



Coalition of Homeowner Associations-Council District 5: Newsletter #3

Preserving and Protecting Neighborhoods

January 2022

Los Angeles City Controller

Each candidate was individually interviewed in-depth for two hours by the Coalition's 3-member Candidate Interview Committee. Before leaving the interview, each candidate reviewed his responses to the questions. The Coalition interviews candidates who have demonstrate the ability to wage a reasonable campaign. We thank all candidates for their interest in serving Los Angeles. This newsletter is meant to be informative and does not represent support for or opposition to any candidate or issue. This newsletter may be reprinted or emailed in its entirety. Portions may be reprinted only with written permission from a Coalition Election Committee member. For more information, go to the Coalition's website <www.cd5hoas.org>.

	Paul Koretz	David Vahedi
		

BASIC INFORMATION		
How long have you lived in Los Angeles?	45 years	55 years
Describe your community service positions:	1) Chair of the Policy Committee of Mid-City West Neighborhood Council. 2) Worked with Joel Wachs on developing the Neighborhood Council concept	1) Westwood South of Santa Monica HOA: 13 years, headed Audit Committee; 2) Westside Neighborhood Council (WNC): helped it incorporate, elected to Council for 12 years, served on various committees
Community service accomplishments:	Policy positions on legislative issues	Guided WNC on issues with LAPD and LAFD, mediated issues between diverse community groups, provided free legal advice to community groups
Describe any government service prior to your current position:	West Hollywood City Council for 12 years; Assembly member from 42nd District (now 50th)	1991-93: Deputy Board member at State Board of Equalization; Decentralized Legal Department and saved State over \$3 million by accelerating revenue collection and implementing expense reductions. CA Dept of Tax and Fee Administration (CDTFA): 7 years
In these office(s) what do you wish you could have done better:	Didn't learn quickly enough to take a step at a time, that change is an iterative process	Save taxpayers even more money
Single greatest accomplishment on behalf of the people of Los Angeles:	Working with City Attorney Carmen Trutanich to create the ACE program (Administrative Citation Enforcement), a non-criminal approach to nuisance abatement and quality of life offenses	Working with LAFD for faster response times, coordinating community effort to purchase electric "jaws of live" for LAFD to save more lives, coordinate community purchase of license plate reader for LAPD
What is your current employment?	Los Angeles City Councilmember District 5 (since 2009)	Chief Financial Officer of Retail Print Media, Inc.

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Previous accounting/controller experience	None	The State Board of Equalization and the California Department of Tax and Fees Administration
Previous audit experience	None	Conducted over 350 audits for the State some that led to elimination of organized crime in the fuel industry
MANAGEMENT EXPERIENCE		
A. What is the largest department or unit you have had management responsibility for? B. The budget for this unit? C. Final budget authority?	A. 25 people (Council office) B. \$1.5 million C. Yes	A. 10 people (at California Department of Tax and Fees Administration) B. Set by Legislature C. No
Strengths as a manager of people:	Ability to motivate people, can get people to help people, being stubborn and keep trying to help people	Calmness, empathy, ability to motivate people
Most serious weakness/drawback as a manager of people:	Don't like to terminate people, hesitant on being aggressive in terminating people that should be terminated	Never give up: created remedial plans for people that I thought had potential to show improvement
Experience that best prepared you to be LA City Controller:	My time on LA City Council where I had the Council incorporate the Audit Committee into Personnel and Animal Welfare Committee	BS in Accounting, 350 audits saving the State \$250 million
Character attributes that will make you an effective manager of the Controller's office:	Focus on honesty, ability to make each person feel important and know that their work is important	Motivating for good ideas, create culture of enthusiasm and wanting to work hard, think outside the box, passion for achieving goals
GOALS FOR THE OFFICE OF CONTROLLER		
Why are you running for this office?	Focus of City Council is to find efficiencies and cost-savings, I want the City to run better, want to continue Ron Galperin's work	Love the City and I believe it can be better, disgusted by crime going up, no plan for infrastructure, and corruption in City Hall
What do you bring to this office that is unique from any of the other candidates?	30+ years of legislative experience, I can shine a light on implementation of policies	Depth of experience in accounting and government audits and legal experience (member of the California Bar since 1998)
What are the top three issues facing the City and as controller, what action steps will you take to help address each one:	<p>1) <u>Homelessness</u>: Audit how effective we've been, advocate to build less expensive housing faster, track number of units and people who use them.</p> <p>2) <u>COVID-19</u>: Provide information on COVID and vaccinations, use "bully pulpit".</p> <p>3) <u>Public safety</u>: Audit overtime and banking of time, put out a "white paper" on cost inefficiencies.</p>	<p>1) <u>Homelessness</u>: Do audit of all available housing, use housing more efficiently, audit mental health resources and build/retrofit more facilities, work with Federal partners to find resources, have FEMA- emergency response.</p> <p>2) <u>Corruption and crime</u>: Ask Councilmembers to put calendar on Controller's website and publicize who is meeting with who, have relationship with DA, use Controller's subpoena power to audit areas of suspected corruption, use tools of the office for public good.</p> <p>3) <u>Infrastructure</u>: Add revenue for sidewalks/streets by revamping trash program and identifying illegal pot shops that don't pay taxes.</p>
What are your goals for the Controller's office?	<p>1) Make a better-run city.</p> <p>2) Make sure policies are being implemented.</p> <p>3) Continue and expand current transparency and effective use of dashboard instituted by Ron Galperin.</p>	<p>1) Increase revenue without tax increases.</p> <p>2) Decrease wasteful spending.</p> <p>3) Guide City Council on spending for homelessness and infrastructure.</p>
What impediments would prevent you from accomplishing these goals?	Not enough money. City bureaucracy	Lack of enthusiasm by City Council

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As Controller, how would you overcome these impediments?	Keep pushing, look at different angles	Focus on win-win proposals
OFFICE OF CONTROLLER SPECIFICS		
As Controller, what would you do to remove waste in the City?	1) Move civilians into positions at LAPD. 2) Be an advocate for family reunification to resolve homelessness. 3) Digitize personnel and payroll processes and personnel records.	1) Audit and eliminate duplication. 2) Use audits to identify possibilities for attrition & re-develop staffing of various departments. 3) Audit LAPD to find relief for sworn officers and ways to increase training/use of less expensive LAPD Reserve officers.
The Controller is the fiscal "watchdog" for LA City taxpayers. As Controller, what would you do to decrease expenses for the City?	1) Advise on how to make things more efficient. 2) Give preference to local businesses to contract with City (a charter amendment would be required). 3) Advocate to spend money on things that save money for example more enforcement of illegal marijuana stores or modernizing asphalt plants.	1) Top-to-bottom audit of City agencies focusing on 3 biggest expenditures: LAFD, LAPD, LADWP. 2) Establish strong communication between stakeholders and Controller's Office to find waste. 3) Have strong relationships with City Council for audit ideas and implementation of recommendations.
Name the first two audits you would conduct and why:	1) <u>Homeless programming</u> because there are so many programs and we don't do enough prevention. 2) <u>Sustainability & climate change</u> programs because this is an emergency and LA should be a leader, what other steps should we be taking that other cities could follow.	1) <u>LADWP</u> : To get a handle on infrastructure in jeopardy (water mains, sewers). 2) <u>LAPD</u> : Recordkeeping & training to decrease litigation & settlement costs & being an attorney will be very helpful in managing these audits and the process.
As controller, would you do an inventory of the City's available affordable housing?	Yes. My focus would be on affordable housing in market-rate buildings.	Yes. Focus on how to increase affordable housing, which creates more property tax & LA gets 24% of property taxes collected by State.
How would you make the Controller's Office more constituent-friendly?	Continue what Ron has been doing, and a constantly improving dashboard.	Publicize data availability & how data can be used effectively.
How will you ensure that the City publicizes your audits?	Have Council hear audits. I spent 4 years as chair of the Audits & Government Efficiency Committee and would do more of the same. Would use the press more.	Use Neighborhood Councils, HOAs and business community as avenues of communications.
What will you do to ensure your audit recommendations are implemented?	Get them heard in Council. Work with City Council and the departments.	Talk to City Council & staff. Rally HOAs and Neighborhood Councils, and all stakeholders.
What is working well in the Controller's Office?	Transparency	Administrative functions are A+

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What serious issues are facing the Controller's Office today?	1) Need to ensure the human resources program is being implemented correctly. 2) Need to do more to work with City Council. 3) Get audits noticed and implemented.	1) Budget-Does Controller's Office budget get fully funded. 2) Is there intimidation of City auditors during an audit by the entity being audited. 3) Audits are not getting light of day, need to push information out further.
If elected, on Day 1 of your term what are the first three things you will do?	1) Meet staff. 2) Meet with Office management and identify first few audits. Can only do about 10 audits per year, but the controller can write "white papers". Have to have judgment to know when and how to do audits. 3) Meet with each member of City Council to see what they are focused on and see how we can work together.	1) Open up communication with stakeholders. 2) Empower staff. 3) Start audit for proposals to bring in more revenue to City with no tax increases.
What role can the Controller's Office play in the preservation of neighborhoods?	Use the "bully pulpit", advocate for desired positions	Be proactive and support actions that protect neighborhoods
As City Controller, what can you do to combat SB 9 and SB 10 and the destruction of neighborhoods?	Use the "bully pulpit" and identify damage and costs.	Be on the vanguard with community leaders and show lack of infrastructure and LAPD & LAFD resources, support a statewide initiative or referendum.
A. Where has the Mayor's office made mistakes regarding Controller's audits? B. City Council?	A) Not involved with Controller's audits. B) Not giving audits enough attention.	A) Failure to take recommendations and effect change. B) No central review of audits or method for instituting recommendations
Will you do audits of <u>financial waste</u> in: A. Building and Safety. B. Planning Department. C. LADWP.	A. Yes. B. Yes. C. Yes.	A. Yes. B. Yes. C. Yes.
Will you do audits of <u>misuse of manpower</u> in: A. Building and Safety. B. Planning Department. C. LADWP.	A. Yes. B. Yes. C. Yes.	A. Yes. B. Yes. C. Yes.
Will you do an audit of City Council in terms of access given to homeowner groups and the public comment process in PLUM?	Don't know if the Controller can audit programs under City Council	Yes
Will you do an audit of the Planning Department regarding how it doesn't follow the City's rules and ordinances and inhibits homeowner access?	Yes	Yes

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Will you do an audit of how many cases the City Attorney's office wins, loses or settles and the costs to the City?	If allowed, I would	Yes, audit of using outside counsel
Would you do an audit of overtime pay for LAPD and LAFD?	Yes to both	Yes to both
INTERACTION WITH CONSTITUENTS		
Will you pledge to adopt and operate according to the Coalition's <i>Constituents Bill of Rights</i> (see last page)?	Yes. Signed pledge.	Yes. Signed pledge.
Will you commit to meeting with the Coalition of HOAs-Council District 5 at least one time per year?	Yes	Yes
Will you organize a Community Advisory Group for two-way dialogue with HOA leaders throughout the City?	Yes	Yes
CAMPAIGN METHODS		
Will you pledge to the Coalition to provide its Election Committee with evidence/back-up material within 24 hours when accusations against another candidate are stated?	Yes	Yes
If you had a previous campaign, did you receive any contributions that were later shown to be laundered funds? If yes, what did you do?	Previous campaigns for City Council (2009, 2013, 2017): No laundered funds received	Previous campaign (ran for City Council in 2009): No laundered funds received
Did you ever refuse to accept/keep any campaign contributions? From who?	Yes. A developer with controversial projects	Yes. Developers with controversial projects
Did you ever have ethics violations in a previous campaign? How were they resolved?	No ethics violations	No ethics violations

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CAMPAIGN FUNDING		
Information is as of 9/30/2021 as reported on the Los Angeles City Ethics website: <http://ethics.lacity.org>. Best efforts were made to accurately report contribution data.		
Amount raised to date:	\$274,914	\$73,157
Loans to campaign:	\$51,000	\$93,500
LEADING INDICATORS OF POSSIBLE SPECIAL INTEREST FAVORS OR CONSIDERATIONS: SIGNIFICANT CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS FROM A PARTICULAR SEGMENT. BEST EFFORTS WERE MADE TO PROVIDE ACCURATE INFORMATION. HIGH PERCENTAGES OF CONCERN ARE IN YELLOW.		
Percentage of money from:		
◆ Developers, construction industry, real estate interests, building suppliers, any real estate connection or interests, etc.	21%	16%
◆ Finance, banking, accounting, investing, money management, etc.	11%	11%
◆ Lawyers, attorneys, associates in/of the legal profession	7%	9%
Other special interest groups of concern:	Unions: 16%	None
Out-of-state contributions if excessive may indicate potential of special interests	2%	4%
If disputes arise, do you pledge to give equal access to homeowners?	Yes	Yes
Do you pledge to <u>NOT</u> advocate for, or be involved in any way with any project or issue that involves a campaign contributor or client thereof, or give special treatment in any way to a campaign contributor or a contributor's client?	Yes	Yes
CANDIDATE ENDORSEMENTS, WEBSITE AND MARKETING MATERIALS		
ENDORSEMENTS ARE A LEADING INDICATOR OF POSSIBLE CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND/OR POSSIBLE BIASED BEHAVIOR IN OFFICE. INFORMATION WAS OBTAINED FROM EACH CANDIDATE'S WEBSITE AND/OR CAMPAIGN LITERATURE. CONCERNS ARE IN YELLOW.		
Endorsement(s) of concern that might inhibit job performance as City Controller:	10 <u>elected officials</u> of LA city 26 <u>labor unions/union PACs that include city workers</u>	No concerns. David states that he "does not seek or accept endorsements from current LA City elected officials. David strongly believes the City Controller must be independent of the policy makers that the Controller is responsible for auditing."
For more information about the candidates, please go to their websites:	www.koretzforla.com	www.vahediforcontroller.com

NOTE: The Coalition's Election Committee also interviewed Controller candidate Kenneth Mejia. Mr. Mejia did not respond to the Committee's numerous post-interview emails and phone messages. The Committee agreed that this non-responsiveness disqualified Mr. Mejia from the Coalition's election process. Of further concern to the Committee is that Mr. Mejia is endorsed by Dr. Melina Abdullah, who has made various statements promoting bigotry, antisemitism and hate ("Make no mistake #House Negroes r a problem." Facebook, 2/10/2016), ("...more & more Jews invading campuses..." Twitter 2/26/2016), ("The U.S...is currently a violent-White-supremacist nation." Facebook 5/13/20). The Coalition's Election Committee discussed this endorsement with Mr. Mejia but he stood firmly by it. Mr. Mejia has had two previous campaigns (2016 and 2018).

On December 1, 2007, the Coalition adopted a basic **Constituents Bill of Rights** that each candidate was asked to accept and sign. The **Constituents Bill of Rights** for the City Controller includes the following:

- i. The right to prompt, professional and efficient service.
- ii. The right to be treated with dignity and respect by friendly, courteous and attentive City employees and our elected official without arrogance or stone-walling.
- iii. The right to ask questions and receive accurate and useful answers.
- iv. The right to prompt return and follow-up calls concerning complaints or requests.
- v. The right to be educated about the services provided by the City Controller's Office and how these services are used to support the needs of the City.
- vi. The right to expect frequent communication from the City Controller's office regarding audits, on-going issues/their process of resolution and information about what is going on in your office.
- vii. The right to have staff in the Controller's office that are constituent-centric and not beholden or biased in favor of any special interest group.
- viii. The right to inclusive and transparent processes.
- ix. The right of all constituents to meet with the City Controller on an appointment and as available basis.
- x. The right to have a City Controller's Office that is not bloated with staff or political appointees.
- xi. The right to zero tolerance for corruption, waste and special treatment for any constituency group or campaign contributor.
- xii. The right to have recommendations resulting from audits/investigations conducted by the Controller's office with clear action steps to remove corruption, waste and special treatment for a constituency group or campaign contributor.
- xiii. The right to have a City Controller who keeps and executes campaign promises.
- xiv. A promise from you to meet with the Coalition not less than one time per year.