

*Progressive Dems of Benicia Questionnaire
Cassandra James BOS D1
February 5, 2024*

1. Please provide a one or two paragraph background sketch.

For almost two decades, I have been organizing in the most disadvantaged communities in the Bay Area. At 18 years old, I represented Bayview/Hunters Point as an appointee to the San Francisco Youth Commission, one of San Francisco's most marginalized communities where I grew up.

The center of my organizing, then and now, is to ensure and increase access to deserved resources for historically excluded and underemployed communities, including but not limited to communities impacted by gun violence, justice impacted individuals, dual-diagnosis (mental illness + substance (use/age), formerly unhoused individuals, survivors of domestic violence and communities utilizing public benefits. Throughout the years, I have successfully completed relevant training programs to expand my knowledge and maximize my public service capacity.

2. Provide one paragraph about why you are running for office.

I am running for Solano County Supervisor because I believe that my personal experiences, professional background, and passion can make a real difference in the lives of our children, aging parents, and ourselves.

My motivation comes from my two sons, who serve as my guiding light. After witnessing the racial reckoning following George Floyd's murder, my eldest son asked, "what can we do?" This simple question forced me to deeply reflect on how we can move beyond protests and take meaningful action through policy to create sustainable positive change for marginalized and working-class individuals. It was at that moment that I knew I had to run for office.

As a working-class mother who grew in public housing and relied on government subsidies, I understand the importance of unions in providing professional opportunities, fair wages, and safe working conditions. Unfortunately, many residents in my Vallejo district are being left behind. We can see the consequences of this, with wages falling far behind the rising costs of basic necessities, particularly housing.

3. In one paragraph, describe your top three priorities.

My top three priorities are ensuring that the Southern County gets its fair share and an equitable return on county services; invest in affordable housing and expand the housing ladder and prioritize our county's open spaces and agricultural lands. I am committed to standing up to the out-of-town billionaires who were to repurpose county resources for a new city instead of investing in its current cities, specifically Southern County.

4. At the end of your term of office how will you know you have been successful? What is your measure of success?

At the end of my term of office I will know I have been successful through the demonstrated ability to work collaboratively with colleagues, community leaders, and representatives from different political parties and interests. In addition it would include establishing a tangible

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timeline and possible breaking ground on the Solano 360 project, establishing district office (possible shared space with D2 representative) in Vallejo, moving the needle on open space and parks and/or agricultural commission, effectively partnering with the rental assistance program in the county, creating and maintaining an cross-sector advisory committee and establish beneficial partnerships with regional groups.

My measured success would be the productive relationships and partnerships. Also, it would ensure we are able to establish a timeline and tasks are completed.

5. What do you view as the top three priorities for the county in attacking climate change?

The three top priorities for the county in attacking climate change is supporting an open park district, re-establishing the county agricultural commission/district and standing up to Flanery Group. I support the creation of a countywide park district and would work with other supervisors to continuously enforce SB 365 that was signed into law in 2017 to advocate for the creation of the park district by highlighting its benefits to the community, such as improved recreational opportunities, including working collaboratively with other supervisors, local officials and community stakeholders to build consensus within the board regarding the importance and feasibility of establishing the park district. In addition, focus on re-establishing the agricultural commission that was recently disbanded. The most important priority for the county in attacking climate change is addressing the unchecked sprawling development that might result from this land acquisition in an area ill-equipped for transit, pedestrian, and bicycle accessibility, including natural resources such as water and electricity. Equally important is the possibility that these lands might be developed without consideration for community input, environmental sustainability, and troubling infrastructure. I commit to working closely with environmental agencies to ensure any development on this land meets rigorous sustainability and environmental protection standards.

6. What do you view as your greatest accomplishment?

Outside of my sons, it would be turning around the rental assistance program for the City and County of San Francisco. When I took over the program it was on a five year decline with monies disinvested from the program and being reallocated to other counties. After one year, I was able to turn the program in partnership with the largest city and county departments, housing consultants and efficient qualitative and quantitative data collection. I established goals using the SMART model and implemented the goal by operationalizing equity to expand the program. I was unafraid and bold in expanding accessibility and language services and ongoing accountability check ins between government and private entities. After one year, the program had seen a drastic increase in community partners, private dollars and under my leadership it had several stories highlighted in the SF Chronicle. The foundation I created is still felt as I transitioned into a different role.