

Santa Monica Democratic Club

2022 City Council Candidate Questionnaire

Thank you for your interest in the Santa Monica Democratic Club endorsement. Candidates seeking the endorsement of our Club must complete and return the following questionnaire. Note that only registered Democrats are eligible for our consideration.

Please send the completed questionnaire to smdemocrats@gmail.com by 11:59pm on August 26, 2022. Interview appointment times with our Executive Committee will be scheduled on a first come first served basis as the questionnaires are returned.

Submitting this questionnaire constitutes acknowledgment that its contents are now part of the public record and may be reproduced and distributed by the Santa Monica Democratic Club.

General Information

Candidate Name: Natalya Zernitskaya

Email Address: natalya@natalyaforcitycouncil.com

Phone Number: 323-628-2596

Candidate's Current Occupation: Financial Analyst/Senior Due Diligence Analyst

Candidate's Employer: Cetera Financial Group

Campaign Contact Person (if other than candidate): n/a

What qualifications do you bring to this office?

I bring both my lived, professional and community experiences which all contribute to my deep understanding of the challenges facing our City.

I am an immigrant who at the age of six years old, fled Belarus with my parents after the fall of the former Soviet Union. Like many immigrants, my family arrived in the U.S. with only a few hundred dollars. Through government and nonprofit safety nets – such as food stamps and a rent-controlled apartment – my family was able to eventually achieve a better life. I know the importance of those safety nets and I know what it is like fearing to lose them. This lived experience has shaped my values and influences every decision I make and will continue to make as an elected official.

As a financial analyst and one of two residents appointed to the City Council's 2019 Audit Subcommittee, I have a deep understanding not only of finance, but of the particulars of our City's budget. I believe this experience will be a tremendous asset to the City Council as we navigate economic recovery from the pandemic and move our city forward to be transparent and accountable while protecting, restoring and expanding vital services. My experience has taught me how to analyze and shape policy, resolve neighborhood issues, and make our city more fiscally responsible and transparent.

Through my decade of community involvement and activism in Santa Monica, I have come to know our neighborhoods, local organizations and underserved communities and the challenges each one faces. I am a Pico neighborhood renter, and have served as President of the League of Women Voters of Santa Monica, as a Board Member of the Human Relations Council of the Santa Monica Bay Area, and as an Advisory Board Member of Climate Action Santa Monica. On a more global level, I serve on the Board of the International Women's Resource Center (IWRC), and was recently selected to serve on the Rising Leaders Council of the Institute for Portfolio Alternatives (IPA) for 2022-

2024.

I believe all of the above gives me the qualifications to make meaningful, fact-based decisions.

Why are you running?

I moved to LA right after college and immediately knew that I wanted to be part of this forward-thinking community of Santa Monica. Since day one, I dove right in to become a part of this community and help move forward democratic values. After a decade of community involvement, running for City Council is an important next step in my dedication to our City. I am running at this particular time because I am saddened with the direction of the current City Council and believe that my combined skill set and unique voice and perspective will contribute a great deal to making our city more inclusive, diverse, equitable, affordable and sustainable.

What are the top issues of your campaign? How do you plan to address those issues once elected?

- Reversing the trend of homelessness so that more people become housed than fall into homelessness, while creating better support services to keep people in permanent housing
- Creating more low and middle income housing to alleviate our housing crisis by working more closely with neighboring cities.

Please list all of your individual and/or organizational endorsements.

While most organizations have not endorsed yet, I do have the endorsements of Santa Monica Forward and Abundant Housing LA. Here is a partial list of individuals who have endorsed me:

Sheila James Kuehl, LA County Supervisor
Kristin McCowan, Santa Monica Mayor Pro Tem
Gleam Davis, Santa Monica City Councilmember
Judy Abdo, Former Santa Monica Mayor
Pam O'Connor, Former Santa Monica Mayor
Nat Trives, Former Santa Monica Mayor
Alex Fisch, Culver City Councilmember
John Erickson, West Hollywood Councilmember
Dr. Nancy Greenstein, Trustee, Santa Monica Community College
Barry Snell, Trustee, Santa Monica Community College
Laurie Lieberman, Santa Monica-Malibu School Board Member
Richard Tavildaran-Jesswein, Santa Monica-Malibu School Board Vice President
Judy Abdo
Abby Arnold
Neil Carrey
Sirinya Matute
And many, many more [here](#).

How long have you lived in Santa Monica? Where else have you lived, and why did you live there?

I have lived in Santa Monica for about 8 years, because once moving down to the LA

area after college, it took 4 years to find a place to live here and a job that paid a sufficient wage to afford it. Despite that, as mentioned, I got involved in the community a decade ago. Prior to that, I lived in West LA after earning my Bachelor's degree in Economics from UC Santa Cruz.

When my family immigrated to the U.S. from Belarus in the mid-90s, moved to the Bay Area as that is where we had relatives who had already resettled. During those years, until college, I lived in San Francisco and San Bruno.

Will you pledge to serve on City Council for your entire four year term?

Barring any unforeseen significant impediments to my ability to serve – such as a medical emergency – I pledge to serve my entire term on the City Council if elected.

Party / Activism

How long have you been a registered Democrat?

I am a “lifelong” Democrat, meaning approximately 15 years, since the time I was first eligible to register to vote.

Have you ever been registered as a member of another political party, or as Decline To State? If so, which party and why?

No, I have not.

What is your experience with political activism?

I have primarily been politically active on issues such as housing, homelessness, transportation, women's rights, social justice, and the environment for about a decade but because of my leadership role in the League of Women Voters of Santa Monica I have not been able to engage publicly in any candidate-specific or political party-specific activism.

Have you ever volunteered or worked for a political campaign other than your own, and if so, in what capacity were you involved?

I have volunteered and worked on (in an unpaid capacity) on ballot measure and proposition campaigns primarily as a representative of the League of Women Voters of Santa Monica. This included being on the committee for Yes on Measure SM in 2020, doing advocacy & outreach to support Prop 15 in 2020, engaging in advocacy & outreach to support Measure SMS in 2018 and to oppose Measure LV in 2016.

Which political candidates have you endorsed or supported publicly in the past? Please list as many as possible.

As previously mentioned, due to my prior leadership roles with the League of Women Voters of Santa Monica, I was not able to endorse candidates for public office in the

past.

Have you ever signed for or publicly supported efforts to recall a public official from office? If so, please list the name(s) of the officials and why you felt they should be recalled.

No, I have never publicly supported efforts to recall a public official from office. Generally, unless there is significant egregious unethical or criminal action, I believe that we should let the voters opine on the effectiveness of a public official via the ballot box at a regular election.

Please list any organizations with which you are a member, including any leadership position you have held in each organization.

- Santa Monicans for Renters Rights
- Santa Monica Democratic Club
- Westside Young Democrats
- LACDP
- League of Women Voters of Santa Monica- Previously served as President and Treasurer
- Human Relations Council of the Santa Monica Bay Area, Board Member
- Climate Action Santa Monica, Advisory Board Member
- International Women's Resource Center, Board Member
- Sierra Club
- LA County Young Democrats
- Stonewall Democrats
- National Women's Political Caucus
- Ocean Park Association

Please confirm that you have read the latest version of the California Democratic Party Platform, as found here:

<https://cadem.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/CDP-Platform-2022-FINAL-1-1.pdf>

Yes.

List any items in the CDP Platform with which you disagree. (This is in no way a litmus test for our endorsement; however, because the party delegates have worked so hard on every word of this platform document, we believe it will be a helpful guide to comprehend the policy differences between each candidate.)

I agree with the CDP platform.

Campaign Finance

Please indicate Yes or No to the following statements:

1. I pledge not to take contributions from oil, gas, and coal industry executives, lobbyists, and PACs.

Yes.

2. I pledge not to take contributions from police or law enforcement unions, lobbyists, and PACs.

Yes.

3. I pledge not to take contributions from development firms, lobbyists, and PACs.

No. I do not think all developers and their lobbyists are evil, nor do I think that a \$410 contribution will buy my influence.

If you answered No to any of the above contribution questions, please explain here:

I am being cautious around contributions from developers who may have projects coming before the Council. There are certainly some projects that may have merit and do not want to be precluded from participating in important discussions around shaping future development in Santa Monica. Additionally, given my professional work, I am also cautious about donations from real estate firms that may be involved with the types of investments I analyze.

City Governance

What is your brief assessment of how City Council has functioned over the past two years?

There has been a lot of divisiveness on the Council and it has been disappointing to watch the quality of civil discourse fall. In many ways it has been dysfunctional and has driven away good, hard-working Councilmembers who have been the victim of deeply personal, unnecessary attacks.

Do you believe we should keep the current system of seven at-large council seats? What other type of representation would you be interested in exploring?

At this time, I believe the current at-large system of elections works well. I also support ranked choice voting.

Do you support the elimination of the City Manager position and/or the creation of an empowered, directly elected Mayor of Santa Monica?

I believe the City Manager position is important to keep our City functioning and have clear reporting lines and a level of municipal expertise that elected officials do not. I would support a directly elected Mayor in addition to at-large councilmembers if that type of change was supported by the voters but given the result of recent elections, I am hesitant to advocate for this..

Do you favor any changes to our City Charter as a means to make the city government more democratic?

I support exploring how to best widen the potential pool of candidates for office through measures such as public financing of campaigns, higher wages for elected officials so that people of different income levels could afford to serve, and investing more into opportunities for younger residents to learn the importance of local government.

Are top city staffers' salaries too high, and is this a potential source for balancing the City budget?

Not necessarily. The City's internal auditors performed a [compensation study](#) in 2017 which showed that "Santa Monica's average cash compensation for employees is comparable to the average of peer cities, although the City's median senior leadership compensation is the highest among peers. When Santa Monica's median cash compensation was compared to peers, it was the third lowest, likely due to the City's strong preference to insource services that require a large number of relatively low paid workers. For individual positions, Santa Monica met or fell below the peer median for 40% of the positions included in the benchmarking study, while the remaining 60% of positions were compensated at levels exceeding the peer median. Santa Monica lacks a formal philosophy to guide how compensation is determined." We are a sophisticated city with a wide range of services and programs – many of which are groundbreaking. In order to attract the level of expertise we need in staff, we must pay at a level comparable to comparable forward-thinking cities. However, I understand that the study is 5 years old and would support an updated study given the turnover and changes to City Staff over the COVID-19 pandemic.

Should each City Council member have their own paid staffer, and/or should Council be a full time job?

We should definitely explore this idea further – or at least how to help Council with the heavy load that part-time Councilmembers have, many of whom have full time jobs in addition to serving the community. More support would enable a more diverse pool of people to serve as councilmembers. This would certainly help parents with young children and others who work demanding jobs, to serve on Council. There are dangers to paid staff for individual councilmembers. When West Hollywood first became a city, each councilmember had a deputy. At that time, it was necessary as they were creating a city from scratch. Over time, however, the positions became very political and were more like political operatives inside city hall. I think we would need to do further analysis of options that actually serve the community and not the political agenda of individual councilmembers. I believe that making the role of a councilmember a full time job would most likely require a change to the City Charter.

Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

In what ways can the City of Santa Monica ensure that, in a real, practical sense, Black Lives Matter in our community?

At a bare minimum, we need to issue a public apology for the City's past racist actions and ensure that efforts to correct past wrongs are done with the buy-in of the people who were harmed and/or their descendants. I support a right-to-return policy and reparations, which may take different forms such as priority in housing access, subsidies for purchasing homes, or other compensation as appropriate. Additionally, I support right-to-counsel for tenants, youth diversion programs, and commemorating the rich history of neighborhoods such as Belmar and Broadway to uplift the Black Community.

In what ways can the City of Santa Monica better protect its undocumented residents?

I fully support a timely pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. Although I would not be able to directly impact legislation if elected as a councilmember, I would be able to support undocumented residents and stakeholders who live, work, and/or attend schools in our City in other ways such as supporting funding for Santa Monica College, our local community college which offers the DREAM Program for undocumented students.

I am proud of our city's policy enacted in 2016, to forbid local law enforcement from cooperating with ICE and specify that we do not "use City monies, resources, or personnel to investigate, question, detect, apprehend, detain or register persons whose only violation is or may be a violation of the civil provisions of federal immigration law related to documented status." If elected, I will stand against any efforts to change this policy.

How do you plan to (in the moment) counteract any and all observed possible acts of microaggressions towards Women, African Americans, Hispanics, LGBTQ and others of marginalized communities from your fellow Councilmembers or members of the public? What is your experience in dealing with these situations?

I plan to use my privilege to protect those who have less privilege than I do. I am experienced in the art of civil discourse and have the skills necessary to educate people in a non-judgmental way which leads to sustained positive change. Additionally, I can empathize, show compassion for, and help validate the experiences of those on the receiving end of such microaggressions. My first experience as a "mediator" was when I participated in a program called "[Peer Resources](#)" in middle school. More recently, I have had extensive experience in civil discourse, including providing training on the topic for Climate Action Santa Monica's Climate Corps and on one occasion to the Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce's Government Affairs Committee.

What are the most significant environmental justice issues in Santa Monica, and how will you address them?

Air quality/pollution, heat, and transportation. The most environmentally impacted area in the City is the Pico neighborhood, with a pollution impact rating in the 96th percentile per CalEnviroScreen 4.0. Most of our housing stock is fairly old and as such, does not have air conditioning so although we're lucky to live in an area where the climate is much better than further inland, we still have people at risk of negative health impacts. Transportation is part of both air quality/pollution and heat because generally speaking, people who are the most impacted are those who live and work in the neighborhoods along the 10 Freeway.

What specific initiatives to increase diversity and promote inclusion among City staff are you interested in pursuing, and how will you work with the City Manager to implement these policies?

I support expanding our Cradle to Career initiative as well as expanding mentorship, fellowship, and paid internship opportunities for Santa Monica students from under resourced backgrounds.

Housing / Development

What steps would you propose to address the homelessness crisis in the City of Santa Monica?

We should use all of the tools in our toolbox to address homelessness, such as supporting housing for people experiencing homelessness and providing people with mental health services, job training and opportunities, and other services that they need to stay housed. We need to address homelessness as a systemic failure due to lack of affordable housing and living wage jobs. I would advocate for funding and reducing red tape for supportive housing. I believe we should expand funding for street teams and support outreach and case management services to minimize turnover and enable consistent, experienced outreach.

Homelessness does not stop at the City border and neither should our advocacy efforts. I support a regional approach to safely house people experiencing homelessness, including improving cross-collaboration. I would work with the County Board of Supervisors as they work to reimagine the scope of work that LAHSA is undertaking. I recognize the power that the City of Santa Monica has in working with the County with our resources and we should use that power on supporting solutions that work. We have a long tradition of being a voice for the voiceless and we should continue to build on that work.

What is your philosophy on the appropriate scope of development that should be approved in Santa Monica?

We should lower the costs of building housing through efforts such as eliminating parking minimums which would allow us to prioritize our limited land and resources for housing people rather than storing cars. Additionally, we should explore ways to further streamline deed-restricted affordable housing.

In what specific ways has Santa Monica failed to address the housing affordability crisis? What concrete steps would you take on Council to better address the crisis?

I believe that housing is a human right. Beyond the slogan, I believe that all people deserve access to safe, affordable, decent housing. I have worked on housing issues for nearly a decade locally both personally and previously when I was President of the League of Women Voters of Santa Monica. I support a housing-first approach to homelessness and believe that it is a systemic problem. As a candidate for the Santa Monica City Council, I also support a local right-to-counsel ordinance for tenants which would ensure that renters have access to legal protection against unjust evictions. In order to address the issue of homelessness, we need to get unhoused people into safe, stable, affordable housing and prevent people from falling into homelessness in the first place.

How can the City of Santa Monica meet its next RHNA cycle goal of 6,153 new deed restricted affordable housing units for low and moderate income households and 2,721 new market rate housing units?

I believe we need to ensure that any new housing built in Santa Monica does not displace existing residents and improves the long-term well-being of our community. We

should pursue different models of public/private partnerships that allow us to meet our RHNA requirements while providing benefits to our City.

What is your assessment of the 2022 Housing Element proposed by City Council?

I am concerned with the housing element draft as submitted because I do not believe it went far enough in addressing equity in housing by not adequately affirmatively furthering fair housing. Having a non-compliant housing element prevents our City from being eligible for certain types of funding/grants, including those for affordable housing so it further harms our ability to meet our RHNA requirement.

The Rent Board and its staff have committed to hosting a discussion about the city's rent control law with the community at large. The City has always complemented the Rent Charter's mission in the areas of the City's jurisdiction, including: Tenant Harassment, Code Enforcement, Land Use (AirBnb & corporate rentals laws) and Tenant Relocation Benefits. How would you enhance or change these areas of tenant protections on City Council?

I support tenant's rights including further eviction protections, right-to-counsel laws, and taking another look at our home-sharing ordinances to ensure that corporate housing and home-sharing programs do not unfairly remove existing housing stock.

What do you see as the mission or purpose of Rent Control in a city where 70% of the population are renters?

I believe that rent control provides stability and safety for tenants and it also helps keep our city diverse and more equitable than without – although vacancy decontrol has diminished that.

Public Safety

What is your assessment of the role of the Public Safety Reform and Oversight Commission in Santa Monica?

I support the PSROC would want to support additional resources as feasible given the limitations of our budget and increased costs.

What is your assessment of the OCR Report regarding the police response on May 31, 2020, and what changes to City and SMPD policy should be implemented in light of its findings?

I was disappointed with the results of the report, but was appreciative of the next steps that resulted from it with the creation of the permanent PSROC

What steps do you think need to be taken in the next two years to reduce crime in the City? If this requires additional funding, how should it be funded? Is the Santa Monica Police Department presently well funded? Should more or less of the City budget be allocated to hiring SMPD officers?

Currently, the police budget is approximately 20%-25% of our discretionary budget and approximately 14% of our total annual budget. However, that also includes our City's valuable youth diversion program, our animal control/animal services division, the HLP

team, and the Harbor Unit. In order to determine how to best allocate our resources in the future, we need to understand how they're being used today.

Do you support efforts to promote investment of general fund monies previously allocated toward armed police response to instead go toward mental health services and other unarmed departments when appropriate?

We need to perform an analysis of how police resources are being used to ensure that our law enforcement officers' valuable time is not being wasted on tasks and issues that could be better addressed by other types of city or nonprofit resources. Additionally, we need to recognize that policing is only one part of our criminal justice system. I support Santa Monica's new Public Safety Reform and Oversight Commission as well as California Assembly Bill 2542, the Racial Justice Act which passed in 2020. I also support California Assembly Bill 256, the Racial Justice for All, which would extend the protections of the Racial Justice Act to people who were subject to racially biased convictions and sentences prior to January 1, 2021.

Do you support or oppose efforts to recall District Attorney George Gascón? Do you support DA Gascón's special directives on restorative justice? If not, what approach should be taken?

I was not able to take a public position on the Gascon recall due my then-role as President of the League of Women Voters of Santa Monica because it would have been considered a partisan action per League policy. However, had a recall made it to the ballot, I would have voted no. I also support restorative justice but it seems that if some of his actions were handled with a bit more sensitivity, the recall effort might have been stopped after the first go-around.

Was the City Council justified in choosing *not* to implement an indoor vaccine mandate during the omicron surge in January/February 2022? What was your position at the time?

I respected the science presented in the Staff Report. However, I do believe we should have engaged in a discussion of the topic sooner so that we could have been better aligned with our neighboring cities on such policies.

Mobility

Should Santa Monica encourage more pedestrian-only streets like the Third Street Promenade? If so, on which streets would you consider this?

Yes. I would love to see this on parts of Main Street and Montana Avenue. I am open to considering additional locations for pedestrian-only streets.

Do you support additional Metro rail lines being built in Santa Monica, and if so, which potential projects do you support? Which regions of the City would you like to see serviced? Should shared mobility devices and apps (eg, scooters, e-bikes) be encouraged or discouraged in Santa Monica?

Yes, I support more public transit. I believe we can make our streets safer and improve the biking and pedestrian experience so that people feel more comfortable not using a car to get around. We can reduce headways for buses, make public transit more convenient and improve the perceptions of safety. We could also explore creating

subsidy programs that would allow people to purchase electric bikes, cargo bikes, or electric cargo bikes to reduce their dependence on cars. I am very proud of the progress we've made in enabling students to use public transit by providing discounts and subsidies, and I believe we should continue to build on that work.

Additionally, we should expand our first-mile/last-mile solutions in a way that would allow more people to use them such as people with young children, elderly people, and disabled people. For example, I personally try to limit my use of my car when I'm within Santa Monica but I also have a large elderly dog with mobility issues that I push around in his stroller wagon who joins me when I go to other parts of the City so I have experienced first-hand the challenges of trying to use our existing transit options in unique circumstances.

Should the overall amount of street parking in Santa Monica be reduced in order to encourage a shift away from cars toward other modes of transportation?

Yes, but I would first focus on reducing off-street parking. Studies indicate that this reduces traffic/emissions but does not reduce retail revenue as the myth goes.

Ballot Measures

Do you support California Proposition 1?

Yes. We must codify the rights to abortion and contraception in the California constitution.

Do you support the citizens initiative ballot measure which would tax real estate transactions over \$8M and provide revenue for affordable housing, rent subsidy, and SMMUSD? Why/why not?

Prior to deciding to run for City Council, I made a commitment to perform a nonpartisan ballot measure analysis of both transfer tax ballot measures on November's ballot. In that role, I am unable to take any position on either Measure GS or DT at this time. Unfortunately, after I chose to step into the race, there was nobody else who had the background and experience necessary to perform the analysis and I honor my commitments. If I were to take any position prior to completing the analysis, it would harm the credibility of the organization.

Do you support the competing council-approved ballot measure which would tax real estate transactions over \$8M and provide revenue into the general fund? Why/why not?

Prior to deciding to run for City Council, I made a commitment to perform a nonpartisan ballot measure analysis of both transfer tax ballot measures on November's ballot. In that role, I am unable to take any position on either Measure GS or DT at this time. Unfortunately, after I chose to step into the race, there was nobody else who had the background and experience necessary to perform the analysis and I honor my commitments. If I were to take any position prior to completing the analysis, it would harm the credibility of the organization.

Do you support the rent control ballot measure which would permanently lower the rent control General Adjustment cap from 6% down to 3%?

Yes.

Do you support the SMC bond measure?

Yes.

Do you support the 1% transient occupancy tax ballot measure?

I do generally support leveraging our strong tourism economy to increase City revenues but I need to perform additional research to ensure that this measure is keeping with best practice.

Do you support the cannabis business tax ballot measure?

I have concerns about implementing a tax of this nature prior to developing our City policy around recreational cannabis businesses.

Federal Legislation

Do you support the **Inflation Reduction Act of 2022** which just passed Congress? It compromises on many of the important provisions included in the previous Build Back Better Act. Do you think it's good enough?

Yes, I support the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022. I do not think it was good enough, however I believe that we must not let the "perfect be the enemy of the good" so although it could have been better, I am relieved that it passed given the current national political climate.

What do you think of legislation proposed since Roe v Wade was struck down – designed to protect other previously assumed fundamental freedoms? Notably: the **Right to Contraception Act** (HR 8373) and the **Respect for Marriage Act** (HR 8404) which would codify into federal law the rights for access to contraception and same-sex and interracial marriage. Do you think we need the **Protecting Access to Medication Abortion Act** (S 4467)? It defends access to medication abortion in states where the right to an abortion is still protected. Do you support the **Medicare For All Act** (HR 1976)?

I strongly believe in bodily autonomy rights as well as civil rights overall so I support these bills' goals to strengthen our rights.

Whether you support that bill or not, how can we ensure universal, single payer health care coverage for all Santa Monicans?

It is absurd that as one of the richest countries in the world, we still have a for-profit healthcare system. Our current healthcare system does not work for the overwhelming majority of people living here. Although there have been some improvements through requirements for health insurance plans to cover preventative care, which lowers long-term costs and improves long-term health outcomes, there are still too many people who are not able to access or afford health insurance and there are too many people who are forced to go into tremendous debt due to healthcare costs. We must reform our healthcare system so that it works for all people.

Additional Questions

What steps must Santa Monica take to enact a Green New Deal in our own city, if any?

Climate change harms all of us, and disproportionately harms marginalized communities the worst. We need to urgently act at all levels of government to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and other energy sources that pollute our communities and our planet. The climate crisis intersects with nearly every other issue that we are facing today including housing, transportation, health, inequality, and more. I currently serve on the Advisory Board of Climate Action Santa Monica, a local grassroots organization dedicated to empowering the community into action to mitigate and adapt to cataclysmic effects of climate change. Santa Monica has been a leader in sustainability and as a councilmember, I would build on that work so that we can continue to set an example for other communities.

Although marijuana is legal in California for recreational use, there are currently no recreational dispensaries operating in Santa Monica. Why is this the case, and should that be changed? If dispensaries are allowed in Santa Monica, what processes would govern the business approval process to ensure equity?

I am not privy to why Santa Monica took this position but I would look to West Hollywood who has dispensaries and consumption bars to learn what worked and did not work there. I never take a position or advocate for policy without thoroughly studying the facts.

What role do you believe the Santa Monica Democratic Club should have in our City?

I appreciate the leadership role the Club takes in advocating for democratic policies.

If elected, how would you attempt to interact with the Santa Monica Democratic Club and other political organizations to ensure community buy-in on new proposals?

Meet and confer on a regular basis.