

The Post recommends for Palo Alto City Council

Burt, Schmid, Kniss and Gray

The Palo Alto City Council race didn't attract many candidates this year and the campaigning hasn't been as heated compared with previous years. The reason is that the city is being run better than in the past, and there have been fewer controversies. We're not saying everything has been perfect.

But council has been working to reduce compensation and benefits in order to bring the budget in line, not just in the near term but in years ahead.

Flood control efforts are on track, the city is seriously addressing its infrastructure needs, neighborhood streets are being repaved, better and more energy-efficient streetlights are

being installed, emergency preparedness efforts are expanding

and planners are addressing the need to improve the California Avenue district, though we think they could have done that with a four-lane street instead of two lanes.

DAILY POST EDITORIAL

Solid contributors to council

So it's easy to recommend the reelection of the only two incumbents in this race, Pat Burt and Greg Schmid.

Individually, they each are strong members of the council who do their homework and ask intelligent, probing questions.

Burt, along with the rest of council, was in support of the 2008 state ballot measure for high-speed rail. But when he realized that voters were misled about the project, he became one of its strongest opponents, leading the charge in Palo Alto against this behemoth \$68 billion project.

While the project is now moving forward, Palo Alto needs Burt to stick up for residents and fight to reduce the negative aspects of high-speed rail.

Schmid, a former school board member who is completing his first term on council, has taken the lead on



PAT BURT



GREG SCHMID



LIZ KNISS



TIM GRAY

council when it comes to fighting the housing mandates being imposed on cities by the Association of Bay Area Governments, or ABAG. He's well informed on the topic and is working to bring down the number of homes Palo Alto would be required to allow.

About Liz Kniss

The Post also recommends Liz Kniss, a former Palo Alto school board member, councilwoman and mayor. She has spent the last 12 years as a county supervisor, and was considering a bid for state Senate but opted instead to run for council.

While we haven't been crazy about her nanny-state leanings, such as putting calorie counts on restaurant menu boards or pulling candy bars out of vending machines in county buildings, that's not the big picture. The big battle facing cities and counties is regaining control of their budgets from public employee unions, and Kniss has courageously stood up to the unions even when it meant they would bankroll candidates to run against her.

At a time when the city, with unfunded pension liabilities of \$300 million to \$600 million, needs to still make significant cuts, Kniss is up to the task.

As important to that, Kniss has a good ear for hearing concerns in the community and reacting to them. For example, earlier this year the Post discovered that VTA was planning to put

two toll lanes (called "express lanes" because they would also be available for free to carpoolers) on Highway 101 without a thorough public hearing process. She got busy and soon VTA responded by saying it would do a full-blown environmental study, which would include public hearings, before any final decision was made.

Kniss, with her depth of experience and knowledge about how government works at all levels, would be a valuable addition to council.

Gray in tune with Palo Alto

We're also pleased to recommend Tim Gray, an accountant who has been on the civic scene for years, consistently arguing against overdevelopment and for spending restraint. He says that before the city asks for a bond measure, which is likely next year, the city ought to be living within its means and prioritize expenditures so that sidewalks and streets are repaired.

Gray is not the snappiest speaker on the campaign circuit, but when you listen to what he says, he has a platform we think most Palo Altans would back. For those who are unhappy with the status quo at city hall, Gray is absolutely their best choice in this election.

In endorsing Gray we should note that Marc Berman is also an impressive candidate. But we were concerned by the fact that he sat for endorsement interview with the South

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Bay Labor Council, which includes the city's employees unions. The labor council later said it wouldn't endorse anyone in the council race and Berman said he wasn't seeking their endorsement.

Whatever the case, a council candidate should realize that they would have a serious conflict of interest if they were to accept help from the unions and then vote on the city's contracts with those very same unions.

Gray clearly understands this conflict and has properly criticized Berman on this point.

While council has made strides to reduce the lavish salaries and benefits the city bestows on its workers, more cuts needed to be made in the years ahead to keep the city out of trouble. This isn't an "anti-union" position, but a stance in favor of financial sustainability.

We hope Berman remains on the local political scene and applies for an opening on a city board or commission. That's the traditional way candidates get the experience necessary to be successful council members. If he can show he is independent of labor's influence, he has a bright future as a community leader.

However, in this election, the Post recommends Burt, Schmid, Kniss and Gray for City Council.

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