

# **LOS ALTOS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE CANDIDATE ENDORSEMENT POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

## **WHY ENDORSE?**

As the stewards of a strong business climate, it is the responsibility of the Los Altos Chamber of Commerce to ensure that the interests of business are being represented in the political decisions of our community leaders. This chamber is dedicated to supporting a strong business climate, promoting business attraction, growth and retention, and fostering pro-business public policies that advance the economic agenda of our region.

We are the voice of our community's businesses, advocating the business community's concerns and stressing changes in laws and policies that affect our member businesses. By supporting and helping elect business friendly candidates we can expect to influence governing bodies, especially our City Council and State Legislative Delegation, that are filled with individuals who partner with the chamber and business community before making policy decisions. We can strengthen our relationships with our elected officials when they understand and appreciate that we expect accountability for the decisions they make.

## **ENDORSEMENT COMMITTEE/PANEL CRITERIA**

### **Requirements of Endorsement Committee Members**

- A panel member shall be a member of the Los Altos Chamber of Commerce in good standing in accordance with the chamber by-laws.
- A panel member shall not be a part of any candidate's election committee.
- A panel member shall not have given an endorsement prior to interviews of the candidates.
- A panel member shall not have given money to any candidate's campaign prior to candidate's interview;
- A panel member must not have personal ties to any candidate.

### **Selection of Endorsement Committee Members**

The Endorsement Committee will be recommended by the Executive Committee and comprised of the following seven members: the current Chair of the Government Affairs Committee, one past Chair of the Government Affairs Committee, one current member of the Government Affairs Committee (not a Chamber Board of Director), two current members of the Board of Directors (In addition to the Chair of the Government Affairs Committee, if the Chair is a board member) and two Chamber members-at-large. This group will be approved by the Los Altos Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors and empowered to select the individuals proposed for endorsement. They will follow the specific procedures developed by the Chamber Board of Directors. The President will facilitate the panel but will not have a vote.

### **Goal of the Panel Interview**

The goal of the panel interview is to direct questions that will demonstrate the candidate's ability to act as an effective liaison between the business community and the office to which he/she

aspires. This process will allow the interviewers to ascertain which issues a candidate supports that are consistent with the position of the Chamber of Commerce and its business constituency.

## **The Process**

**Step One: Pre-screening:** Immediately following the close of filing for an elected public office, the Endorsement Committee will evaluate and recommend races that have significance for the Chamber.

**Step Two:** The Endorsement Committee will solicit background information and will develop and send a questionnaire of pertinent questions to all candidates.

**Step Three:** The Endorsement Committee will review the candidates' responses and will invite candidates who have responded to the written questionnaire to an interview panel. Candidates will not be interviewed if they have not responded to the questionnaire. A copy of the Endorsement Policy will be provided to all candidates interested in being considered for endorsement. Recommendations from the Endorsement Committee will be presented to the Chamber Board of Directors for final approval and adoption. The Board of Directors reserves the right to accept all or part of any endorsement recommendation. The endorsement recommendation must be voted on and approved by at least two-thirds (2/3) of the quorum of the Board of Directors present.

## **Development of Questions & Process**

Throughout the interview process several core questions will be introduced to each candidate. The first four core questions will be delivered by the same interviewers to each candidate. The remaining panel members will have the opportunity to follow-up on the candidates' answers.

The core questions will be developed in an attempt to open up different areas of discussion while keeping the focus on Chamber issues.

The individual candidate interviews will take place in a closed forum with the selected interview team. The interview with each candidate should be *no more and no less than 20-25 minutes*. All candidates will follow the same interview process. Consistency is important in conducting a fair interview for all candidates.

### **Examples of Possible Sample Interview Questions**

1. *What is the Los Altos Chamber of Commerce of Commerce, and what role do you see it playing in this community over the next several years?*
2. *How would you work to improve development in our community?*
3. *What do you see the primary responsibility of a (title of public office)?*
4. *What in your opinion are the three top issues facing the city in the next four years?*
5. *How do you feel your background, experiences, and skills will contribute to you being an effective (title of public office)*
6. *What are some things you would have done differently during your term? (for incumbents)*
7. *What are some things you would have done differently than (name of incumbent) during the past year? (for opponent)*

8. *What do you think is the most viable source of future revenue for the city?*
9. *What is your stance regarding the future growth of Los Altos?*

### **Interview Scoring Process**

As the interviewers score each candidate, they should do so using two different systems. Each panel member will be given a cumulative scoring sheet where he or she will have the ability to rate certain personal qualities of a candidate. Each candidate will be scored on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the best. Each candidate should also be scored on a 1-5 scale for their answer to each interview question as it best relates to the views and goals of the Chamber of Commerce and business community. After all candidate interviews are completed, the interview panel will reconvene, and as a group will select the candidates of choice.

### **ENDORSEMENT CRITERIA/CONSIDERATIONS**

#### **Answers to the Endorsement Committee interview questions**

*Interview questions are based on Chamber position statements*

#### **Incumbent voting record on business issues**

*Staff provides the committee with a report card or a business issue voting record*

#### **Candidate platform and campaign materials**

*Campaign platforms provide a list of key candidate issues*

#### **Public statements**

*Public statements, especially those given in the text of speeches or available in the print media, give an indication as to what a candidate will likely do in office*

#### **Leadership Skills/Personal and Professional Background**

*Do they have the skills and experience necessary to make them effective leaders and policy makers? Do they have the respect of their peers?*

#### **Electability**

*The electability of a candidate is a consideration. Several factors make a candidate more or less likely to become elected to office. They include:*

- 1) **Funding** – Does the candidate have enough money to convey his/her message?
- 3) **Name Recognition** – A candidate with a recognizable name is more likely to be elected than one without a recognizable name.
- 4) **Community Reputation** – Can encompass several factors including but not limited to community involvement, level of influence, affiliations, employment and community longevity.

#### **Endorsements**

*Support or opposition from other groups and individuals may be a factor in endorsement deliberations*

**Staff recommendations**

*Staff frequently attends public meetings, converses with incumbents and works with the Chamber Government Affairs Committee, and may be able to provide insight into a candidate's ability to govern once in office.*

**AN ENDORSEMENT BY LOS ALTOS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE WOULD MEAN:**

1. The candidate may use the Los Altos Chamber of Commerce as an endorser;
2. The Los Altos Chamber of Commerce can disseminate information to Chamber members in a variety of media and public relations formats;
3. The Los Altos Chamber of Commerce may provide to candidates meet and greet opportunities with Chamber members;
4. The Los Altos Chamber of Commerce cannot give cash or contributions to campaigns.

Approved May 16, 2013  
Board of Directors