



BAYMEC
2006 Questionnaire
Candidate for
City Council

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Thank you for your time. Please answer questions with some detail; “Yes” or “No” answers are not sufficient to garner endorsement. Attach additional pages if you require more space for your responses.

1 Describe your understanding of the issues that face the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community in general. The major issues are lack of equality and full civil rights, discrimination in a wide variety of areas, and lack of social recognition. Despite great advances in recent years, members of the GLBT community continue to face significant discrimination in housing, employment, access to social resources and in a wide variety areas of social life. The development of domestic partnership benefits was a great advance. Although they are hardly universal yet, they have been adopted by many public and private agencies. However, the lack of full rights to marriage and all of the legal rights that institution confers in our society remains a major obstacle to full equality. Some major problems that creates relate to adoption of children, medical care and inheritance rights with respect to partners, tax benefits, and some retirement and health benefits.

The issue of discrimination continues to be a significant problem ranging from issues related to lack of equal access to society’s resources through ridicule and insults, to open violence. Many of these problems are magnified in school settings. Again, we have made some significant progress on these issues in California in general, and especially in Santa Cruz, but schools remain very difficult places for young members of the GLBT community – with daily taunts, jokes, insults, threats, intimidation, and outright violence all too common.

The lack of social recognition is also a serious problem. We need to move beyond “tolerance” or “acceptance” of diverse lifestyles to a recognition and celebration of the significant contributions to our community made by many, many members of the GLBT community. We are still in a difficult period in which we are not past the risk that right-wing politicians and activists and fundamentalist religious zealots will try to undo the great progress we have made, and an unfortunately large amount of our energy is required just to defend the gains we have made so far when we should be moving to advance the struggle for full equality.

2

Please describe how you have reached out to the LGBT community in your public life. In my 22-plus years as a public official, I have been an active participant in GLBT community activities. I am a founding and continuing member of the Diversity Center in Santa Cruz. I have marched and been a monitor in every Pride Celebration in Santa Cruz since the parades started in the 1970s. Starting in the struggle against the Briggs Initiative, when I wrote, printed, and helped distribute hundreds of thousands of pamphlets throughout California, to the present day, when I have been an outspoken advocate of gay marriage. I have made full equality and civil rights for the GLBT community a very high priority in my political work. I have been recognized by the GLBT community in Santa Cruz for my work as an ally, and I have made myself available for public speaking on GLBT equality. I have spoken and led workshops on GLBT equality in local middle school and high school classrooms, and in school-wide public high school assemblies as well as at the local juvenile hall. I have made myself accessible and responsive to the needs of the local GLBT community and work closely with groups and individuals on many programs. I have been endorsed by GLBT groups in all of my elections – including BAYMEC, the UCSC GLBT Alliance, and the Santa Cruz GLBT Alliance, the latter of which has already endorsed me in this election. I have actively displayed my endorsements to all audiences and in all of my literature.

In my work at UCSC, I integrate discussions of GLBT issues into all of my classes and I have sponsored scores of internships for individual students working with GLBT groups providing support, education, and political action on behalf of the GLBT community and its members. I count significant numbers of members of the GLBT community among my closest political allies, colleagues at work, and friends.

3

Greatly expanded domestic partner rights will be in effect under California law as of January 1, 2005. How do you see your elected office helping gay men and lesbians realize the full value of these rights? One of the most important forms of constituent service is helping individuals who are experiencing problems to find the appropriate forum to resolve their issues. As a Councilmember, I will help individuals whose rights under the new legislation are being ignored or abused find remedies for their problems. As some inevitable backlash results from the implementation of the new legislation, I will act as a spokesperson to the local media who will use my office to respond to any negative reactions that appear in public – for example, in writing op-ed pieces or letters to the editor, appearing on public panels, and, when appropriate, offering Council resolutions addressing concerns that arise. I expect that the new legislation will be fully implemented in Santa Cruz, and the City already has implemented domestic partner coverage many years ago as a result of work by myself and other progressive Councilmembers like John Laird and Mardi Wormhoudt; but, of course, if there are any problems with implementation at the City of Santa Cruz or on the other boards or agencies on which I serve as a Councilmember, I will, as I have in

the past, work closely with the GLBT community and its leaders to fix the problems.

4 Would you work to provide complete health coverage for transgender surgical and medical care? **Yes.** I am not sure how such changes to health plans are generally effected, but I would work with leaders of the local GLBT community to find models of what is being done in other communities on this issue to see how we can make it happen in our community.

5 Describe your position on LGBT adoptions, guardianships, and foster parenting. I know you don't want just short answers, but I'm not sure what more I can say than that I support full equality in this area and that I have been working and will continue working to overcome the ignorant arguments that opponents make on this issue.

6 Describe in some detail your position on same-gender marriage. Once again, I am at a loss for how to construct a longer response: I support full marriage equality and access for same-gender couples without restrictions or limitations of any kind. Same-gender couples should have full rights to marriage as an institution with all the rights and privileges pertaining thereto. Anything else is absurd.

7 If elected, how will you actively educate residents of your community about myths and misconceptions regarding the LGBT community? **As I have over the past three decades, I will speak out about these issues at every opportunity and in as many forums as I can gain access to. I will use the power of political office to pass resolutions and join the GLBT community in press conferences. I will write op-ed pieces and letters to the editor, appear on television and radio programs, and I will write sarcastic songs about the opposition to GLBT equality and their misguided ideas which I will sing, while accompanying myself on guitar, at public rallies, on television programs, and in front of my school classes.**

8 Since Police Officer Standardized Training (POST) does not require that police officers be educated about the LGBT community, how will you assure that your city's police officers are provided appropriate training on this subject? **In the City of Santa Cruz, we already require all employees, including police officers, to attend sexual harassment trainings in which GLBT issues are now a standard part. I will continue to check periodically on the content of the trainings and work to insure that we do not slip backwards on this important commitment. I'm sure that we are not perfect in this area and that continued pressure will be necessary to improve the content of these trainings and the**

frequency of the trainings as well. I will work closely with the Chief of Police to have him make this a priority for his departmental training as well.

9 If you are elected, what steps will you take to strengthen the city's relationship with the LGBT community? I feel that we already have a strong relationship. City departments, including the police, work closely with the GLBT community on the planning and execution of the Pride events each June (and the Pride parade is the only event left in the City of Santa Cruz that still receives some free service from the City after our current fiscal crisis caused us to institute new fees for public events). The leaders of the GLBT community in Santa Cruz know that I am accessible and available to help them respond to any problems or to work on any area where there is a perception that we can advance equality for the GLBT community. If I am re-elected, I am sure we will continue to work together to make Santa Cruz even more of a model community with respect to GLBT rights.

10 Many local cities provide proclamations for LGBT Pride celebrations. What will you do to ensure that your city does so after you are elected? I was the first Mayor in Santa Cruz history to create such proclamations in 1981, and I am not about to let any of our Mayors get away with not producing them when they are requested. I do intend to work with the organizers of Pride to make sure that the requests come in for the proclamations in a timely fashion so the City Hall staff are not burdened by their production at the last minute, as has occasionally happened in the past.

11 If you are currently in an elected position, please specifically describe what you have done to include LGBT people on commissions, boards, etc. I have appointed or voted to appoint members of the GLBT community to virtually every board and commission in the City. This includes the most visible and powerful commissions, like the Planning Commission and special task forces. I have had GLBT community members as the top staff in my campaign committees, e.g., treasurer for several campaigns and manager for one campaign. In each of these cases, I am proud to say that the appointments were not token selections. We have a large enough and open enough GLBT community in Santa Cruz to make principled selections of GLBT community members based on their qualifications as the best candidates for the positions to which they are appointed.

12 Are you willing to participate in significant events in the LGBT community such as June Pride celebrations and the annual BAYMEC dinner? I have never missed a Pride Celebration since they started in Santa Cruz. I participate in the planning of the event and as a monitor in the parade, and I am often on stage as a performer and/or public official. I also have helped organize the

ACLU participation in the events each year for the past ten years or so. I have been active in many other LGBT events in the past, such as “A Gay Evening in May,” Youth Leadership Awards, etc., and will continue to do so in the future. Because, as I said above, recognition of the GLBT community as an active and important part of our overall community is critically important, I do my best to participate in as many such events as possible. I attended almost, but not every, BAYMEC dinner and fundraiser to which I have been invited over the past couple of decades. I was there this year and last for sure, but not sure which years I might have missed.

13 If you receive the BAYMEC endorsement, will you display it on your campaign literature? I will use the BAYMEC endorsement on any literature I print after I receive it. I hope I get it and, equally important, that it comes soon enough to get included in my campaign literature. I have displayed proudly in all past literature.

14 Please provide us with a list of lesbian, gay bisexual, or transgender individuals who have endorsed you. Marge Frantz, David Kirk, Kaleo Kaluhiwa, Sarah Rabkin, Cece Pinheiro, Darlene Wilcox, Larry Friedman, Tom Ellison, Paul Wagner, Robert deFrietas, Gigo deSilvas, Bruce Gabriel, Alan Savat , Gene Smith, Jane MacKenzie, Richard Spencer, Shawn Gould.

15 Please provide us with a list of organizations or individuals who have endorsed you. Please see list beginning on next page: [For an up-to-date list of endorsements, select the Support & Endorsements link on the web site, or go directly to http://www.mikerotkin.com/pdf_files/support.pdf.