

MARINA BAY NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL  
“MEET THE CANDIDATES” FORUM

Wednesday, September 25, 2024 – 7:00 PM

**MBNC Attendees:** Rita Mitas, Amelia Berto Morgan, Lynne Therriault; Laura Freeze Ho, Kathy Watson; Basha Goddard, Jacob Perkins, Susan Lustig, Kyanna Williams, Sandra Lax

**Presenters:** Ahmad Anderson, Candidate for City Council District 5

**Announcements/Updates:**

1.) Welcome and introductions

- Rita opened the meeting at 7:02 pm
- She mentioned MBNC hosted city council candidate, Sue Wilson, last week for a similar forum
- She also noted an event to be held on 10/28 with experts discussing sea level rise and how Richmond can adapt to it
  - Encouraged resident to attend virtually or attend in person

2.) Candidate's Opening Statement

- Ahmad Anderson introduced himself by explaining how he has worked as an HR professional in “people & culture” for over 25 years
- His goal is to listen to the diverse voices of the community
- Noted his family's long-term ties to the city, as both of his parents, Booker T. Anderson and Irma Anderson, served as Richmond mayor
  - From them, he learned the value of doing all you can do and being all you can be in your community
  - He learned about public service from his dad whose focus was “peace, jobs, justice, and education”
  - His mother taught him “giving back is the rent you pay” for living on this earth
- Ahmad first ran for city council in 1985
  - Although he didn't win, he visited every corner of the city and started to build a strong network with other city residents and leaders
  - He went on to learn more and soon became involved with the Youth Service Bureau at only 25 years old to help keep youth from crime

- He has lived in the city for over 60 years
- Said that Marina Bay deserves the same attention as other districts in Richmond
  - Pushed back on the idea that our district doesn't need any support due to socioeconomic status or educational attainment levels, pointing to issues such as environmental injustices, lack of economic development, and sideshows
  - Said that although we have special assessments, there are still city responsibilities that need to be a focus
- Noted that priorities for this district include economic development, proper staffing for public safety, and transparent city communications, especially around finances
  - Believes those boxes are not currently being checked, and he will try to fill in the gap, especially as a former economic commissioner and someone who handled HR Budgets at UPS, Goodwill of the Greater East Bay, and Gardens of Golden Gate Park.
- He encouraged residents to vote for him and help the community "come alive"

### 3.) Resident Questions

- **Q: What are the two most important challenges facing our community?**
  - Response:
    - Crime is still the "number one issue for us"
    - Police are unable to respond to calls or crime issues in a timely fashion, particularly with a reduced police force, mandatory overtime, higher workers comp issues, and overall disconnect between department and the community
    - Wants to immediately end sideshows and the associated crimes
- **Q: Multiple large projects, such as TransMontaigne Expansion Project to expand the railroad tracks, are currently in the planning process. Other projects like pickleball at the Craneway, single family home development proposal near Rosie the Riveter, and Moxion going bankrupt, are also of concern to residents. What are your thoughts on those projects?**
  - Response:
    - "I did my homework," and went to every location to try and assess the issues
    - With TransMontaigne expansion, the first step is to say, "we don't want this," while the second step is to conduct an environmental impact.
      - He doesn't think it's been discussed that this is a District 5 and District 2 issue.
      - The corresponding neighborhood councils should be aligned on this project as well.
      - The neighborhoods need to come together and advocate against the expansion, which will push the needle a lot more.
- **Q: Would you support working with East Bay Trails to support protected bike lanes on the Bay Trail and the streets?**
  - Response:

- Yes. He recommends developing an ambassador program to work with the East Bay Trails to make sure there is safety and monitoring.
  - Believes this is a safety and neighbor engagement issue
  - Would help provide jobs to have Bay Trail monitors
  - Noted similar programs in San Francisco and San Jose’s that have been successful—not as a police force, but to put people “on watch”
- **Q: Marina Bay has had a lot of illegal fireworks, sideshows, and theft. What is your plan to help address these issues going on in Marina Bay and city-wide?**
  - Response:
    - Stated there isn’t a “quick fix” to solving these problems
    - Above all, Richmond needs appropriate levels of law enforcement, particularly implementing beats covering smaller areas
    - May look to Fremont as an example of successfully combating illegal fireworks, such as arresting people setting off fireworks
- **Q: How can Marina Bay implement a quiet zone for trains?**
  - Response:
    - Noted there are policies and procedures in place to establish one
    - Marina Bay is eligible for a quiet zone
    - He had worked with West Richmond to get one there
    - Suggested working with other neighborhood councils in getting this done
    - Rita said she would follow up on this with the planning department
- **Q: In terms of development, would you support a local grocery coming into Marina Bay?**
  - Response:
    - “Absolutely.” Explained in the past there was a deal in place to build a Natural Grocers extension where Lara’s is, but the developers didn’t want to do what the city expected, and the deal fell through
    - Ahmad indicated he has access to the developer who is still around
    - Believes Marina Bay residents live in a grocery store desert
- **Q: A lot of money is coming into the city of Richmond to help the unhoused, but where is the money going? If elected, what would you do to address this issue and ensure there is accountability to taxpayers?**
  - Response:
    - Pointed to his experience as a former executive with Goodwill Industries of the East Bay, explaining how he understands unique challenges faced by the unhoused and those with behavioral health issues
    - Also acknowledged problems, especially in other cities, in not being transparent with where money is going
    - Contended that city council members need to go through financial and budget training to ensure adequate accountability with taxpayer dollars
- **Q: Would you also support making protected bike lanes in Marina Bay?**
  - Response:
    - Yes. With the Transit Village in Richmond, there was a project in place to provide bike lanes not only in that area, but the rest of Richmond as well

- Said that bringing protected bike lanes to Marina Bay is “a larger engineering question, but is plausible,” and at the “very least, we need to research it”
- **Q: How can you help ensure more robust budget oversight?**
  - Response:
    - First explained how the city recently received \$500 million from Chevron for the general fund
    - One piece that has been “short-sighted” with the payment is that residents haven’t been surveyed about what priorities should receive attention and how to best invest the funds in the community
    - Current city council is focused on using that money for potholes and basic general services, rather than longer-term, strategic initiatives
    - He contended that Marina Bay residents need to vote in someone who will “do the work” and conduct proper financial planning
- **Q: Where would you like to encourage new housing in Marina Bay?**
  - Response:
    - The concern around new housing in Marina Bay is finding room for it
    - Starting in 1975, there was a plan to make the Craneway area the “San Francisco Ferry Building of the West,” with housing in the back, but the “lack of [city government] foresight” didn’t bring it to fruition
    - To make up for lost revenue, the city allowed for additional industrial businesses that bring hazardous materials and emissions into the community
    - He doesn’t want single family housing, but housing that fits into the needs of the community
- **Q: Where could we put in a new grocery store?**
  - Response:
    - The past proposed area was next to Lara’s and could be a “conversation starter,” although it’s contaminated
    - The previous developer is still interested in that area as well, but the neighborhood has changed, and traffic might be a problem
- **Q: How can we promote public transit links to Marina Bay, particularly to get to BART?**
  - Response:
    - A Richmond General Plan was adopted in 1973 that discussed issues like this, particularly transit connections with AC Transit, BART, and Amtrak
    - Said the community has changed since then, so the transit issues need to be reassessed
- **Q: Can you address the pickleball issue at the Craneway, which is an illegal use?**
  - Response:
    - He pushed back on the statement that pickleball in the Craneway is “an illegal use,” responding with “that isn’t necessarily correct”. Based upon the City Attorney the contract is legal. However, based upon the Bay

Conservation and Development Commission guidelines, it specifically highlights the importance of public access as a priority.

- The challenge is that the State Lands Commission amended its position in the past on the Craneway, stating that it must be for public use, but didn't outline what that public use was
- Pickleball facilities is a public use and can encourage public access to the remainder of the facility
- Ultimately need to "figure out how to get along together"
- **Q: How will you get along with the Richmond Progressive Alliance (RPA)?**
  - Response:
    - "I don't have any problem with them"
    - He is "not upset with people," but upset with the RPA's lack of proper procedures and foresight
    - Reminded residents he is an HR professional who engages and collaborates with everyone. While using his expertise to draft policies and procedures with the keen focus on how they may impact people-we employ or serve.
- **Q: Do you have plans to attract more businesses to Richmond?**
  - Response:
    - Economic development is the engine of providing revenue, workforce development, affordable housing, adequate public safety staffing
    - Richmond needs money for economic development to first retain the businesses that are already here
    - Also need answers and statistics from the City about how Measure U revenue is being used or not used
    - It is a public health issue to not have a solid economic development plan-all services need revenue to effectively and responsibly grow our city
- **Q: Homelessness is a huge problem everywhere. What is your plan for transitional housing?**
  - Response:
    - The City first needs to discover what type of people are unhoused to adequately learn what their specific needs are: Unhoused / employed, Unhoused/skilled , Unhoused / unskilled, and Unhoused/Behavioral Health challenges
    - Need to have those conversations to identify the needs, what the City can do, and align regionally with other cities, like El Cerrito, and San Pablo, and Albany
- **Q: How do your views differ from your opponent, Sue Wilson, and other city council members?**
  - Response:
    - His opponent discusses environmental justice, which he agrees with at its core, but contends the City also needs a more holistic focus on jobs and revenue to fill in the gaps of companies being pushed out or folding
    - Said the police department needs to be adequately staffed

- As a Black man, he wants more consequences for crime, not fewer
- Stated he has been serving his community for decades, but Richmond is Sue's "adopted city"
- Wants to meet people where they are and see the city through their eyes, rather than try to change residents' perspectives to meet his own
- **Q: How do you ensure that businesses coming into Marina Bay pay their fair share, especially for lighting and landscaping?**
  - Response:
    - Marina Bay residents are paying into lighting and landscaping with special assessment, but staffing is the biggest issue, because that takes the most amount of money
    - If elected, he would talk to the city manager, other nonprofits, etc., to help keep up the area
    - Believes in "training your citizens to become the next workforce"
- **Q: How can you attract new residents and businesses if the environment in Marina Bay is so bad?**
  - Response:
    - He has survived living in Richmond for over 60 years, even with less regulation in the past
    - Aims to set out "red carpet" for bringing back organizations and businesses, while minimizing emissions and encouraging clean energy
    - The City needs economic development work to encourage businesses to move here, while also keeping the residents safe
    - Need a "we-us-together format" in collaborating

#### 4.) Adjournment

- Rita thanked members and Ahmad for their participation
- Ahmad concluded by saying thank you for being Richmond citizens and being engaged, and he sees a lot of hope and promise

Meeting concluded at 8:40 pm

-Laura Freeze Ho  
MBNC Secretary