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Chamber Endorsements for Salinas City Council

The Salinas Valley Chamber has announced its endorsements for the November 2020 general election. Be sure to vote on Tuesday, November 3rd and if you vote absentee, ballot return locations open beginning on October 5. Please submit your ballot early as we expect the Elections Office (and the Post Office) to be swamped even more than usual this year. You can also deliver your ballot to a polling place, but you must get your ballot in by the day of the election.

Following its process, the Salinas Valley Chamber's Candidate Review Committee solicited information from candidates and held a series of panel interviews to discuss their ideas. After the committee offered its input, our Board of Directors made the final decisions on our endorsements. We found these individuals to be most supportive of the Salinas Valley Chamber's public policy positions and friendly to the interests of the business community and the community at large. We hope you'll consider casting your vote for these worthy candidates.



Kimbley Craig

Salinas Mayor – Kimbley Craig

(There will be a new mayor because Mayor Joe Gunter passed away while in office.)

Kimbley Craig is the obvious choice for endorsement in this powerful, high profile position. She has a solid voting record of supporting economic growth and job creation as a two-term member of the Salinas City Council. She believes prosperity for businesses combined with fiscal responsibility is the proper approach to balancing the city's budget. Her experience in public relations will be useful as she represents the City of Salinas in attracting businesses and investment while rebutting

the city's detractors and competitors.

Since completing her council term in 2018, Ms. Craig has advocated for businesses as the President & CEO at the Monterey County Business Council. When coronavirus public health restrictions began in mid-March, she became a leader in Monterey County in providing local businesses with information on how to seek Paycheck Protection Program federal loans and other public and private assistance during troubled times. She has also coordinated the Leadership Monterey County program to prepare residents to be more effective leaders.

She is smart, highly competent, and not afraid to be open to the public ➡

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How Corpuz Contributed to Salinas

Highlights of Salinas City Manager Ray Corpuz's Accomplishments



Corpuz

Salinas City Manager Ray Corpuz retires this month. During his over 8-year tenure at the City of Salinas, Mr. Corpuz has overseen a number of initiatives that will have a lasting impact on the City. Perhaps most obviously is the design, financing, and construction of two new City facilities – the previously undersized El Gabilan Library on North Main Street has been replaced by a new state-of-the-art facility, and the Police Department has relocated from the 1950's-era Salinas Police Station on Lincoln Avenue to the community-oriented Public Safety Building on East Alisal Street.

Corpuz led efforts to put the City's fiscal house in order, most visibly in

the development and implementation of the Salinas Plan, a collection of 32 recommendations from December 2018 to eliminate the City's long-term budget woes and address the City's housing shortage. Several of these recommendations have already been implemented, saving over \$1 million already, and City staff continue to work to implement the recommendations.

Working in partnership with the agricultural sector, Ray helped develop the City as a global hub for the agricultural technology (AgTech) sector. The City was an instrumental partner in the establishment of programs to market the City as an ideal location for startups through partnerships with the THRIVE Accelerator, Western Growers Association, and Forbes Media (which has hosted five annual AgTech Summits on Main Street), while also supporting the creation of programs to expose the City's youth to technology (including Coder Dojo and Digital NEST) and increased coordination between the City and Hartnell College. ➡



Groundbreaking for Salinas police headquarters (with Ray Corpuz on right)

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about her positions. We expect her to continue the leadership legacy of the late Salinas Mayor Joe Gunter, whose family supports her candidacy. Finally, in the 150-year history of Salinas, the City has had only one female Mayor (Anna Caballero). The Salinas Valley Chamber thinks Ms. Craig is worthy of being the second woman to hold that distinction.

Salinas City Council, District 1 – Scott Davis

(Councilmember Scott Davis is running for reelection to a second four-year term.)

Scott Davis is the incumbent city councilmember and worthy of reelection. His three priorities for his second term: (1) make Salinas the most business-friendly city on the Central Coast (if not California), (2) improving the quality of life, particularly by increasing the supply of housing that is affordable, and (3) economic development. These priorities align well with the priorities of the Chamber.

He openly states his interest in identifying and reducing excessive government spending and seeing government operate more like the private sector. The Chamber appreciates elected officials who see economic growth, increasing the supply of residential units, and fiscal responsibility as critical to the future of the city.

Chamber leaders find Councilmember Davis to be accessible and reasonable. We appreciate his detailed study of issues and the analytical questions he asks at council meetings. There is never any question about whether Councilmember Davis reads the staff reports and public comments about items on the meeting agendas. We hope he'll get more traction on getting those questions answered in his second term.



Davis



Orlando Osornio serves on the City of Salinas Small Business Task Force, which is advising the city on relief and recovery policies from negative impacts from coronavirus public health orders. We appreciated his humility and thoughtfulness and think he will work well with other members of the council to find consensus on difficult issues.

Salinas City Council, District 6 -

Vanessa Robinson

(Councilmember Tony Villegas is not running for reelection after one four-year term.)

Vanessa Robinson is someone who will add energy and commitment to the city council as an "outsider" with a strong vision for the future of Salinas. We were impressed by her knowledge of the often-frustrating regulatory challenges that businesses deal with in Salinas and her desire to make Salinas more appealing to young entrepreneurial people who grow up in Salinas but then leave permanently to more innovative and visionary regions.



Robinson

Ms. Robinson states that her first priority will be making the city's planning department and permit center more efficient and responsive. She's quite aware of anecdotes circulating in the community about hassles in getting permits, and she recognizes how these stories discourage people from starting and expanding businesses and improving their properties. We look forward to seeing her work with other city council members to achieve this long-elusive goal of the Chamber and other local business groups.

Housing supply is another issue that Ms. Robinson regards as a priority. In addition to pointing out the lack of affordable housing for lower income residents, she indicates her interest in increasing the supply of housing in Salinas for middle-income households. This problem doesn't get the attention that the lack of low-income housing receives, but Chamber members identify it as a major obstacle to recruiting and retaining employees.

We expect that Vanessa Robinson will ask the city staff tough questions and insist that tough questions from other members of the council get answered. ■



Osornio

Salinas City Council, District 4 -

Orlando Osornio

(Councilmember Gloria de la Rosa is not running for reelection after five four-year terms.)

Orlando Osornio will bring small business experience to the city council as the owner of a Salinas food truck, Tortas al 100. He wants his business "to be known as a local small business where we make everyone feel like family" with a vision "to bring unique and quality Mexican food, while offering over the top customer service." This is the kind of spirit the Chamber wants on the Salinas City Council.

He was recently profiled in a national news story about Latino small businesses and the challenges they face. Because of his negative experience accumulating debt as a young man, he chose not to rely on a bank loan when he started his business. Instead, he invested his savings to start it and his earnings to grow it. Mr. Osornio has valuable perspectives to add to the city council about work ethics, the dangers of excessive debt, and the dilemmas and challenges involved in starting and growing a small business.

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Ray has pushed for the creation of a Dark Fiber network to support the community's access to broadband; the first leg of this network is expected to be completed early next year.

Ray will leave a lasting legacy in the City through his leadership in the creation and adoption of new City policies to support ongoing economic and neighborhood development efforts that make our City government more accessible and inclusive. Under his tenure, the City completed a new Economic Development Element and incorporated it into its General Plan, thus ensuring that the City takes economic development into account in the future. Further, the City has adopted the Downtown and Alisal Vibrancy Plans – in both cases, these plans were created not just with the input of affected communities, but by

members of these communities. These plans establish a vision for the Downtown and Alisal Communities.

Ray initiated training for City staff in the principles of Governing for Racial Equity, with 70% of City staff receiving training on the topic, which will enable City staff to better serve the community for years to come. And as the Chamber pointed out in the cover of our August 2020 Business Journal, five of the eight departments at the City are headed by women.

Ray, the Chamber thanks you for your leadership and we wish you the best in your retirement.

Chamber Endorsements for Hartnell College Board



In addition to the endorsements for the Salinas City Council and Mayor, the Salinas Valley Chamber's Candidate Review Committee also interviewed candidates vying to serve on the Hartnell College Board of Trustees. The College is at an important crossroads as the Board must hire a new Superintendent, as well as oversee the expansion of the College to new locations in South County and Castroville.

After performing our due diligence, we are pleased to offer our endorsement to the following candidates.

Hartnell College, Area 1 – Manuel Osorio

(Manuel Osorio is the incumbent, running for reelection.)

Manuel Osorio currently serves as Hartnell College Board Trustee for Area 1. He received his A.A. at Cabrillo College, B.A. at UCSC and M.A. at San Jose State University. As the first (and only) to attend college in his family, Manuel spent 34 years working at Cabrillo College.

A strong advocate for community colleges, he has served on the Cabrillo College Foundation Board of Directors for five years. Manuel was a Trustee for the Pajaro Valley Unified School District for 11 years and a Trustee of the North Monterey County Unified School District Board for 4 years.

Manuel is a common sense leader with deep educational experience that Hartnell can rely on as the Board hires a new College President. He has earned our support and we hope he'll earn yours, as well.



Osorio

Hartnell College, Area 2 - Aurelio Salazar Jr.

(Aurelio Salazar Jr. is running for reelection)

Aurelio Salazar Jr. is again endorsed by the Chamber for this seat. He wants to see the college continue existing partnerships with local industries to meet their workforce needs by providing students with the skills to succeed. He touts how the college has balanced its budget (while maintaining 20% operating reserves) since his election, and he wants to sustain that record now as current president of the college board.

As an advocate of fiscal responsibility, Mr. Salazar wants

to see the college district continue to award bids for Measure T construction projects under fair and open competition.

Mr. Salazar is widely respected by all of our Candidate Review Committee members who have had the pleasure to work with him. He is reasonable, professional and compassionate. He is one of "Salinas's own," with his family having moved here when he was eight years old. The son of farmworkers, he has succeeded despite remarkable adversity including the death of both his mother and father when he was a child. His resilience has enabled him to survive difficult financial circumstances (including having to live for a time in a garage). He calls Hartnell his "pathway out of poverty." Now armed with a Master's Degree from San Jose State, Aurelio is using his considerable talents to give back to our community.



Salazar

Hartnell College, Area 3 - Kari Valdés

(Patricia Donohue is not running for reelection)

Kari Valdés is the Chamber's choice for this seat. In the 2000s, she served on the Hartnell College Board for three years and ultimately became board president. (She resigned in 2008 when she moved to Hollister). She was involved in the selection of a new college president during her service - good preparation and perspective for the upcoming selection process for a new college president.

Kari is a focused business professional, with over seventeen years of experience in the Salinas Produce Industry. She has been the Director of Food Safety & Quality at Taylor Farms since 2010 where she oversees a team of 8 managers and approximately 200 employees at four processing plants.

Kari has a long history of active involvement in the partnership between Hartnell and the agriculture industry that enriches students' experiences and their academic and career prospects. She knows how vital it is to connect and support local students with careers, boosting the local economy, increasing opportunities for job advancement and raising the standard of living in our community. As an advocate of fiscal responsibility, Ms. Valdés wants to see the college district continue to award bids for Measure T construction projects under fair and open competition.

We have confidence in her commitment to focus on the time-consuming challenges of serving on a community college governing board.

Hartnell College, Area 4 – Irma C. Lopez

(Irma C. Lopez is finishing a two-year term and is running for a four-year term.)

Irma Lopez currently serves as the Hartnell College Board Trustee for District 4 and has been honored with the "City of Champions" commendation award presented by the City of Salinas. She works with the Monterey County Office of Education's AmeriCorps Program. Should she be re-elected, her priorities include ensuring funding is being allocated correctly and helping students and staff navigate the changes required by the COVID-19 pandemic. Please join the Chamber in supporting Irma Lopez for Hartnell College's Board.



Valdés



Lopez



Hartnell Community College District is building a new nursing and health sciences building at its main campus in Salinas using Measure T funds. The Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce wants to see the college continue a well-managed, fiscally responsible construction program at its various campuses.