1 . Tell us something about yourself and why you have decided to consider running for Rent

Stabilization Board Commissioner.

I am a thirty -year plus resident of Berkeley. My wife and I have raised a son who attended Berkeley Public Schools, and we have both been active in Berkeley politics and community issues since the early 1990's. In that time I have served 3 terms on the Berkeley School Board (3 years as Board President) and my wife served 2 terms on the Berkeley Rent Stabilization Board. Both Pam (my wife) and I have also served on Commissions and Task Forces over the years (I currently serve as Chair of the Rent Board and on ZAB and the BOLT Library Board). I serve on the Mayor's Housing Task Force as well as the 4 x 4 Committee, and have worked with the Mayor's and Councilmember's offices on housing related issues.

I care deeply about Berkeley and about our shared institutions, and maintaining and protecting all of our communities from displacement and economic predation. I have had a commitment to our common, public spheres (our schools, our libraries, our housing protections) my entire adult life. These have been under attack nationally and even at the state level. It is imperative that we maintain them here in Berkeley.

2. How much time are you able to devote as a Commissioner? Are your hours  lexible? Can you

attend meetings until as late as 11:00 pm? Can you attend a two‑hour twice‑a‑month

daytime meeting?

I put in many hours on Committees, preparing for and at Board meetings, and meeting with community members and other electeds in my capacity as a Rent Board Commissioner. I will devote whatever hours are necessary, and can and will commit to late meetings and day-time meetings as well.

3. What experience have you had with Berkeley’s Rent Stabilization Ordinance, the Rent

Board’s staff and the elected Board?

I am running for re-election to the Rent Board. I have served over 3 years to date and would very much like to continue my service to the Board and the residents of Berkeley. I have become versed in the Ordinance and Just Cause eviction, am very comfortable and respect and admire our staff and the work that they do, and strive to stay on good terms with all Boardmembers. Further, I have been elected by my colleagues for two consecutive years to serve as Chair, and I am honored that they have placed their trust in me.

4 . Tell us about at least three issues that you consider important to tenants in Berkeley.

Repeal of Costa Hawkins is tops on almost every tenant advocate's list. I would include repeal or major revision of the Ellis Act to that as well. Locally, the demolition ordinance still needs some work, and I would add that registration of ALL units in Berkeley, not just rent-controlled units, is an important first step toward understanding market-rate rents, displacement, and other issues. This would have to be funded by or undertaken by the City and not the Rent Board, because our jurisdiction begins and ends with the Ordinance and Just Cause.

Finally, I want to get back to displacement/gentrification. This is the most important and significant issue facing not only Berkeley but the entire Bay Area and many other urban areas of California. There are no quick fixes for this. Property rights and greed allow and dictate the market. Vigilance in regard to enforcing our Ordinance and Just Cause as well as disincentivizing demolition and "owner" move-ins help a bit, but these are not going to prevent displacement by themselves. We all need to work on this issue, coming up with specific, local strategies. Council has to lead on this issue, the Rent Board has limited authority.

5. What is the role of Rent Board Commissioners? What powers do they have? What changes

do you think should be made in how the Rent Board operates?

The powers of the Rent Board are pretty clear: enforcing the Ordinance and Just Cause, as well as hiring, evaluating, and terminating the Executive Director. The Rent Board is not the employer of and has no authority over any employee other than the Executive Director.

The Rent Board is a Committee-driven body. That is, Committees, usually 3 or 4 of the Commissioners, do the research and discussions, with staff, and come up with recommendations. These are brought to the Board itself for discussion, revision, approval, or rejection. It is a system that works well when all Commissioners are participating.

I would not want to see major change in the operations or functions of the Rent Board. In any event, any major change would have to go to the voters, since the Ordinance was enacted by voter approval and remains in effect until the voters alter it.

6. What experience do you have organizing tenants? Please describe and include any thoughts

you have on how to better engage Berkeley tenants.

I was a co-founder of the reinvigorated Berkeley Tenants Union in 2013, and have served on its Steering Committee since then (except for a brief period after I was elected Chair of the Rent Board when I took a break to assess my ability to handle multiple roles). I have been active in membership, fund-raising, and visibility of BTU since 2013. In addition, I am a member of Tenants Together and support the work they are doing state-wide.

I have participated in a number of tenant actions in the past several years, including one here in Berkeley to draw attention to seismically unsafe buildings.

BTU has to expand its membership and become more efficient in working with elected officials and other community groups in advocating for tenants and tenants' rights in Berkeley. It is a slow process but I believe it is important work.

7. Market developers argue that building more market rate multifamily units is the only way

to lower the price of housing. What is your position on this theory? Please discuss your

thoughts on how Berkeley can increase the housing available and affordable to tenants

living on very limited income such as those living on government bene its, retirement

pensions, and others with very limited resources.

Market rate housing will not solve the housing emergency. It only benefits those who have the capacity (money, position) to afford these units. It is essentially trickle-down, supply side economics, which in my opinion is so much hooey. It is a neo-liberal, late-stage capitalistic fantasy, but a dangerous and damaging one.

Market rate housing also is the single largest cause of displacement and an overall increase in rents. It benefits developers and large property owners (usually absentee landowners) but does nothing for the real needs of Berkeley residents.

Now the difficult part; how to build truly affordable, sustainable housing for the residents of Berkeley who desperately need it. I want to point out that State efforts such as SB827 are not only counter-productive, they potentially penalize municipalities such as Berkeley that have built market-rate housing (current figures indicate that Berkeley has built 100% of its allocated market-rate housing ((AIRBAG)) but that number falls to probably less than 20% of very low and low income housing, and moderate income housing is even worse). We certainly need to strengthen and allocate funds to the Housing Trust Fund, though my issue with this approach is that it often takes many many years to built any affordable units, and it is subject to the politics and whims of City Council. For years under Bates those funds were not or were poorly allocated. I much prefer that each project incorporate truly affordable housing into its mix (BMR, that is, Below Market Rate units). This may or may not be under State jurisdiction, but even if it is we all need to advocate a change in that "exemption." The clear benefits of incorporating BMR housing into each development is that these more affordable units are spread around the City, and not concentrated, as they have been, in South and to some extent West Berkeley, a de facto segregation. It also brings units into existence and use when the project is completed, and not years afterward.

Developers must build BMR units as part of their projects. The City needs to hold developers more accountable with community benefits. This Council has been moving in the right direction toward that goal.

8. Is a pro‑tenant Rent Board capable of treating tenants, small, and corporate landlords fairly.

Yes, I believe so, if the Board adheres to the Ordinance and bases any rulings or policies on the Ordinance itself. It is the law, and it does apply to everybody.

9. How do you think rent and eviction controls are related to homelessness? Can the Rent

Board have any effect on the homeless situation?

Eviction protections can certainly help staunch homelessness in particular cases, but it does not fully address the problem. There has to be a 360 degree approach to homelessness: intake and counseling, job training where appropriate, mental health services, substance abuse services, as well providing transitional and permanent housing for those in need of it.

The Rent Board does and can have a very minimal effect on homelessness. To the degree that the RB and the City keeps low-income, fixed income, elderly, families, disabled folks, and students in their housing, it probably has a significant but invisible effect. The Board is limited in its jurisdiction to the Ordinance and Just Cause. By strictly enforcing these ordinances we can have some tangential influence on mitigating homelessness.

10. What do you consider to be your constituency or base of support? What organizations are

you af iliated with? What qualities would you bring to the slate.

I am first and foremost a tenant advocate. All tenants. But I can and do represent reasonable and responsible property owners and landlords, those who follow the law and do not abuse their power position. I am affiliated with Berkeley Tenants Union (on the Steering Committee) as well as BCA and BPA. In the late 90's I served on the Steering Committee of BCA; I have a long history with that progressive organization.

I believe I bring experience, compassion, an understanding of our Ordinance and the importance of enforcing it, the ability and willingness to work with others to meet our common goals.

11. Do you support the repeal of the Costa‑Hawkins Housing Act? If it were repealed, what

changes do you believe Berkeley should make to its Rent Stabilization Ordinance?

Yes, absolutely. Berkeley would have to register and roll in all rental units under the jurisdictioon of rent control. This would take some time and implementation, but it can be done, and probably would be in a two or three year period.

12. The Convention asks all candidates to sign a pledge NOT to run against or endorse against

the slate the Convention selects. Will you sign it? Do you think that the pledge is important?

Do you think it is fair?

Yes, I signed four years ago and would again. I understand the need and usefulness of the pledge, though pledges generally rub me the wrong way.

13. If you are nominated by the convention, will you agree, in concert with other slate

members, to hire a coordinator with full authority to make campaign decisions in

consultation with the slate? The slate will retain the power to determine an overall budget

and may replace the coordinator by a democratic process

Yes, if appropriate and if funds are available to do so. The circumstance of the November ballot are not known yet, and the need for a campaign coordinator would be determined by whether there are opponents and who those opponents are. But generally in a City-wide race a campaign coordinator might be essential, and I would readily advocate for one and participate in hiring.