

Santa Monica Democratic Club

2022 School Board 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: Esther Hickman

Email Address: estherheidi@gmail.com

Phone Number: 310-600-7306

Candidate's Current Occupation: Real Estate Agent

Candidate's Employer: Compass

Campaign Contact Person (if other than candidate): None

What qualifications do you bring to this office? Parent, Alum, Resident, Educational Volunteer, Community Building and Financial literacy.

Why are you running? I love my community and have a passion for SMMUSD. My child has just entered Kindergarten at Edison and I love all children. I believe in the promise of public schools. I believe parents should be welcomed to be involved their child's public school education.

What are the top issues of your campaign? How do you plan to address those issues once elected? Small Class Sizes, Quality Education, Addressing Declining Enrollment, Creating a culture that brings people together. Solutions: Hold leadership accountable for waste and find the money for more teachers. Not go along with agendas to dumb down education. Being part of a kind, collaborative and inclusive culture. Our schools are fantastic, just a few tweaks could make them phenomenal.

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

Craig Foster, SMMUSD School Board Member, Phil Brock, SM City Council, Oscar de la Torre, SM City Council, Christine Parra, SM City Council, Commissioner Lori Brown, Various Residents and Parents

How long have you lived in Santa Monica? Since 2020, before that, 90-98, and relevant to this race in Malibu from 78-91 **Where else have you lived, and why did you live there?** 1998-2014 NYC, 2015 Portland, Maine. (Work and Love)

Will you pledge to serve on City Council for your entire four year term? School Board for 4 years, yes.

Party / Activism

How long have you been a registered Democrat? Have you ever been registered as a

member of another political party, or as Decline To State? If so, which party and why?

I'm pretty sure I've always been a Democrat except when I was registered as an Independent accidentally because I don't identify as being a "progressive democrat" I do identify as being a progressive Catholic. I have voted for Bloomberg 3 times, once as a Republican, 2nd time as an Independent and 3rd time as a Democrat.

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

None

Which political candidates have you endorsed or supported publicly in the past? Please list as many as possible. Both Clintons, Obama, Bloomberg, Marianne Williamson

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. I privately supported the recent recall of School Board Members Lieberman, Leon Vazquez, and Kean. I thought they were really letting our kids down, but I know they work really hard, have the kids best interest at heart and I was really very glad to hear the recall was dropped.

Please list any organizations with which you are a member, including any leadership position you have held in each organization. I shine in supportive roles. That's why I'm running for school board, because our kids, teachers and administrators need to be supported and that's what I would be doing. In my job I am constantly supporting others through difficult decision making. I will always be involved in a supportive role in the Catholic church and will always be an active parent in my child's classroom.

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>

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.)

Confirmed and I loved reading the platform because it confirmed that I am truly a Democrat. I would like to see more written around financial stewardship. I'd love to see far more advocacy around teaching financial literacy and paths to financial empowerment. More education on what it takes to bring these programs to life.

I'd like to see more on morals and ethics and government waste. People aren't always honest and we need to find more ways to create programs that don't attract predators.

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.** I am a democrat and I support the police. Sure, I won't but this is why I'm a Democrat but not an extreme leftist.
3. **I pledge not to take contributions from development firms, lobbyists, and PACs.** Yes.

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

SMMUSD

What kind of approach should SMMUSD be taking in regard to COVID safety at this point in the pandemic? Voluntary testing and masking is perfect! Stick to CDC and latest science. No need to create it's own rules.

What are your top priorities for SMMUSD which you plan to address in this four year term? Small Class Sizes, Retention by providing students what they need, Culture of Collaboration. A culture of administration that supports it's teachers district wide.

Given the district's Basic Aid status, what are the biggest impacts to the district as a result? Accountability on how money is spent. **How does this affect your funding priorities?** Kids have to be first and we need high quality teachers to teach our kids.

Do you support the petition to transition the SMMUSD Board into districted elections, or do you believe the Board should continue in its current form of seven at-large seats? District Elections. This is a State Bill initiative. Why not Santa Monica and Malibu? Residents need representation.

What can SMMUSD do to further reduce the achievement gap? Small class sizes.

What can SMMUSD do to better implement social justice instruction and otherwise address equity issues? There are model programs. Let's expand upon them. Expand project based learning, expand immersion. Embrace parent involvement. Let's celebrate and bring people together.

What do you believe is the role of the District in providing high quality early childhood education and how will you fund expansion and quality improvement while maintaining accessibility and affordability? I support the mission. As of now, the fees are market rate with a sliding scale. I need to understand the financials better in order to answer how we would fund the expansion. Remember there are tons of private daycares and preschools in the area that are accessible and affordable so while I support early childhood education and personally tried to get into the SMMUSD programs for 3 years in a row I need to learn more about the financials around the initiative.

How do you see your role on the School Board in relationship to different stakeholders: parents, students, credentialed teachers, classified staff, CTA, LACOE, Sacramento, the City of SM, etc? My role is to support these stakeholders and facilitate solutions. I am a candidate for a public servant position.

What is your plan to deal with Malibu's petition to unify (ie, separate from) the school district, and what would an equitable solution look like? A fair and equitable agreement needs to be reached. Rebuilding trust and supporting our Malibu schools is a first step to reaching an agreement.

Student Concerns

What is your idea of the perfect learning environment? Small class sizes. A positive relationship with my teacher.

What can SMMUSD do to better address student mental health needs? Small class sizes. Proactive and early intervention.

How do you feel about campus surveillance? I'm all for it as long as we can properly screen the surveillance team to keep our kids safe.

What is your position on gun safety at school? What steps can the School Board take to prevent violent shootings? Be proactive and vigilant.

Do you support SMPD officers in the schools? Absolutely.

Do you support legislative efforts to limit unnecessary police involvement in schools? Not

really.

How will you support our students to be critical thinkers, leaders, and activists, starting in elementary school? Focusing on the fundamentals of having fun at school. A passion for learning how to read, write, speak, problem solve, and collaborating with their school community.

Would you support student activism such as the student walkouts in support of gun control, racial justice, climate strike, etc.? Yes, I would!

How can these ideals be incorporated into the curriculum? Quality education. Raising standards and challenging all students to perform at their very best.

Social Justice

In what ways can SMMUSD ensure that, in a real, practical sense, Black Lives Matter in our school community? Celebrating each other and one love all year round.

In what ways can SMMUSD best protect the undocumented residents of Santa Monica? Small class sizes and giving them the best education possible.

How would you use your position on the School Board to assist BIPOC and other disadvantaged residents of Santa Monica? Small class sizes and giving them the best education possible and challenging the students to perform at their very best.

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 Boardmembers or members of the public? Through compassion and collaboration. Hatred is born from ignorance and intolerance.

What is your experience in dealing with these situations? My experience is that Santa Monica and Malibu also suffers from Classism and this should be included in the list. The best way to overcome microaggressions towards someone in a different economic or social class is through education and that is one of my passions. Public schools is a way that marginalized communities can improve there social and economic conditions.

Ballot Measures

Do you support California Proposition 1? yes

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? No. I see it as a precursor to SB9 and SB 10 ruining our communities.

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? Yes, practical solution.

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

Do you support the SMC bond measure? Undecided.

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

Do you support the cannabis business tax ballot measure? Yes

Additional Questions

What role do you believe the Santa Monica Democratic Club should have in our City? Represents all Democrats, not just "progressives"

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? By being fair, communicative and inclusive.