



# 2022 Mayoral & City Council Elections Candidate Questionnaire

## **Topic: Sonoma-Marin Fairgrounds Lease Extension**

Issued by the Friends of the Sonoma-Marin Fairgrounds

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

The fairgrounds is central to our community, both physically and figuratively. When I go through those gates, it is like I have entered a sacred space. I experience it as a neutral place – where we leave our differences at the gate --where our community gathers and celebrates. It is a place that represents our history and our agricultural heritage. It is a place of education and recreation and of course it is home to our annual Sonoma-Marin Fair

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

My favorite aspect of the fairgrounds is its potential and that it has so many large outdoor spaces where we can gather which is so critical right now. I love that it provides us with a place to host evacuees during their time of crisis. That we come together to celebrate here, to attend events with our friends and family, listen to music and go to the circus.

**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?**

It is critical that we protect the history, heritage and traditions the fairgrounds have contributed to the community for over a century. And not just the use of the site for our annual fair, it has evolved historically as a place where this community comes together for a variety of events all year-round.

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

I envision it being an educational center, where we have hands on learning about the agricultural practices we need to be a healthy and vibrant community. A place where we can better support our first responders and the people and animals displaced by disasters. To comfort them, provide the solace they need and healthy meals. A lush green space where we can gather as community. A place that has more of the infrastructure needed for citywide events and celebrations. And a place that is used every day, year-round.

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

It is clear from the initial reports presented to the city council by Healthy Democracy that they would like the property to be safer, cleaner, more secure with the proper facilities needed when people gather. A place that is more welcoming and inviting, and more connected to its surrounding neighbors.

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?**

In 2015 discussions were taking place and not getting anywhere. When our new City Manager discovered Healthy Democracy she knew that is was just what we needed to engage our diverse community. We need to use the information gained from their experience as a guide post for the next steps in the process.

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

I think that with the information coming out of the Healthy Democracy process and the stories gathered by the city along with the results of the various surveys -- that the public will have spoken. And as we continue this process, there will be more opportunities for the public to participate.

8. **The 4<sup>th</sup> DAA represents all of Marin & Sonoma Counties. How much input should the extended community from outside of Petaluma have on the fairground's future?**

Everyone in our community has been invited to be a part of this Fairgrounds Visioning Process. There has been opportunity participate in the Healthy Democracy weekends, to attend our last workshop where their initial findings were presented. The city hosted a community workshop last weekend, and in partnership with our Library is asking the community to capture and share their stories for a community storytelling exhibit, which I really look forward to viewing.

9. **How do you see the 4<sup>th</sup> DAA and the City of Petaluma working together to shape and protect the fairgrounds for future generations?**

I see our staff taking all of the information they are gathering from the community and synthesizing it into a presentation at our City Council Workshop on October 24<sup>th</sup>. They will come, presumably, with recommendations on what the next steps will be and at this workshop, the Mayor and my fellow City Council members will provide them with the direction they need to move this process forward.

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?**

Whoever ends up assuming the subleases, whether it is the City or the Fair Board, that is who will be responsible for managing the leases and relationships with the existing tenants. And of course the tenants would be given the time and compensation to protect their livelihoods.

11. **Should the footprint or orientation of the fairground's property change and why?**

I think that it is inevitable given what we are hearing from the community. Their desire for a central park, for a year round farmers market, and for multi-use and multi-functional spaces that serve the community year round. Again, it is inevitable

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?**

You know 100 years from now is hard to imagine given the state of our world today. But we know that our Governor has mandated that there will be no more gas powered vehicles sold beyond 2035 and that we have banned new gas stations given our carbon neutrality goal of 2030. So, this is a golden opportunity for the speedway to leapfrog into the future and go all electric.

And as with so many of the structures on the property, it can be programmed to be used more year-round. Perhaps we can add a BMX track as recommended by the community or what about a velodrome. I understand there is a portable one available somewhere in the state.

**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 4<sup>th</sup> DAA and change the properties use, how should the city account for these lost public safety services for people and animals?**

Given that 90% of those participating in the Healthy Democracy process want the fairgrounds to continue to serve as an Emergency Evacuation Center and the likelihood that we will continue to need one, I don't think we need to provide those public safety services elsewhere.

**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 4<sup>th</sup> DAA on the existing fairgrounds property, what length of lease would you advocate for and why?**

Given that 93% of those participating in the Healthy Democracy process want to keep the Fair, I think that there will be some sort of lease with the 4<sup>th</sup> DAA. And I look forward to the recommendations from staff at our Fairground Workshop on October 24<sup>th</sup>.

**15. Is there anything else you would like the community to know about your views on the fairgrounds?**

Through the years, this site has provided a place for fun, learning, special occasions, -- respite and refuge during crises, as well as many lasting memories for Petalumans, County residents, and visitors. It is a truly unique place that is loved by so many. The Fairgrounds is such an important part of our community as well as our local history. We need to honor this history and have it continue to play a vital role in our future.