

## **Candidates differ on issues: Adams backs green power plan, Mazzoni calls venture risky**

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Supervisor Susan Adams and former Assemblywoman Kerry Mazzoni haven't found much to agree on in their race for the San Rafael area's seat on the Board of Supervisors.

The two, invited to the Marin Civic Center press room to provide written answers to a series of questions during separate 90-minute sessions the other day, are even at odds on what the key issue is.

Adams provided a rare one-sentence answer: "It's all about the economy and jobs right now."

But Mazzoni said effective leadership is at issue: "There are several key issues in this race and they all hinge on sensible, thoughtful and collaborative leadership." Mazzoni added, "I have wondered 'Who is minding the store?' We have a \$20 million deficit, a \$20 million-plus computer debacle, a public safety building plan that is over budget and not sensitive to the local community, and the county acting as a venture capitalist in funding the very risky Marin Energy Authority."

Here is what the candidates had to say on other matters. Answers have been edited for length and clarity.

Q: Should the county spend \$60 million to build the first phase of a \$100 million public safety complex near the dog park at the Civic Center?

Adams: She noted three grand juries supported the need for an earthquake-proof facility, and that funding for the project was being set aside before she was elected.

"The Civic Center Frank Lloyd Wright building is seismically safe for visitors but does not meet the criteria for remaining operational throughout a disaster. It is unknown at this time what the exact costs will be but funds of up to \$58 million are available without asking the taxpayers to raise taxes. The final site is yet to be determined through an EIR process that is looking at multiple sites including 'off campus' sites."

Mazzoni: "I do not support the building of a public safety facility at the dog park and adjacent property. The county must stay within its means. I believe a more sensible option, provided the costs and improvements pencil out, is purchase of the Marin Commons" three miles away on Los Gamos Road and retrofitting it with improvements, she said.

"I understand this is likely possible for much less than \$100 million, would yield a space adequate for county needs and provide excess space for either county operations consolidation and/or lease space to a private entity which in turn could provide a revenue stream for the county."

Q: Should the county get in the electricity business without a public vote by moving ahead with its Marin Energy Authority program to compete with Pacific Gas and Electric Co.?

Adams: "The Marin Clean Energy program will deliver electricity over the owned, operated, maintained and administered PG&E infrastructure and have guaranteed rates at or below PG&E's while delivering twice the amount of clean renewable energy.

"Instead of Marin using taxpayer dollars to build solar, wind or methane capture programs, now ratepayer dollars which were going to shareholders at PG&E will be coming back to Marin to leverage the development of our own local green energy.

"Every single ratepayer in Marin will have a choice, not just those who are registered voters who show up to vote in an election. If the county was asking for a tax rate increase to help pay for the program, then a vote may have been indicated.

"I am convinced MCE will be good for Marin, bringing in new green tech jobs, creating new clean energy and conservation programs and helping Marin residents easily do their part in reducing greenhouse gases."

Mazzoni: "I believe the county should have an advisory public vote before entering into this very risky venture, particularly since the county is facing a \$20 million deficit, state revenues are uncertain, and jobs are being lost."

Q: Do you support county plans to ban plastic bags and tax paper bags at retail outlets?

Adams: "The best place for this to happen would be through a statewide approach," she said, noting a "spinning gyre" of plastic fills an area in the Pacific twice the size of Texas.

"There are cleaner and greener alternatives, including reusable bags. I encouraged my colleague to slow down and circle back with the retailers and city and town councils and the public to see what is possible. The discussions are not over yet and there would still be more opportunities to weigh in. Personally, I use reusable bags and hope others would make the switch."

Mazzoni: "While I believe it is imperative that plastic use be reduced and ultimately go the way of the dinosaur, I think there are more pressing issues for the county to be addressing at this time.

"Educating the public which has been done through a variety of channels is an effective way to reduce the use of plastic and paper bags and does not require county staff time to implement.

"I find it curious that the board did not find it important to go to a public advisory vote on the risky Marin Energy Authority but now is talking about a vote on whether or not to implement a bag ban."

Q: The supervisors' personal aide program, launched in 1972 for \$12,000, has expanded at a cost that approaches \$1.1 million. Should the county continue to provide two personal assistants for each supervisor?

Adams: "The aides are instrumental in helping the supervisors address the many and

varied issues in our districts. I have had one full-time and one part-time aide to assist me and regularly receive positive feedback about how constituents have been assisted.

"This current budget reduces costs in the Board of Supervisors' budget as well as in other departments. The Board of Supervisors has also declined salary increases during these trying financial times."

Mazzoni: "High quality staff is key to good constituent service and thoughtful decision-making. Given the county's budgetary problems, supervisors' budgets should reflect the same or greater level of cuts as those of other departments. That may necessitate a reduction in staff."

Q: Should the county provide free health and other services to illegal immigrants?

Adams: "As a licensed health care provider, my position is that people who need health care should be able to access health care regardless of income, race or other status. Health care is a public health issue. I would rather treat tuberculosis than have someone spreading the infection in the community or ending up in a hospital with much higher costs."

Mazzoni: "The county should do all it can to pressure the state and federal government to enforce immigration laws. Almost all people should participate financially in their health care, even if it is a minimal amount. In that way they are invested in their health and that leads to a healthier community."

"As it relates to education, children of illegal immigrants are not here out of their own choice. It is better and less costly to our community in the long run that they receive a quality education rather than be out of school and subject to gang activity, ignorance and other negative influences."

Q: What's your view of county budget cuts? Which spending priorities would you change?

Adams: "Marin County is in the top of all 58 counties in terms of fiscal health. The county has the highest available bond rating, the lowest debt, healthy capital reserves and among the lowest in per capita spending of comparable counties. We were prepared for the rainy day and the reserves have allowed us a glide path toward a structural rebalancing of the budget. Over the last three years, 170 positions will have been eliminated as the county has streamlined programs."

Mazzoni: "First, I would have joined supervisors Arnold and Kinsey in voting against the \$950,000 loan to the Marin Energy Authority. The county should not be taking such risks with taxpayer dollars at such a difficult economic time. I believe the county has made some good first steps to close its budget gap, the reduction in positions is a good example."