

Redding City Council Candidates Questionnaire on Environmental Issues

Presented by



Part of the mission of the Shasta Environmental Alliance (SEA) is to educate citizens of this area about environmental issues. This year, six candidates have filed for election to the Redding City Council and SEA has sent each candidate identical questions on environmental issues that SEA is concerned about. Two emails and one letter were sent to each of the six candidates and Julie Winter, Mark Mezzano, David Robbins, Monique Welin and Adam McElvain responded. Candidate Jack Munns did not respond to our inquiries via email, letter and phone.

Each candidate was limited to 150 words to respond, which can be difficult with complex questions, but we think they all did quite well. We feel it is important for candidates to take considerable time to respond to our questions. Even though we may not agree with all of their answers, it is important that candidates let their views be known. We also feel those responding would at least listen to our concerns about our local environment in the future and we applaud them for their responses.

Responses were edited only for misspellings and are, otherwise identical to the original answers received from the candidates. As SEA is a non-profit organization, we will not be endorsing any candidates. We have nineteen supporting organizations and our website is www.ecoshasta.org

QUESTION 1: *Redding is losing its tree canopy. Do you support a new Tree Ordinance for Redding requiring mitigation fees for removal of our native oak trees similar to those enacted in many California cities, including Chico, Santa Rosa and Roseville with the funds used by the City to plant and maintain more street and park trees? (Note: This would not apply to individual lots with a home or business on it unless over ½ acre.)*

McELVAIN: I would consider a new ordinance but would need more information on the details of the mitigation. I am not familiar with the ordinances in the cities mentioned.

MEZZANO: This is an excellent idea and it appears to have proved beneficial in other cities. I support the idea, with the understanding we continue to involve the Fire Marshall, Redding Electric Utilities, and our parks department. Establishing a protocol to ensure we protect the ecosystem is necessary. At present it appears the current ordinance in Redding might need review. As a councilmember I would welcome the opportunity to strengthen it in the interest of environmental progress. Current scientific research clearly shows the benefits of adding trees to our environment. A mitigation program requiring developers to replace trees they remove during development with environmentally friendly drought resistant trees is appropriate and in the best interest of our city and our residents.

ROBBINS: I support a new tree ordinance. I also would like to create a Green Public Works Program. Our city needs to become sustainable and also create new jobs. We can make this happen by expanding public works with a green public works program, including; mass-scale weatherization of commercial buildings and residences to reduce energy consumption and maximize efficiency, establishment of public neighborhood gardens to increase community self-sufficiency and food security.

WELIN: I support the city of Redding having discussions about how to best have a tree ordinance for our current/future residents. I believe trees are essential/beneficial for ecology/biology because trees offer a naturally beautiful way of shading and cooling down our valley. Trees are essential to consider when properties are being sold because trees do increase property values. Redding is known for having many bright sunny days. It would be amazing for people to know that our sunniest days, we have the most amazing shade/canopy. I am innately inclusive and I support discussions from a broad range of perspectives, from our Redding residents. So we together make the best for our whole community.

WINTER: I would be supportive of looking at our existing tree ordinance which has not been updated since 2006. COR needs to do a better job of enforcing our current tree ordinance so that existing trees survive surrounding development. We also need to make sure that new trees being added are appropriate for the conditions, and that they are planted in a way that they can thrive. I would also support enforcing any conditions of development that require trees to be maintained and replaced.

QUESTION 2: Homeless camping along the Sacramento River and other riparian areas are damaging our natural areas and polluting our waterways. Past City efforts at removing homeless camps over the last ten or more years have only resulted in the return of people days later. What solutions would you support to end this problem whether providing supervised camping places, other housing, or your own ideas.

WINTER: This is a frustrating problem due to limited resources and problems with mental health and drug addiction that go far beyond the City's scope of service. I'm supportive of the current micro-shelter project being reviewed by the Planning Commission, as well as the new Square One Homes County project that will house 13 unsheltered folks. COR is limited as it has no structure or funding for social services, a County function. COR was supportive and involved with the County's plan for the Navigation Center (COR provided the funding for the initial design). I would support a temporary camping area if there was security and case management and the County was willing to manage the site. Whatever we do we need to have an end-goal in mind, moving people into permanent shelter, and getting them mental health/addiction treatment.

MEZZANO: I agree with your assessment. We need to enforce our city municipal code regarding illegal camping. I have seen the damage done to our ecosystem firsthand. Councilwoman Winter is of the opinion the homeless crisis is beyond that of city government. Mayor McElvain failed to mention the homeless at this year's State of the City address. Affordable housing is at the forefront of my discussions with constituents. If elected, I intend to form a task force of City, County officials, civic and religious leaders and members of the homeless community with a goal of creating a workable plan based on successful programs I have been vetting for the last two months.

McELVAIN: Earlier this year the city was in discussions with a local non-profit to establish a day center that could accommodate up to 175 people. The project has been put on hold, but I hope to see it resume once public health concerns are alleviated, as it is a much needed service. The city is currently in the process of approving the use of micro-shelters, and we have been very successful in obtaining grants for affordable housing. We will continue to partner with nonprofits on affordable and transitional housing projects. The Council made historic reductions in fees with a focus on affordable housing, multi-family, duplexes/quadplexes and additional dwelling units (ADUs). Now, there are currently 550 affordable housing units in development stages with 150 to be completed by the end of this year. We will continue to work to keep our riparian areas maintained, and pursue solutions to the homeless crisis.

ROBBINS: Housing is a human right. As such there are several things which need to be done: One: Housing First Programs have proven effective in similar-sized cities, saving taxpayer dollars while also greatly reducing homelessness. Once individuals have housing, they are able to heal from trauma, get motivated to keep and maintain their living situation, adopt a healthy lifestyle, and seek work training or employment. On average cities spend about \$15,000 per person to keep individuals homeless, whereas cities with Housing First programs spend about \$7,500 per person to simply house them. Some factors that make criminalizing poverty more expensive include emergency medical services, law enforcement and incarceration costs.

WELIN: When an individual makes a succession of choices and becomes homeless there are many variables at stake. That said, as a Redding city council member I would work to better understand the Lanterman-Petris-Short Act, to better help with our local homelessness issues. As a Redding city council member I would work diligently with other council members to get the much-needed Community grants for the funding of a resource centric center to help underserved, unsheltered individuals that struggle with making choices in their lives. I support improving our City of Redding's ability to deal with the substantial side of our homelessness/mental health issues more than just the infrastructure aspect like land deals for Woodlands 1 and 2. I genuinely want to help individuals with a hand up rather than a hand out, and I want to get to the heart of the need of all of our people sheltered or not.

QUESTION 3: *Being available to hear the concerns of your constituents is important. What will you do to meet or otherwise make yourself available to hear the concerns of all the citizens of Redding, not just real estate developers or others with money? Do you feel it is important to hear the concerns of all sectors of your constituents even though you may not necessarily agree with them?*

MEZZANO: I agree completely, access to local leadership is a must. If elected I plan to work full-time. I retired from the California Highway Patrol with honors and have no other commitments preventing me from making myself available. I will even go as far as saying if I play golf on Wednesday, I'll work later in the evening in order to meet my commitment. I am committed to setting aside personal agendas if it benefits the City of Redding and its citizens. If you have a problem, I am interested in hearing it and your solution. If I can make it better, great, if not, I will tell you why and ask for another solution. I want people to be candid and tell me what they think I need to be doing. I value their advice and support. With honest, strong, straightforward advice I will make decisions in the best interest of the citizens and businesses of Redding.

McELVAIN: Absolutely! I have always endeavored to be available to any citizen of Redding. My personal belief is to talk to as many people as possible to get the most well-rounded perspective of our city. I will meet with any group or citizen with valid questions or concerns about their local government and have been doing so since I was elected in 2016.

WELIN: One of the main responsibilities of a duly elected official is to listen to the needs of their constituents whether it be about a grievance or a concern. And, a part of the responsibility is having the ability to respond to the constituents particular needs or concerns. For three years I have put myself out there to try to Advocate to help our citizens within the city limits of Redding. I vow to be someone that will be available to listen to best understand to try to find the best resources to fit the particular need of the constituent that has the need. I vow to do my best for the people, because I too am one of the people. This is about a reciprocating relationship between the politician/citizen. Because this is the healthiest sign of a community. Trust me on one thing, everyone wants to communicate! I want to listen.

WINTER: It is important that elected officials are available to their constituents on all sides of an issue. I make myself available to all constituents and can usually respond in a timely manner. The easiest way to reach me is via email - julie@juliewinter.com.

ROBBINS: I am willing to meet or talk to anyone. Too many politicians don't make themselves available to the general public. People can reach me on my cell or by email. A good idea is a good idea no matter who it comes from. I also believe that we need a city that works for everyone, not just the wealthy.

QUESTION 4: *Wildfires and fuel loads are of concern in Redding's greenways and open spaces. Are you aware of and/or would you be supportive of fuel reduction treatments that are also sensitive to protecting habitat for birds, wildlife and native flora?*

WELIN: I would absolutely be supportive of fuel reduction treatments that are sensitive to our indigenous wildlife and native flora. Humanity try's to live life in symbiosis with our natural ecological surroundings, so it is important to take it all into consideration when working to mitigate the future potential of California's problem with wildfires that turn into

these massive complexes or fire-nadoes. I would be open to meet with Redding Fire, CDF, and surrounding fire districts to best understand how we can work together as an alliance made up of all the available mutual aid. I will work with the other city council members to be mindful on how to take the best foot forward with wildfire mitigation.

ROBBINS: Year-round fire essential fire protection work, including but not be limited to clearing out brush, dead material, and other hazards, replanting native trees and plants, and restoring burn zones would also be a part of the Green Public Works Program.

WINTER: Preventing another disaster like the Carr Fire is critical, not only for humans, but to protect our valuable green spaces. This is a big area of concern as global warming, drought, and poor forest management have created a state-wide tinderbox. I have pushed heavily for the city to move on developing a fuel reduction plan. We live in a WUI, and we cannot ignore the danger around us. I am supportive of fuel reduction treatments that are sensitive to protecting natural habitat. I would certainly be willing to talk to SEA leadership about current wildfire fuel reductions that are in process or planned for the city.

McELVAIN: I would consider this policy, but would need more details. Today fire mitigation efforts are the top priority. We are in year-two of a five-year cycle to mitigate against wildfires. The council has approved sweeping policies to ensure we meet this goal. The protection of life and property is critical (and keeping the power on), but if improvements can be made, I would consider them.

MEZZANO: I am aware of the need to reduce ground fuels. For years, the mentality regarding wildland fires has been "Just put it out as fast as you can." The lack of proactive programs promoting a healthy forest was for the most part nonexistent. A recent grant funding program targeting ground fuel reduction in Susanville contributed to the successful containment of a lightning strike fire to just 10,000 acres just this season. A second grant location not yet completed was contained after just 26,000 acres. We have the technology and the resources to effectively manage our forests. We just need to make it a priority and we must consider bird habitats, wildlife and native flora when conducting any ground fuel reduction program.

QUESTION 5: To help counter the effects of climate change and save costs, do you support efforts such as the gradual conversion of the fleet of City of Redding cars, trucks and equipment to electric as new purchases are made? What other suggestions do you have to reduce Redding's greenhouse gas emissions?

WINTER: We need to do more to reduce GHGs. One of the largest sources of GHGs are gas engine vehicles. The city has provided funding for rebate programs for EVs and chargers. I wholeheartedly support the conversion to EVs for the COR fleet and 20 EV's have been purchased for several city departments, as well as mowers and side-by-sides, not to mention the new addition of an electric RABA bus. COR has just completed the installation of 10 charging stations for both city fleet and employee use. Additional charging stations are planned at REU, Redding airport, and the Sundial bridge. I support this growing trend. After hiring a professional consultant, the city is moving forward on making recommended changes in HVAC systems, filters, LED lights, and many other options that will make city facilities more green. The cost of the program will be covered by the resulting energy savings.

McELVAIN: Cities will/should be the earliest adopters of electric fleets. Due to the reliability of repetition of many city services, electric fleets will become the best solution. We own our own electric utility, creating a natural synergy for cost-savings and efficiencies - putting us ahead-of-the-curve with other cities. I also believe there is a possibility of hydrogen fleets for certain services. Even now, the city is working with a hydrogen company looking to establish here in Redding.

There are many possibilities with electric/hydrogen fleets, and even autonomous fleets - including public transit. In June of this year, the council approved the first two phases of the Redding Broadband Master Plan and we will soon begin construction of a 26-mile fiber-optic ring across the city. This is the foundation for smart-city solutions, many of which will have a major impact on GHGs.

MEZZANO: In theory replacement of combustion engine vehicles with electric vehicles sounds promising. Gradual replacement would most likely have minimal financial impact on local government. In theory because we must consider the environmental cost producing EV batteries. My research of lithium-ion EV battery production is less encouraging: Researchers discovered battery production for electric cars ultimately produces more carbon dioxide up to 74 percent more than efficient conventional vehicles when manufactured in a fossil fueled factory. Automotive manufactures are in the business of battery powered vehicles. As battery production scales up, emissions from producers relying on less than clean energy to build the batteries will increase. Another concern with current battery production which weighs about a 1000 pounds are the metals required and the mining process which is far from environmentally friendly. As research continues to evolve the production of lithium-ion batteries should move into an environmentally friendly community. Ultimately, I would support pursuing alternative sources of fuel, including propane and nitrogen for vehicles operated by our city.

ROBBINS: I support undertaking a mass-scale weatherization program of commercial and residential buildings. This would greatly reduce our energy consumption. I definitely support the conversion of Redding's fleet to electric. I also believe that by supporting local, mid-level sustainable agriculture that we would also cut down on packaging, distribution, plastic waste, fossil fuel usage from transportation, while at the same time, revitalizing and localizing our economy.

WELIN: By the very laws of nature "climate" is characterized as continually changing. Parabolic if you will. So, yes I support sound efforts of gradual changes to Redding's Fleet of equipment to lessen our overall carbon footprint. Simply stated: globally we have an atmospheric increase in carbon dioxide from the burning of fossil fuels, so as I simply see it we need to lessen our use of fossil fuels, and increase our tree canopy to help lessen our collective carbon footprint.

QUESTION 6: Would you support an increase in Redding's tree canopy on streets, parks, and in residential areas to counteract the increasing heat of Redding summers and the consequent heat island effect?

WINTER: Increasing our tree canopy not only makes our city more beautiful but offsets our heat and makes our streets more comfortable, resulting in less AC use. Redding has received awards for our trees but many of our downtown trees are in poor condition. This past year we planted over 100 trees in downtown, and more are coming with the new Marketplace project. It always comes down to limited funding sources. I'm certainly willing to look at projects and community partnerships that can increase our tree canopy.

WELIN: I absolutely support increasing our tree canopy on our streets, in our parks, and our parking lots to offer the best shade, for the citizens of Redding California. Redding is known for our natural beauty throughout, and as a council member I would be open to have inclusive conversations to keep and to also improve our local tree canopy. I truly want the best for all of us and trees offer our citizens a safe place to sit shadowed by the leafy shade to circumvent the sun.

McELVAIN: Yes.

MEZZANO: Absolutely, I think this concept has substantial merit. I would also ask you to review my answer to question #1 specifically the concerns I identified when considering a tree removal program. Counteracting the Heat Island affect is one thing many citizens in Redding would most likely get on-board with. We all suffer when our summer temperatures exceed 100 degrees. The heat island effect contributes to higher daytime temperatures and reduced nighttime cooling and let's not forget higher air pollution and heat related illness and deaths.

ROBBINS: I always think about this anytime I walk around town. There are large swaths of pedestrian routes, sidewalks, etc. that have no cover from the shade. Climate change will continue to worsen as the years go by, making this a key issue. We need cooling centers open to the public, and we need to plant more trees along our streets. I would also support planting drought-resistant fruit trees along public avenues.

Candidates Biographies

Julie Winter



Julie grew up in southern California and she and her husband Mike, moved to Redding in 1989. They have two children and five grandchildren. Her education includes a B.S. degree in Genetics from UC Davis, a B.S in nursing from CSU Sacramento, and a Masters in Nursing from UCLA. Julie has been a Family Nurse Practitioner for 31 years and currently works for Dignity Health Medical Foundation. Julie was elected to the Redding City Council in 2016 and served as mayor in 2019. She is seeking re-election. Her website is www.juliewinter.com

David Robbins



I am a father, student, worker, and a community organizer and volunteer. The requirements and responsibilities of each of these roles are vast. I have the insight, patience, and empathy necessary for the job. I am the person to bring the fresh outlook and new solutions to old city politics that we so desperately need. As a father, making ends meet and putting food on the table is an ever-present worry and responsibility, one in which failure is not an option. As a college student I have firsthand knowledge of Redding's lack of educational and employment opportunities. David Robbin's website is <https://robbins4redding.com/>

Monique Welin



I with a genuine heart only want to help elevate and empower our Redding citizens to know, they too are a part of our cities growth for a more sustainable future. Collectively, together we can be innovative and solution oriented. Life is about potential, and purpose because I only desire to work for the people, with the people, because our government is made up by the people. I am blessed to even be in the position of being able to run for a public office. And I thank you for your time, and energy.

Mike Mezzano



California Highway Patrol, 1983-2011. Transferred to Mt. Shasta in 2000 and Redding in 2005. Served on two multi-agency task forces targeting general law enforcement in the San Bernardino City and Professional Vehicle Theft in San Bernardino County. Currently volunteer with Shasta Lake Kiwanis in Shasta Lake and Redding. My wife Kathy and I celebrate 30 years of marriage this October. We enjoy hiking, boating, fishing, playing golf, and cooking for family and friends. We have two children, Marcus, 27, Kristine, 25, soon to be son-in-law, Joshua Plummer, and two Yorkies, Lucy and Lola. His website is www.mezzano4redding.com.

Adam McElvain



I am Adam McElvain, Mayor of Redding, and I am running for reelection to the Redding City Council. I want to thank the Shasta Environmental Alliance for providing me an opportunity to discuss my positions on these important issues. I am a father/husband, veteran, business owner, solar advocate, and City Mayor. I began attending Council meetings in 2006, and served for seven years as a city commissioner before winning a seat on the Council in 2016. I have kept all the promises I made to you four years ago, and would be honored to have your vote this November.