

Leonard Ely III Replies to 2016 City Council Candidate Questions

1. **Reason for running:** What are the top three goals you want to achieve in the next four years on the city council?

Try and make the Council more proactive, work to make the Council more responsive to changes in the City, provide solutions to issues.

2. **Experience:**

Non-incumbents: Describe your personal experience with Palo Alto City government and recent issues that have come before public hearings at the city council or other board and commissions. What was your role? (For example, did you send an email, speak to the Council, lead a group of citizens, etc.?) How extensively were you involved?

Incumbent (Kniss): What have been your major initiatives on the Council? Describe your role and the results.

I have very limited involvement in City politics. I am getting involved because I am tired of everyone complaining about City government, including myself, but not doing anything to change it.

3. **Affordable Housing:** Regarding building affordable housing, we are faced with several problems: lack of land, lack of interest on developers' part and the cost (one unit costs \$400-600,000). Please address:

- How do we get such housing built?
- Can we even build enough housing to satisfy demand?
- Should the City increase development fees to fund more affordable housing?

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- We first have to identify what type of housing is needed. Then identify the solution/s. Present them to the City and see if we/they have the political will the move forward with the solution/s.
- Not in the short run
- This something that I would need to look into.

4. **High-density housing:** What are your thoughts on "high-density housing" in Palo Alto? How much should be built and for whom?

This term is somewhat of a catch all. As stated above we need to identify the needs and then present the solutions.

5. **Jobs/Housing Imbalance:** Office creation is outpacing housing development. Please address:

- How much, where *and what kind of* office space can Palo Alto sustain?
- Do you support extending the annual office space development cap?
- Should the City consider placing a moratorium on new office development?

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- At this time not being on the “inside” I don’t believe I can answer that question in a knowledgeable way.
- No
- No

6. **Growth:** There has been a lot of discussion about the demand for housing as well as potential impacts, and how fast it should increase in Palo Alto. How does this compromise the quality of life of local residents, including school enrollment, and what mitigations do you support?

Solving the housing job/office imbalance will take time but the one thing that I am sure of is that we need to get started now.

7. **Cumulative Impacts:** Commercial projects are evaluated on an individual basis, without looking at the cumulative impact on intersections, traffic and spillover parking in neighborhoods. Many traffic studies seem to have a finding of “no impact,” yet traffic continues to get worse. What changes in the way we evaluate projects would you favor?

I don’t have a one answer fits all answer to this. I would favor having developers participating in traffic mitigation measures but this would be predicated on the size and scope of the project. I don’t think that a build should be built in certain areas without adequate parking.

8. **Local Review:** What is your opinion of the Budget Trailer Bill 707’s (or similar bills) by-right exemption from environmental review?

DID NOT ANSWER

9. **Retail:** How would you support local retail? Specifically, how would you protect, support and possibly even extend ground-floor retail in our commercial and neighborhood commercial areas? How would you enforce existing laws?

Anytime you draw arbitrary lines you will have problems. I do not believe that the current “emergency ordinance” in regards to this issue is correct and should be let to expire and replaced with a more flexible ordinance.

10. **Accessory Dwelling Units (aka “Granny Units”):** Do you support zoning changes to enable the creation of additional second units, such as reduced minimum lot size, removal of parking requirements? If so, which ones? How do ensure these units don’t simply become short-term (Airbnb-type) rentals?

Again, zoning is not the way to solve this issue. I would be in favor of this but the implementation needs an overhaul.

11. **Parks:** The current Comprehensive Plan calls for the city to maintain 4 acres of in-town park space for every 1,000 residents. The actual ratio is now below this ratio as our population has grown. What should we do?

DID NOT ANSWER

12. **Dewatering:** What policies should the City set regarding the discharge and loss of water (as well as land settlement problems in neighboring properties) when basements are being built?

I just built a house and was able to not dewater. The settlement issue is something I have not considered.

13. **Single Family Individual Review (includes SSO, Eichler preservation):** Please address:

- What type of design guidelines should be developed to preserve neighborhood character?
- Is the current process working?
- If so, give examples. If not, what should be changed?

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- I think this is something that needs to be discussed within the neighborhoods. Restricting the use of the lot will reduce its value. You really can't do that after the fact. If everyone in the neighborhood understands that and is willing to place a deed restriction on their properties then I would be OK with that. However, it will never work as a checkerboard.
- Is the current process working? No

14. **Traffic/Commuters:** With so much traffic spreading into many neighborhoods, and with a lack of regional transportation plans, what do you propose Palo Alto should do to address employee traffic into town? How do you propose to ease the congestion on our arterial streets — especially during the rush hours — so fewer commuters will try to take unsafe short cuts through our residential neighborhood streets?

Jam Wase? I believe that we can make some changes to our current commute patterns and signals.

15. **Parking (RPP):** Do you support an expanded Residential Parking Permit Program? Please address:

- How should it be structured to protect neighborhoods?
- Should neighborhoods get determine which type of program is appropriate for them?
- What alternatives or additional mitigations do you support?
- Will you keep in place the commitment to phase out non-resident parking in the Downtown RPP district in 10 years?

Not sure that this has worked or ever will. Happy to look into it if elected and find a solution or solutions. This is a good example of an ordinance that was passed and has not worked. In my opinion the Council should have admitted it and either rescinded it or amended it.

- How should it be structured to protect neighborhoods? Of course.
- Should neighborhoods get determine which type of program is appropriate for them? I believe that they should be given solutions and the option to opt for one that they feel will work best. Again, with the caveat that if it doesn't work that we will try something else.

- Will you keep in place the commitment to phase out non-resident parking in the Downtown RPP district in 10 years? I have no idea.

16. Caltrain/HSR: What is your view on Caltrain's electrification plans, High Speed Rail and grade separations?

I support electrification of Caltrain, I am far from an expert on High Speed rail but I think it is something that we will be happy to have in 30 years, I don't see how you can have grade separation in Palo Alto.

17. VTA: What will be your strategy in dealing with the VTA to stop their proposed severe reduction of VTA bus service within Palo Alto, and to persuade them instead to improve their service in Palo Alto so more commuters working in Palo Alto will take VTA buses to their jobs in Palo Alto.

Unfortunately, as far as I know you can't force people to take a bus. I live right off of Middlefield and watch the buses go by empty or with 1 or 2 riders. What might be possible is to persuade VTA to use smaller buses at the north end of the county. I think this is strictly an economic issue and legislating the solution will just make the rest of the county subsidize our buses. Also, the environmental impact of underutilized buses is enormous.

18. Budget: How do you plan to fund the city's long-term pension and health benefits liability, which currently stands at \$500 million? How serious is the impact of this liability to the City's ability to provide services and amenities to residents?

Again, not being an insider and not fully understanding the possible solutions I am really not able to comment on this. I know it is there and I know that it is time to stop kicking the can down the road. These are the types of problems/issues that I want

19. Stanford: What is the most important aspect of the City's upcoming negotiation with Stanford regarding its General Use Permit?

I believe that the most important part of this negotiation will be to set a tone of cooperation rather than confrontation. I believe that both parties need to realize that we are attached at the hip and in most cases what is good for one is good for the other.

20. (Optional) Unasked Question: If there is a question you think we should have asked, ask and answer it.

Who was in charge of the restriping on California Ave and Middlefield along Jordan Middle School? I have no answer but I would like to see if they would send their 10 to 14 year old into the face of rush hour traffic on a bike.