

Questions from the 2018 Candidate Forum

Traffic/Roadways-

- 1. What level of commitment do each of you have to slow building until traffic is addressed adequately and improves? Do you have a plan, and if so what is it?**

I understand how frustrating it is to hear about developments in our town when traffic is as bad as it is. However, we also need to realize that most of that traffic is coming from new hotels, wineries and businesses north of us, in Napa and other Napa Valley communities. Even if we stopped all development, the traffic will get worse.

On the other hand, using development to help pay for needed road improvements is the best way to move forward. For example, the Watson Ranch project will pay for two-thirds of the Newell Extension, which in turn will provide a parallel road to Highway 29. The project will also generate the types of new businesses we want (restaurants, pubs, shops, etc.) which also helps us pay for local services.

Specifically, in the next two years, we can expect to see Devlin Road completed from Napa to Green Island Road; we should see our traffic signals on Highway 29 better synchronized; the environmental review and design completed for the Soscol Junction overpass (by the Wine Crusher statue); and a funding plan for the Newell Extension.

- 2. How do you propose to stop the rampant stop sign runners in American canyon?**

Traffic enforcement is the best way to handle this and other local traffic conditions. We are fortunate to have two traffic officers. For now, their priority is on ensuring our local schools are safe from bad drivers, then they move on to other "hot spots."

A second approach is "traffic calming," or modifying the road to encourage slower speeds and better traffic behavior. An example we will be seeing soon is the new sidewalk on Donaldson Way. There will be a larger section of sidewalk at some of the intersections, which will make drivers slow down, since there won't be as much roadway. Slowing local traffic will improve safety.

- 3. Transportation congestion is a growing problem. It is apparent that addressing the regional housing issue must happen. Widening or overpasses are long-term solutions but costly and take decades to completes (Ex. Jameson Canyon took 2 decades). Given this predicament, how can American Canyon work with the county and up valley cities to ensure that they take n their fair share of housing? Absent this, their workforce housing will continue to be supplied by American and Vallejo making traffic worse.**

I agree, Up Valley cities have ignored the need to address either workforce housing or increased traffic capacity, and now the problem is impacting their economic health. The most immediate solution is to support the 1% increase in the hotel tax, which would be earmarked for workforce housing. This would at least provide money to deal with the issue. Up Valley cities could use that money to purchase housing sites and then leverage that to build workforce housing.

We can also use everyone's participation in the Napa Valley Transportation Authority (NVTA) to work on other solutions, particularly traffic-related. I represent the City on that body.

- 4. More industrial park development means more trucks on our roads. Any solutions to ease that burden?**

The completion of Devlin Road will be the best solution. Trucks will be able to use this parallel road to go up and down the industrial areas on the west side and reduce the need to use the highway.

5. What is your timeline to connect “Ruins” to Highway 29/bypass?

I’m not sure if you mean extending Rio Del Mar from the highway to Newell Extension; or extending Newell around the project to Highway 29 at Green Island Road. So, I’ll answer both!

Rio Del Mar will be extended in the early phases of building Watson Ranch, which includes the “Ruins.” As such, we should see something in the next five years. Extending Newell will take longer, since it is linked to phasing of the project. It will also require other contributions, such as from a property owner that wants to annex into the City and the possibility of securing grant funds to complete it. Ten years is an ambitious timeframe, unless we are fortunate to receive grant funding.

6. Please discuss your ideas on how to support alternative forms of transportation in our community?

As a member of the NVTA, this is one of the big issues we wrestle with. We just finished analyzing our bus services and will be making changes that should improve usage. One of the most successful routes are the express busses that take people from this area to BART stations. They will be enhanced.

A second strategy is to improve bike and pedestrian routes. Donaldson Way sidewalk is now underway. We also hope to secure funds from the recently approved toll increase to build bike paths along highway 29 through town. This could also include undergrounding the utilities and including some landscaping and curbs/gutters. This will improve circulation *and* aesthetics!

Schools/Children of the Community

1. What is your plan for providing safe walking routes on Donaldson Way between the highway and the American Canyon Middle School? (for children who walk to school)

Good News! This project is underway as I write this response. It should be completed in the next 3-4 months.

2. What can we do to provide more safe activities for our teens?

First, we should encourage them to take advantage of our outdoor assets, the wetlands and Newell Open Space. We already provide a number of events, such as S’mores and Meteors, and Wild American Canyon—we can continue this trend. Second, we can actively recruit businesses that cater to teen and young adult ages, such as miniature golf, bowling and similar activities.

3. You mentioned that your kids *went* to the American Canyon schools, how would you address the safety of your children going to and from school today?

For the record, my kids were already grown by the time my wife and I came to American Canyon. Safety is a major concern for parents while their children are in school. We do what we can, by providing School Resource Officers at our Middle School and High School. The School District also expanded wellness and mental health services at our schools.

4. Napa Valley School District has to cut its budget due to declining enrollment. This could mean eliminating 7th period electives and 43 teachers. American Canyon is growing. We are supposed to get a new elementary and middle school for the school bond, but nothing has happened so far. Why don’t we become our own school district?

The new Middle School and replacement school for Napa Junction were scheduled to be built by the 2020 school year. My understanding is this may be delayed due to changes in key personnel. However, they will be built. As for our own school district, we are probably too small to be cost-effective, and we would have to “purchase” the existing schools from Napa Unified—that means asking the voters to support another bond issue.

5. What level of importance do each of you place on the need for more schools in American Canyon? How do you plan to address this to meet the needs of our students?

It is important to remind voters that the City Council does not have any direct control over the school system—that is Napa Unified School District’s responsibility. However, as noted above, a new middle school is planned for American Canyon, probably ready in the 2021 school year. A replacement elementary for Napa Junction should be ready at the same time. Lastly, if Watson Ranch is approved, a fourth elementary school will be added, which will eliminate the need for Vintage Ranch parents to send their children across the highway to Napa Junction.

6. Using an example from your children’s experiences at American Canyon Middle School and American Canyon High School, please describe how the city can financially support the seven-period school days?

As noted above, my children were grown by the time I got here. However, I did hear a great idea, which I cannot take credit for, but will pass on, anyway. The suggestion is to preserve the seventh period for freshman and sophomores, but offset it at the Senior level with college classes and work internships. That may not save all the money that’s needed, but could help offset the negative academic impacts.

Environmental /Parks

1. You keep talking about growth. What’s your plan for wildlife, animals and open space?

I have been a strong supporter of open space in American Canyon. As City Manager, I helped to secure the Newell Open Space and the Wetlands. I helped establish the Open Space Advisory Committee and have the support of most of its members. I served on the Board of the Napa Valley Vine Trail, which would provide a bike/pedestrian trail from the Vallejo Ferry to Calistoga. I am also a member of the Land Trust of Napa County.

By ensuring adequate open space, we create the environment/habitat for wildlife to flourish.

2. Our older parks are in desperate need of repair. Are any of the candidates willing to commit to funding the Parks and Recreation Department with funds to begin repairing our deteriorating basketball courts, tennis courts and the skate park?

I advocated increasing the amount of money we set aside for capital replacements (such as roads and parks) for two years now, and with a new City Manager, I hope the Council will adopt that policy for next year’s budget. That is the easy part, however—the real challenge is finding the money. The proposed new hotel could generate over half a million dollars per year. We should earmark that money towards repairing our parks and streets.

3. Since California is seasonally on fire, how would you improve American Canyon’s ability to remain free of fires?

I would be remiss if I did not emphasize that our Fire District is second to none in providing excellent fire and medical services. I have great confidence in them. In fact, I was recently endorsed by the Firefighters Association. We also developed our CERT program (Community Emergency Response Teams) and have great volunteer leadership. Lastly, although we have been very fortunate to be spared from the devastating fires that hit Napa and Sonoma Counties last year (and Lake County every year, it seems), I asked the Fire Chief to explore how we can improve our fire fighting capacity in light of this “new normal.”

4. Are you willing to maintain a strict anti light pollution policy despite development, in order to support the birds of the pacific flyway, which our wetlands have an important role in?

I believe light pollution should be one of the issues considered in the environmental review of a project. There are ways to minimize lighting, which could also save energy.

5. I understand there is a new water supply source that has been identified for American Canyon. I would like to hear the details, like when the source will become available and how it will affect our water bills?

About a year ago, the City agreed to purchase 4000 acre feet of water from the Sites Reservoir, near Maxwell CA (northern California). The Reservoir is expected to be online in roughly 10 years. The costs will mostly be borne by new development and not the rate payers. To put this amount of water in perspective, we currently use less than 3000 acre feet of water. At present, our water entitlements include 5200 acre feet of State Water (although we assume on average about 3500 acre feet will actually be available), 2000 acre feet of treated Vallejo Water and another 500 acre feet of emergency water from Vallejo. This does not include our recycled water capacity of up to 1000 acre feet.

In other words, we have enough water supply to accommodate current and planned growth. And our new water rates include provisions to better help us deal with the next water drought.

Business/Tourism

1. What plans, or how do you plan to help the Family Resource Center assist families who are low income/socio-economically challenged all throughout the year, but especially at the holiday season?

We should provide financial support for the FRC, since they support our less fortunate residents. The City should also work with the County and seek support from them to help fund FRC. I have worked with FRC towards this end in the past and will continue to do so.

2. What about another push to get a “regular” post office? Trader Joes? Theater and high end restaurants in American Canyon?

On the post office, we have offered space at City Hall at very competitive rates, but the Post Office has declined. We will continue to work with Congressman Mike Thompson to improve the facility or at least increase the hours and service levels.

As for other business opportunities, I believe our best chance is the proposed Napa Valley Ruins and Gardens (Watson Ranch). This will be a unique destination that can attract the types of new businesses we seek. As for a grocery store, I do not believe Trader Joes will come here when they have a store in Napa. However, I do believe we are ready for a third grocery store, and I would support something similar, such as a Sprouts or Nugget.

- 3. I can buy groceries in American Canyon, but I can't buy business office attire or shoes. I can go to the gym here, but I can't buy good gym clothes and quality gym shoes. I can go out to dinner here, but not to a higher end restaurant. What are your plans to attract better business's here to meet the needs of the community? We want to shop "local" but there aren't many choices.**

As noted above, the Ruins is likely to be our best chance for fine dining and specialty shops. For other retail services, we will need to grow our population before we can expect more retail. For example, we had a shoe store and bike shop in town, but both failed.

- 4. You talk about tourism, What about entertainment and outings for resident things like bowling, miniature golf, rock climbing wall & jump places, Scandia, movie theaters.**

I believe our demographics support family-oriented businesses such as you list. Once the Broadway District Plan is completed next year, we will be in a better position to attract these types of businesses, since much of the land use challenges will have been resolved.

Community/Personal

- 1. There is much talk about economic development, traffic and bringing business to American Canyon. But, what are you going to do as a council member to make things such as daily life in the city better for residents who are already living here? How will you retain the residents you have? (P.S. don't mention traffic)**

Quality of Life is a key ingredient for a successful community, and I am proud that American Canyon is a safe and welcoming community. But it takes money to provide great services, including funds to maintain/renovate our parks and streets. This is why you will hear me talking about the need for economic development, which also gets us more jobs, goods and services.

In fairness, there are a lot of things we can do better with existing staff and resources. The best way to tackle this is by setting standards that objectively define what we mean by "quality services." They need to be tracked and reported, so we know how well we're doing. And when we don't meet our standards, what we are going to do to correct it.

- 2. One of the things that I love about American Canyon is the sense of community. If it were to become a "destination", how would that sense be preserved? I don't want what happened to Napa to happen here?**

I believe we can develop the Ruins, as well as our Wetlands and Newell Open Space, so it is suitable for residents and visitors alike. Over time, the Ruins may become a very special area, and the market tends to reward that with higher prices. But we can also develop our highway corridor to be more local friendly, and actually target locals from Napa City to come to our local shops and stores. To do this, we need to establish a revenue plan, in which we determine the appropriate level of tourism, retail and industry. When we reach our targets, we need to be able to say no.

- 3. Question for the 3 new runners.... Why haven't you attended the city council meetings to observe what the current issues are? If you say you watch by television, that doesn't give you the opportunity to interact.**

As one of the incumbents, I don't need to respond, but I certainly agree that you need to get "up to speed" *before* you run—the voters shouldn't have to wait for someone's learning curve to kick in.

- 4. I would like to know in about 25 words or less, why do you think that you would make a good city council member for American Canyon? Would you visit neighborhoods to see how they are kept up?**

My 30+ years in local government finance and management, combined with over 25 years of community involvement—and eight years on the Council. (23 words). As for visiting neighborhoods, yes. I will set up regular Town Hall meetings in our neighborhoods, including our Mobile Home Parks.

- 5. How do you intend to regain the trust of the citizens who have lost trust in the city government due to its lack of transparency, truth, and accountability?**

I'm not sure that trust has been lost, although I acknowledge there's a lot of frustration. That is why, two years ago, I supported Mariam Aboudamous and voted to appoint David Oro, to the Council. This created a new majority, and we have seen a new direction since then. We have a new City Manager, and we are dealing with issues that were on back burners for too long—such as the water fund, Watson Ranch and traffic. Action is the best way to reduce frustration.

- 6. Outside of campaigning for city council (or being a council member), what do you do for the community of American Canyon?**

I am on the board of the Arts Foundation, Kiwanis Club, and used to be on the board of Relay For Life (until they shut down the AmCan Relay). I am involved in the Bocce League, a life member of the Parks Foundation and Friends of the Library, and contribute most of my Council stipend to community groups, such as Little League, Boy Scouts, and the Boys & Girls Club building campaign. In 2007, I received the "Gateway Award," the highest recognition for volunteering in American Canyon.

- 7. As a council member, you are one out of a body of five. You cannot make things happen without a consensus of the majority. Are you a team player or do you work better alone? And how do you plan to build consensus with your colleagues?**

I always start out as a team player, but when it becomes obvious the team doesn't want to address the critical issues facing the City, I will "break from the pack" as I did in 2016. I will always put the success of this community above any political alliances.

- 8. Before running for city council, or outside of city council, what is your community involvement?**

I answered that question above (#6).

- 9. Do you believe in gun control or crime control?**

I prefer a strong police department, and I believe we have one. Our Sheriff's Contract is an incredible deal that saves us money that we put back into law enforcement. As a result, we have several crime prevention programs other communities cannot afford, such as School Resource Officers, Community Resource Officers, K-9 Officers and Traffic Officers.

As for guns, the right to bear arms is protected under the Constitution.

- 10. Candidates often talk about their religious convictions (of focus in their lives). What about freedom from religion? How committed are you to a secular government?**

I tend to downplay my religious convictions, so I suspect this is a question for someone else. I support a secular government, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't be respectful of other people's religious views and lifestyles.

11. Now that the cannabis ordinance is in place, how are we prepared to deal with the possible increase in crime?

I believe the compromise ordinance we crafted will keep crime to a minimum. We do not allow retail dispensaries, only indoor cultivation in our Industrial Park. Those businesses will be required to have security plans in place before they will be approved. They are also subject to annual renewals, to ensure they stay in compliance.

12. Why would you be in favor of putting more impaired drivers on the road? If you are pro marijuana dispensaries?

I did not support dispensaries.

13. Years of talk about upgrading physical appearance of highway 29, throughout the years it has grown to look like a monster. Think (metaphorically) of a lady (American Canyon) wearing a beautiful wedding gown, but she arrives wearing a wet, soggy, muddy over coat (Highway 29).

It is undeniable that the highway 29 corridor (Broadway District) needs a lot of TLC. When the City first incorporated, the push was to adopt a Redevelopment Plan to rebuild that corridor. The voters ultimately rejected that strategy, and as a result, improvements have been piecemeal over time. Currently, we will finish our Broadway District Specific Plan (BDSP) next year and that will facilitate a renaissance of sorts for that corridor. One critical first step is securing funds from the recently increased toll fees, which we can use to build sidewalks, bike paths, landscaping and other improvements on the highway.