgrounds do not endorse candidates, but we believe Petaluma residents deserve to know where candidates stand on the key issues surrounding the future of their Fairgrounds.

Please respond thoroughly to each of these questions. When you finish, please send your responses to friendsofsmfairgrounds@gmail.com by September 5, 2022. Your responses will be shared on our website and with the greater community.

Candidate Name: David Adams

District/Seat: District 2

1. What does the fairgrounds mean to you and your community?

I am involved with the Fairgrounds in many different ways. From working with the Salvation Army and the use of the fairgrounds during disasters to house and support evacuees. To having events at the fairgrounds to raise funds. As a past executive board member of "Keeping Music in the Schools", I am not sure where we could find a venue to continue to raise funds for our public school music programs. We have donated over a half a million dollars to our public school programs in Petaluma over the years. With all that said the fairgrounds means a place the community can come together.

2. What are your favorite and least favorite aspects of the fairgrounds?

Favorite aspects as I stated the many ways that the community comes together. There are more possibilities and different uses that can be brought to the site. I understand the least favorite is perhaps the race track. I feel it could be managed differently. It shows up like a situation that the community has to put up with rather than is a part of. Bigger events and fewer of them maybe? The events bring in a lot of income to businesses in other communities. Hotel and restaurants to name a few. That question is up to the voters.

3. Describe your understanding of the history of the fairgrounds and how important it is to protect the history, heritage and traditions the fairgrounds has contributed to the community over the past 112 years? I understand that the 67 original acres were purchased with a \$20K bond measure in 1910 to be used as a central park. The fair I believe was up on "Fair" street the area the Petaluma High School is now. It moved to the "Fairgrounds/Central Park" in 1932. A great deal of what the fair history and heritage is about is around agriculture.

This is an Ag town. The folks that built this town rarely have any say on what goes on at the fairgrounds because they are out of the city limit. But that doesn't diminish the contribution the families and the industry make to the town. It was a way for the community of Petaluma, (a community that doesn't stop at the city limits) to come together and stay connected. I participated in the fair showing stock when I was in school here. I can't imagine Petaluma without it.

4. What is your vision for the future of the fairgrounds over the next 50 to 100 years?

I think the fairgrounds needs to be updated and perhaps parts of it could be utilized for use as a "community park". Possibly someday a civic center housing City, Police and Fire in one building again. Something I feel would be great to get back to since it was broke up from English street years ago. A park with areas to enjoy daily activities. A year round concert venue to bring bigger names in the entertainment industry to Petaluma and help with our hotel and restaurant industry. Refurbishing the exhibit hall and utilizing it as a venue for events year round. But always leaving room for our county fair.

5. What are the positives and negatives associated with the 4th District Agricultural Association (a state agency comprised of local state appointees) managing the fairgrounds property?

The positives is that you have an agency that is vested in keeping fairs vital and ongoing. They have resources and personnel that understand the job of maintaining and running events. Negatively the community doesn't have the input on developing the day to day ongoing use of the facility. Perhaps in revisiting the agreement with 4th district Ag that would allow Petaluma to have input both with ideas and financially through grants to participate in design and use of the grounds on a year round basis. I have heard there are funds that could be applied for to refurbish the exhibit building to be better prepared for disasters. Providing the fair with an upgraded venue while servicing the community. I know it isn't as simple as I made it sound. There is work to be done. The first part is securing the fairgrounds as it is. Than looking at what at what other uses we can provide the community with.

6. The city has hired *Healthy Democracy* to engage the community in shaping the future of the fairgrounds. How should the city use the information gained from this expensive and lengthy process?

Take it with a grain of salt. What I mean is to evaluate and compartmentalize the gathered information. I am not convinced the information was taken from a balanced cross section of the community. What does that mean? That should be made up of long time residents, and new residents of the city. Half of those participating should have lived in the city for more than thirty years. An even sampling of retired to working citizens. All the citizens should be registered voters. It should have looked at a balance of industries the workers in the group are a part of. This is a lot of criteria to make up a balanced sampling of ideas. That is my point. No one I knew and a lot of who tried to be included and involved in the process, got to be part of the process. So that is what I mean by "taking it with a grain of salt".

7. At what point should the future of the fairgrounds be determined by an official vote of the residents of Petaluma?

An advisory vote can be taken on the November Ballot. Not sure if the clock is ticking and may be to late. That would have been my suggestion. Although an

advisory vote was taken in 2004 to find out what the community wanted to do about the Rainier cross town connector. It passed with a 72% vote to build and finish it and we are still being stalled by those that have different ideas for our town. If we can take an advisory vote and secure a direction for the fair grounds. We can then roll up our sleeves and start the work of making it even a better asset for the community than it already is.

8. **The 4th DAA represents all of Marin & Sonoma Counties. How much input should the extended community from outside of Petaluma have on the fairground's future?** I could be wrong on this but I think they have more input through the 4th DAA than without it. But it goes back to simple politics and numbers. The voters inside the city limit have the votes. A guy like me lived and went to school here in Petaluma. But was working cattle, sheep and dairying outside the city limits. I value those that built our county and feed us. I feel the majority of Petaluman's feel the same.
9. **How do you see the 4th DAA and the City of Petaluma working together to shape and protect the fairgrounds for future generations?** I feel a long term agreement would be the first thing to accomplish. What that agreement looks like could be a long term contract to run the fair by 4th DAA. Allowing the city to have input into use and development of the property. Written into the agreement should be a strong commitment that for the length of the contract that 4th DAA and Petaluma would enter into, 4th DAA would have use of the property to run the fair. Taking off the table the shadow of closure of the property as what it is today. So investment can be made and the property improved. Who is going to make an investment with a short term lease ? This way letting the community have input to how else the property can serve the community.
10. **Currently there are 9 permanent tenants and dozens of interim renters leasing fairgrounds property 52 weeks a year. These include schools, public services, non-profits, private businesses, raceway, farmers market, etc. Where do they fit into your vision for the fairgrounds and what obligation does the city have to mitigate negative impacts caused by an uncertain future and this lengthy outreach process?** The issue I have with the city is they make decisions , good or bad, it often appears they give little or no support for those that there is consequences for. Case in point. A good decision a needed decision. To ban fireworks and their sales in the city limit. Given the impact we have felt in recent years on wild fires. Yes I agree. What I don't agree with is not having ideas for the non profits that used the fireworks sales to fund, Scouting, Little League, a large list of community valued non profits, a way to regain the lost funds. The city should come with support and ideas to work with the tenants of the fairgrounds into the future development plans or work with them to find alternative sites. Even if we can come to a plan that saves and improves the fairgrounds, it won't happen for a few years. But I feel the city should work with the tenants.
11. **Should the footprint or orientation of the fairground's property change and why?**
I think it is time to look at the orientation of the fairgrounds. Of course. I think we should work the existing buildings, like Herzog Hall into a plan that preserves them. The exhibit hall should be remodeled and if an agreement was entered into that allowed the city a voice (by the city I mean the residents) funds can be brought in from different entities to **A.** Increase and improve the bathrooms. Increasing capacity and efficiency. **B.** Build showers in separate attached rooms to be opened and utilized for evacuees. The track can be an asset to the city. If the voters want it to go than an amphitheater venue for concerts and performances. Back of the

track would be opened up for parking. While a part of the 67 acres could be turned into an activity park. Bocce ball, horse shoes, BBQ areas with basketball tennis and other activities. Being next to the library and the Community Pool could make the Fair Grounds a nice center piece for the city.

12. **Since 1961 the Petaluma Speedway has operated in the fairground's grandstands on roughly 25-30 nights a year. What is your vision for the Petaluma Speedway over the next 50 to 100 years?** Talking with some of the racers they tell me that northern California and down in the valley have less events but bigger and longer events. Maybe have two races a month with more emphasis on quality over quantity. Some towns have an event every three or four weeks. It starts on a Wednesday and ends on Sunday. An entire communities hotels are booked and sold out with race events for four days at a time. We have many restaurants within the area that need the added business. Not to mention all the other businesses that would also benefit. I think there could be a place in the community for the track. Only if that is the will of the voters.
13. **At times of natural disasters and public health emergencies, the fairgrounds serves as the cities largest and most flexible public safety resource. Should the city decide to end the lease with the 4th DAA and change the properties use, how should the city account for these lost public safety services for people and animals?** As I mentioned in other answers to questions in the survey, I believe the city needs to have a bigger say and more control of the property. I think keeping 4th DAA as part of the solution is a must. We need their input and resources. We need to stay connected and respect the Ag community. But giving over a lease for the entire property is something we should consider long and hard. Maybe one way is to look at contracting with 4th DAA. From discussions with city officials there could be funding sources available that cannot be considered if 4th DAA is in total control of the site. Working together and listening to the voters is what will make this work. If the voters say the track has to go, than have a backup plan of a year round venue that will bring tourists to town as well as provide a quality of life beneficial to Petaluma. But upgrading the stock pens, increasing and improving bathrooms and electrical for bigger power draws when needed would be some of what makes up the list of improvements for disasters.
14. **Knowing a secure future is essential for long-term financial investment into any property, if you are in favor of a lease extension for the 4th DAA on the existing fairgrounds property, what length of lease would you advocate for and why?** I go back to what I have been mentioning. An agreement as a partnership in the property might better serve all concerned. A discussion is needed with 4th DAA on what they will be providing and upgrading. They most likely will not be interested in anything under 25 years. If agreements were made for some good long lasting improvements, New roofs and renovation of the livestock pens, added and updated facilities in the exhibit hall, new waste water pump system (yes the bathrooms have to be pumped up to Payran to get it into the city waste water system. Than I would recommend a longer than 25 year lease.
15. **Is there anything else you would like the community to know about your views on the fairgrounds?**

I am not for turning it under to create "Affordable Housing" and retail. We have to much retail standing empty as it is. I am for affordable housing of course but we are not going to build our way

there. We have to look at financial plans creating financial systems that helps qualified buyers help to get into a home. Starting with our city employees and working out from there.

I feel we need to focus now on the quality of life in Petaluma, the history and heritage of Petaluma. The future of Petaluma. I feel some of what I propose in this survey starts to get us there in respect to the fairgrounds and the future use of it. But it will take more ideas than I have and input from the community to mold what will serve all concerned with the property.