

City Council Candidates Forum October 13, 2002

At RQN's Annual Dinner on October 13, 2002. **Jan Marx** and **Dave Romero** candidates for Mayor, **Allen Settle, John Ewan, Andrew Carter** and **Paul Brown**, candidates for two City Council openings, answered written questions submitted by the RQN Board and the audience. The following questions were among the many asked. The candidates' responses follow.

Q. Environment, business and neighborhoods are the three sides of the City triangle that everyone agrees on. Responsibility for these three is given to the Natural Resources Manager, the Economic Development Manager, and the Neighborhood Services Manager. *Do you support parity in the job descriptions and compensations for these three positions, YES or NO?*

YES: Marx, Romero, Settle, Ewan, Brown

DON'T KNOW: Carter

Q. A number of cities have successful ordinances to maintain their rental housing stock. These ordinances require annual inspections to ensure compliance with state and local laws and can be structured to be self supporting through a small annual fee. *(The candidates received material prior to the forum containing a model rental ordinance from the City of Azusa). Would you support a similar ordinance in San Luis Obispo, YES or NO?*

YES: All Candidates

Q. *If you voted on the State Housing Quota of 5,450 housing units allocated to the City of San Luis Obispo, please state how you voted, YES or NO?*

NO: Marx, Settle, Ewan

If you did not vote, how would you have voted, YES or NO?

NO: Romero, Carter

DON'T KNOW: Brown

Q. The General Plan was passed by the City Council in 1994. It contains a major program to protect neighborhoods called the "Neighborhood Wellness Plans". This has never been implemented. *What action would you take to implement the Neighborhood Wellness Plans?*

A. **All candidates favored the Neighborhood Wellness Plans. Paul Brown thought that code enforcement is currently too reactive and should be more pro-active. Andrew Carter echoed the comments about code enforcement and added that the process for public participation needed to be improved as well. John Ewan supported the addition of an additional staff person for neighborhood issues. Dave Romero felt that our neighborhoods are deteriorating and the program should be implemented.**

Q. Approximately 12,000 Cal Poly students live within the City of San Luis Obispo. This has driven up rents and the price of housing. Cal Poly has committed enough housing for future increases, but only 800 units toward the existing deficit. This leaves approximately 11,000 students still living in the city. *How would you influence Cal Poly to build more on-campus housing?*

A. **In general all of the candidates agreed that more pressure should be exerted on the Trustees in Long Beach to provide more student housing.**

Jan Marx stressed the need for public/private partnerships. Allen Settle felt that no new students should be enrolled until housing resources are in place. He believes Cuesta College should be persuaded to contribute student housing as well. Paul Brown discussed the need for more activities and amenities to keep students on the campus. Andrew Carter opined that Cal Poly needs to build more on-campus housing and the City Council needs to be more aggressive on this issue.

Q. There have been proposals by City Staff and real estate developers to increase the density in our established R-1 neighborhoods. *How do you feel about this?*

A. **The candidates all felt strongly about preservation of the R-1 zone. Dave Romero stated that the R-1 zones were already fairly dense. John Ewan said that increasing density works well in certain areas but that R-1 should be maintained for families. Jan Marx believes that neighborhoods should be defined, each neighborhood should have its own philosophy and the property owners should decide how dense they want their neighborhoods to be. Allen Settle stressed increasing density in the new annexation areas, not in existing R-1 neighborhoods.**

Q. *Would you support a ¼% increase in the County Sales Tax to purchase open space and park properties, YES or NO?*

YES: Marx, Romero, Settle, Ewan

NO: Brown

MAYBE: Carter

Candidate responses to question posed by **RQN News**

Q. If you are elected to the Council, what would be the most important thing you would focus on to improve the quality of life in San Luis Obispo neighborhoods?

DAVE ROMERO: To improve Quality of Life in neighborhoods, I would a) increase enforcement of current regulations, b) work cooperatively with Cal Poly and Cuesta to encourage the construction of on-campus housing, and c) initiate a study of the creation of a student-housing zone between Sierra Vista Hospital and the Railroad tracks.

PAUL BROWN: Students need to live near other students and families need to live near other families. Both students and the long-term residents of this City need and want this. Student housing needs to be built so families can again live in the single- family units around town.

ANDREW CARTER: Lobbying Cal Poly and the CSU to build more on-campus student housing. Fewer students in the neighborhoods means more rental housing available for families which means a better of quality of life for us all.

JAN MARX: Introduce a Rental Inspection program like that of Azusa, b) support a full time field officer for code enforcement at budget time, c) make sure the neighborhoods are fully represented in the Housing Element update process and, d) create a neighborhood position, with equal status to positions such as those held by the Economic Development Manager and the Natural Resources Manager, if budget constraints allow.

