

ELIZABETH PATTERSON ON THE ISSUES

October, 2007

Here you will find a sampling of Mayoral Candidate Elizabeth Patterson's thoughts and concerns on some of the pressing issues for our community:

- **A Positive Vision for Development (& the proposed Seeno project)** – Questions and Answers
- **Fair Campaigns and Campaign Finance** – Elizabeth's PLEDGE and her efforts to introduce clean campaign reform on the City Council
- **General Plan issues** – Questions and Answers
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A Positive Vision for Development (& the proposed Seeno project)

QUESTION: What would be the "positive" vision for development at Seeno?

I am passionate about Open Space. I see this project as an opportunity to protect Sky Valley. Seeno's project, as proposed, is a threat to both our local businesses and Sky Valley. Even though we have an Urban Growth Boundary Line in effect which takes a vote of all the voters in Benicia to change, it expires in 2023 unless renewed.

The Seeno Business Park will add growth pressures on Sky Valley. The General Plan open space protection programs require development impact fees to help buy conservation easements to permanently protect Sky Valley. The current draft Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) does not adequately address these growth inducing pressures and therefore does not provide these mitigation measures for protecting our open space.

I draw a line with Seeno and big boxes. It takes experience, guts and knowing when to say no to Seeno. I have the courage and strength and experience to say no to a project that does not meet our General Plan goals and policies. There is too much grading, too much traffic, too much air pollution and too much noise. I don't need to please the developer. I need to make sure Benicia gets an A+ business research and development project, not one that fails the General Plan.

This Seeno project will reflect who we are and the people who live here. We need to match the jobs with our demographics. The General Plan sets policy of matching jobs, housing and workforce. If we match the future jobs with our workforce, people who live here, we will reduce commute traffic.

Basic site planning can mitigate the severe environmental impacts of the Seeno project. There is too much grading proposed - over 9 million cubic acre feet of dirt (enough to fill Oakland Coliseum 63 times). Use the topography as an asset and reduce the grading by 70% -- or another way to view the site is to not grade slopes over 20-25%. Incorporate the natural drainages (intermittent streams) as an amenity for the site, much like what is done by Hewlett Packard in Roseville, Palo Alto and other places. This Seeno project proposes to fill the majority of the drainage (streams) and to concentrate the streams and habitat. This, in fact, will further fragment the habitat areas. This filling of these drainages (streams) is unnecessary with proper site planning.

The 35 acres of proposed retail is oriented to the I-680 freeway and will attract regional shopping and big boxes. By distributing the retail throughout the project at intersections (nodes) the retail would serve the business park and the local region without adding regional traffic. This is a major mitigation measure to reduce traffic.

There is an opportunity with the Seeno project to start at the ground level with alternative energy, green building, self reliant water supply, no net increase in runoff (avoiding flooding issues downstream), reduced need to drive, and a research and development campus environment that fosters innovation, invention and a 21st century economic development.

QUESTION: What is your thinking about our downtown? How can we get more diverse retail downtown - for instance there are too many realtors taking up good retail space. I like that downtown is walkable.

We just completed the Downtown Master Plan which identifies "nodes" of activity for eating places, retail shopping, and professional offices. [The 44-page Downtown Master Plan should be on the city's new website, but could not be located as of this writing. The Plan is downloadable on elizabethformayor.com - click here.]

The Master Plan identifies the need for "wayfinding". They make the interesting observation that 1st Street is a cul-de-sac of 11 blocks and that the gateway entrances from the freeway do not indicate where "downtown" is and the newcomer is left with turning right or left at Military and East Second. In addition to "wayfinding" which can be signified with street trees, one prominent sign could be placed (not so many that you can't read any of them) and other urban design elements. Once on 1st Street, there are improvements recommended for buildings, facades and use of unpaved parking lot and even the lawn at the State Historic Capital. A uniform street furniture program of benches is necessary, and also uniform hanging baskets, lights and other amenities that provide the sense of place and interest. The Plan also supports the General Plan recommendation of studying a Business Improvement District which is a voluntary assessment district that directs money into specific improvements or maintenance projects. Many communities throughout California use BIDs. The city should provide technical assistance for the downtown merchants as they consider a BID. Some of the advantages include fixing buildings that the owners can't or won't, improving street appearance, keeping the overall

upkeep of the street at a high level, improving the waterfront so that it is more than a parking lot, but in fact a destination point or a natural "anchor" for visitors to seek. There are many good ideas that should be explored.

And finally, the city needs to align its expenditures for economic development to include the Arsenal, arts tourism and other categories that currently are not coordinated with a strategic plan. The Economic Development Board recommended and Council accepted the strategic planning for this.

QUESTION: The town could either develop (1) with careful consideration of resident views or (2) largely dominated by outside businesses. For Benicia planning decisions and implementation of those decisions, how do you think the views of residents should be taken into account?

The Benicia General Plan is the expression of the common vision – it is a compact with the community of citizens, residents and businesses, and it is **the law**. The goals and policies should drive the nature and extent of development.

QUESTION: In what ways should the views of outside businesses be considered?

The views of outside business are welcome. But these views must be considered in conjunction with the General Plan Vision, its goal of sustainable development and the protection of Benicia's small town character.

QUESTION: How much financial influence should they have over the process?

Benicia prospers, in part, because of "outside" business. The challenge for the city is to balance the outside interests with the overarching goal of the Benicia General Plan goals and policies. This is fairly straight forward. By using the General Plan, one can create a matrix of goals and policies and "test" the outside business interest against these goals and policies. Seeno is an excellent example of failing this test. Other development projects are more nuanced and a more refined assessment is required.

Fair Campaigns & Campaign Financing

QUESTION: What do you think about the huge sums being spent on local election campaigns?

In January 2006 Elizabeth introduced clean campaign reform for action at the City Council. She proposed **Voluntary Expenditure Limits** of sixty-five (\$.65) per resident. Another proposal by Vice Mayor Schwartzman is for \$1.00 per resident. See the ordinance on the City's website for details. **This ordinance has NOT been adopted in either form - it is now June 2007.**

Elizabeth also introduced **campaign donation restrictions** for corporations with headquarters out of the city, county or state. (Note that Seeno is headquartered in Concord, California and Valero is headquartered in Texas.) This does not limit corporate officials or employees from supporting candidates of their choice - it only limits the corporations (with much more money behind them). Her proposed ordinance also introduced the posting of expenditures or contributions over \$1,000.00 within twenty-four (24) hours on the city website. Additional recommendations are that elected council members who received \$2,500 or more must recuse themselves from participating in a discussion or voting on a project by the source of the donation. **All of these proposals were rejected in May 2007.** This action by the council majority (Vice Mayor Schwartzman and Elizabeth Patterson voted in favor of these) rejects the public's advice, suggestions, and recommendations over several months. The council majority said that the public that showed up or wrote did not represent the majority of Benicia citizens. Elizabeth does not agree and will continue to support these clean campaign reforms.

MY PLEDGE:

I promise to abide by the Benicia Pledge on Fair Campaigns, AND IN ADDITION, I pledge not to take out-of-town or large corporate donations ... *(which means we need lots of donations from citizens like you).*

To view the draft ordinances on the Benicia City website, see:

- Voluntary Expenditure Limits Ordinance - <http://www.ci.benicia.ca.us/pdf/volunteerlimitsord.pdf>
- Campaign Finance Ordinance - <http://www.ci.benicia.ca.us/pdf/campaignfinanceord.pdf>

General plan

QUESTION: If, over the next 20 years, Benicia develops according to the general plan, how would it differ from a town developed according the dictates of Seeno, Valero, Amports, and the other large outside businesses seeking to dominate the process?

The Seeno project as proposed would tilt Benicia toward an Antioch or Fairfield kind of place. The identity of Benicia and its hills would be gone. The connection of historical Benicia – a town with a difference - would be broken and it would become simply yet another industrial park. We have a chance to create the vision of facilities matching our housing with new jobs, using our assets of hills, proximity to historic downtown, waterfront access (not available any place else on the Strait) and the ambiance or a very progressive and special place. One possibility could be a modern campus research facility. The topography could be used as an asset for the campus adjacent to trails walks along riparian corridors, offices built within the topography in a true campus like setting all within walking and bicycling trails to vast open space in Sky Valley and the Tri-City open space lands. Think of an executive hotel built on different levels with fantastic

views. The alternative view by Seeno, is flat terraces with tilt up garages for low end limited industrial.

Valero is Valero. It is a refinery that processes oil. My vision is to develop a cap and trade policy that begins with our schools and city buildings to reduce greenhouse gases by using solar panels and replacing our fleets of vehicles with zero emission cars and also establishing school bus service again to reduce single auto trips. This approach (basically meeting the goals of AB 32) would enable Valero to be in business for a very long time, with less pollution.

Amports is a port facility of little benefit to Benicia. We are in the planning stages for the vision for what the port could evolve into. Whatever that is it must be compatible with the Lower Arsenal's history and small businesses.

Community services

QUESTION: What are your priorities for development of community services?

For a small town, Benicia has many community services. I would like to focus on youth and senior services. Our youth need to have a venue for creative efforts such as performing arts, film, poetry and music. Our seniors need to have more inter action with others and access to downtown and cultural events.

I would like to see more positive programs for our youth instead of focusing on drugs, driving and all the negative aspects about being young. There are many opportunities to link youth to environmental awareness, senior support (painting homes, trimming trees, community gardens, and other tasks that some of our seniors cannot do or afford).

Most important, we need to have medical services that meet "drop in" needs as well as some first line response for emergencies. We are totally dependent on regional resources which may be a problem in a catastrophic event.

QUESTION: What types of recreational facilities that need development?

Outdoor "pick up" basketball is missing. But I think we have done good for baseball, football, soccer, indoor basketball, bocce ball, tennis, and skateboarding. See me comment above about performing arts.

QUESTION: Will Benicia ever have a community center?

Yes. Mills should work as our community center. At least it is a start, is in the center of the community and has many amenities

The Arts

QUESTION: I live in the Arsenal in the work/live portion. One hears about development for the city, and we think that the Benicia arts community should be recognized as one of the best and expanded. It seems that culture takes a back seat and it is the backbone of a society to help it exist.

I share your concern and I respect the arts community which drew me here to Benicia. I will establish the Arts Commission that is called for in the General Plan. We should be working on a performing arts center and now is the time since these efforts take so long.

The Economic Development Board is going through a "branding" process that most likely will capture the essence of Benicia is the arts.

Another concern about expanding the arts community is the rising property values that could make it impossible for artists to live here. There are approaches to this problem that have been used in other parts of the county. A trust can be established for live/work quarters that essentially guarantees affordable space in perpetuity. We should explore these possibilities.

Disaster planning

QUESTION: How could Benicia's plan for disasters such as a massive earthquake be improved?

We could accelerate BERT training by letting BERT lead on the training at Mills instead of having to depend on the Fire Department staff and facility. We should ensure that we have a current list of medical people who may be available. We should enter into an MOU with the federal Maritime Administration in order to have the Suisun Ready Reserve Fleet respond to our needs. Their fleet can house, feed and attend to victims. They also have cranes that may be useful.

We should avoid putting people at risk such as development that may be inappropriate. We should have specific plans for the step by step process of providing water in the event the water line from the SWP North Bay Aqueduct breaks (our only supply of water). We should enter into a regional response planning process.

QUESTION: What do we have in terms of disaster centers and how could the set-up be improved?

We have an Emergency Operations Center at the Fire Department. There are table exercises conducted for city staff and elected official. There are numerous caches around town with supplies in the event of a catastrophic event. We need to have satellite centers in the event the whole city goes down. We need to have a public awareness about evacuation routes and public education about what to do in the event Valero has a major event. We have resources now, but we have not put together a book (easy and user friendly) that would be a Benicia emergency response "owner's manual".

Transportation

QUESTION: Traffic - How will the proposed Seeno Project affect traffic?

The Seeno project, as currently proposed, is to be phased over 25 years. The DEIR (draft environmental impact report) anticipates a 240% increase in vehicle trips per day by build-out of the business park. This means intersections off East 2nd will become impossible, and Semple School will be surrounded by traffic with severe pollution impacts from tailpipe emissions from cars and trucks coming off I-780 and streaming up and down East Second at peak hours. Noise pollution will also increase significantly.

Proposed mitigations for these impacts are either inadequate or wholly unacceptable, for instance:

- the widening of I-780 from East 2nd to Columbus Parkway
- the provision for a "free lane" coming off the I-780 freeway, going north, around Semple School
- the proposed extension of Industrial Way to Lake Herman Road from East 2nd, which will bring daily commute traffic, including heavy trucks, coming from Lake Herman Road and I-680 into the proposed business park.

All of these traffic impacts and the proposed mitigations will permanently change the character of Benicia and pose public health and safety hazards, especially in surrounding neighborhoods and for Semple School children.

QUESTION: Transportation - What can we do about our need for better public transportation to get to world-class events, cultural resources and BART?

We have improved our transportation service in the last couple of years, but there is much more to be done. First, without a late Ferry Service, people cannot go to many of the world-class events. Benicia needs to have a working relationship with Vallejo and the Ferry Service. Better yet would be ferry service to Benicia. There are possibilities for such service with Martinez and perhaps Antioch.

"Follow the money" is good policy and these days. Homeland Security is the source of many funds. There is pending legislation for Bay Area Emergency Ferry Service which would actually fund regular ferry service as part of a "redundant" transportation system. We need to have routine meetings with Bay Area Water Transportation agencies and foster ferry service for Benicia. Studies show that ferry service in Benicia is much more popular than the proposed train.

QUESTION: Transportation - Why does everything have to go to Vallejo, and then go to whatever destination?

The City's Transportation Manager is working on this. As soon as Vallejo gets its transportation staff on board, we will be able to have express service to Benicia. We need to consider rerouting our express BART service to Concord (Pittsburg) so BART

commuters can find a seat. The current Pleasant Hill station is far enough along on the route that the seats are often taken. We also need to advertise our Amtrak Bus connection from Benicia (by the City Park) to the Martinez train station.

The biggest boost to express service would be an Intermodal Transportation Station located on the Seeno Project site. By locating the ITS (bus primarily) at the business park site, we can reduce the traffic that is expected with development of any project and also make it easier for commuters from Southamton and downtown to get to the ITS. This would also help the environment by avoiding the Suisun Marsh on the east side of I-680 (you may recall the previous councils approved an ITS train station on the edge of the marsh).

QUESTION: How could transportation between Benicia and outside communities be improved?

We could build an Intermodal Bus Transportation Station near the Lake Herman Road, I-680 Interchange instead of a train station on the east side of 680 and adjacent to marsh lands and within the project sea level rise. This IBTS could be built in conjunction with the Seeno project as a mitigation measure.

We should implement our “traffic calming” planning and accelerate projects so alternative ways of getting around are developed.

We should provide new jobs that match our demographics so people don’t have to commute outside of Benicia.

Over 25% of the people using the Vallejo Ferry service are Benicians. Yet, we apparently need to do yet another study to see if there would be riders. Instead of another study, I propose that we begin the planning for and permitting of Ferry Service.

QUESTION: How could we be better connected to mass transit?

The city has made good progress on connecting riders to transit. In addition to the ideas above for IBTS and Ferry service, we could provide more connections from Benicia to express buses now in service regionally and have contests or awards program for the Amtrak bus service to the Martinez station.

Housing

QUESTION: Could Benicia have “affordable” housing?

Benicia has affordable housing. In fact, Benicia is now the “good poster” example of helping build affordable housing (after a long legal battle and a very dishonorable city position). We could acquire older homes, bring them up to code, and put them in a trust so they would remain affordable for the life of the structure. We could establish trusts for new affordable housing projects so that they remain affordable after the obligatory

permitting time expires that they remain affordable. There is a great opportunity to have affordable housing at the western portion of the Seeno project. This could be adjacent to transit lines and services such as laundry would be within walking distance. (School access could be a problem).

QUESTION: If so, who could afford it?

As Henry Gardner, ABAG Exec., said recently, all housing is unaffordable to us. Right now the best Benicia could do for “middle class, working people” is to stipulate that housing should be developed for this income range. This would mean smaller homes and more compact development. I could write extensively about how we have shifted the property tax burden from commercial, retail and industrial share in 1978 of 33% to 2006 share at 13%. In other words, residential property tax is the overwhelming revenue source. I could also note that capital gains taxes have been reduced and the investment in California property with fixed property tax rates, low capital gains tax all combine to make California property an investment and not a home. Thus property prices go up making home ownership becoming less than 50% - a reverse in the post WWII trend. Until property tax revenues are more equitably disturbed and until investment in California real estate is no longer a speculative capital investment, there will be few affordable towns and cities.

Jobs

QUESTION: What kind of economic development might best serve Benicia?

We are prime for a research campus park that would include “incubator” type businesses and jobs that attract independent, entrepreneurial professional people who appreciate telecommuting, being connected electronically and highly creative. We should focus on the creative jobs of industry, bio, performance, arts and other types of opportunities.

QUESTION: Where do “formula” businesses fit in?

I do not see formula businesses as a good fit for Benicia. In the short term they are a good investment, but in the long term, they can be a detriment to economic development. Formula businesses such as grocery stores, banks, financial services, and even drug stores can be a good fit (and are) but they must conform to size, location, and appearance standards of Benicia.

Revenue

QUESTION: Are there additional revenue sources that Benicia should consider?

I would like to see the city enter into certificate of participation for some of the historic structures. I believe district assessments make sense for the development of walkable streets, traffic calming, storm water runoff (pollution), trails, waterfront park, and tree planting. The city could consider an income tax as other cities have done, but I would rather focus on getting Valero to pay its fair share.