

2020 Aug 19th Albany Democratic Club Endorsement Candidates Survey - Albany City Council

Questions and responses will be shared with the public. Please type your answers in another document window, eg. Google Docs, and paste them here when ready. Google Docs auto-saves and will tell you the word and character count of selected text when you click Tools/Word Count. Deadline: Monday August 17 @ 10pm.

Your name (as it will appear on the ballot) *

Tod Abbott

Preferred email address *

tod@abbottforcouncil.org

Party registration. *

- Democratic Party
- Republican Party
- Green Party
- Libertarian Party
- American Independent Party
- Peace and Freedom Party
- Not registered for a political party
- Other:

Your age as of Election Day Nov 3, 2020. *

56

During what years have you been a resident of Albany? (eg. someone who left and returned might put 2012-2014, 2017-2020) *

2003 - 2020

Your ballot designation as it will appear below your name on the ballot (usually occupation or current office) *

Local Business Owner

List of any prominent endorsers, both organizations and individuals. (It is understood that in the first days of a campaign this list may be very short or nonexistent.) *

I have not yet solicited endorsements.

List any and all of the following: Website, facebook group, mailing list or other ways voters can reach out to or follow your campaign. (It is understood that in the first days of a campaign these resources may not be fully fleshed out.) *

<https://abbottforcouncil.org> [not yet active], <https://facebook.com/AbbottForCouncil> [not yet active]

Brief description of your campaign organization and finances – names of any consultants or campaign managers you will use, funds you have raised to date, and how much you expect to have to spend to win. *

I will be soliciting donations via word of mouth, and a letter/email campaign. I am agreeing to the voluntary spending limit and expect to raise around \$5,000 for the campaign. I am my own campaign manager, but will consult with a range of people familiar with Albany from Allen Cain, the Director of the Solano Avenue Association, to Peggy McQuaid, Michael Barnes, and Shaun Charles, the President of the Chamber of Commerce.

Brief description of your history of involvement with and support for the Democratic Party and its candidates and ballot measure positions – include Democratic clubs/organizations to which you belong or which you have supported financially. Limit 10 words each item. *

I have been a registered Democrat since 1982, and have voted in just about every election (I think I missed a small one while traveling one time). I have donated to many Democratic candidates and measures over the decades, starting with Bill Clinton and Carol Moseley Braun during my time living in Chicago, all the way to Elizabeth Warren and now Joe Biden and Kamala Harris.

What work have you been engaged with to improve the city of Albany and during what years? eg. work with PTA, school fundraising groups, local non-profits, community groups, city committees and commissions, city-sponsored events, etc. Limit 10 words each item. *

Albany Chamber of Commerce: Support & Promotion of Albany Businesses, 2006 - present

Albany Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Commissioner: 2013 - present

Solano Avenue Association: Support & Promotion of Solano Avenue Businesses, 2015 - present

Solano Stroll Organizer and Volunteer: 2013 - present

Albany Community Foundation: Fundraising & grants to local organizations, 2017 - present

City Working Groups, usually regarding business planning or feedback, 2008, 2010, 2014, (and others...)

Albany Community Leaders meetings: Coordinating with local, County, and State organizations on broad issues, 2017 - present

Child-related volunteer work: ABGSL volunteer, Boy Scout leader and Committee Chair & more, 2007 - 2016

Of the work you did in the previous question, pick one item to explain what was your role and how was the Albany community impacted? Limit 100 words. *

On the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Commission, I was part of the subcommittee tasked with evaluating locations for dog parks in Albany. Being aware of the conflict around the Memorial Park off-leash dog area, we made extensive outreach to neighbors and park users, we collected the information needed to formulate a plan for the park that addressed concerns of all interested parties. I created initial drafts of the questionnaires, designed the doorhangers, and wrote a third of the final report. Albany will soon have a dog park that better meets the needs of users and neighbors because we listened to and respected every perspective.

What in your background - as a person and in your activities professional and otherwise - do you think will help inform your decision making if elected? Limit 100 words. *

I've been working with Albany's business community for 15 years, and been a small business owner for my entire career. Understanding our business community will be important as Albany recovers from the Pandemic. I raised two children in Albany Schools, while being engaged with school and child-related organizations. I'm a lifelong environmentalist and am always looking for solutions to the impending environmental crises. I am a web developer by profession and have a sound understanding of the promises and pitfalls of technology. Finally, while pursuing my Masters, I read, wrote, and taught about issues like Ethics, Morality, and Justice.

If elected, what would you advocate the city do to support public health during COVID?

Limit 100 words. *

We've noticed an increase of people living on our streets. We need to coordinate with the State and County to get folks the support they need to be safe.

The information about the stay at home order is confusing and contradictory. Providing timely, accurate information would be a valuable service.

Some businesses are bending rules about outside dining that leads to greater risk of exposure. We need to better enforce the rules of the stay at home order. The best thing we can do for all our residents is get to Stage 3 as quickly as possible.

If elected, what would you advocate the city do to support businesses during COVID? Limit 100 words. *

The city budget does not include cash that could be granted to businesses that are suffering (the number one request). I have been working with the city on these ideas and more:

Clear Communication: many businesses are confused about what they can or can't do.

Rent negotiation: Some businesses are closing because landlords are unable or unwilling to reduce rent. A letter from the city could help negotiations. As would a tax on commercial vacancies.

Public restrooms: with few businesses willing to let the public use restrooms, business owners are seeing an increased amount of human waste around their buildings.

If elected, what would you advocate the city do to support businesses in general, after COVID? Limit 100 words. *

I have long argued that the City needs to have an economic development staff position to connect with businesses, and recruit new businesses. The city has paid for reports from outside consultants many times in the past, but they have sat on the shelf without staff to follow up. This was part of the reason I helped create the Economic Development Committee, it's now time to take the next step. We could consider a Business Improvement District (BID) fee that could be used for improvements and staff time. I continue to advocate for electric vehicle charging stations in the city.

If elected, how would you work with stakeholders to address systemic racism and police policy? Limit 100 words. *

The first step for addressing any problem is to admit there is one. Many people don't believe we have the same issues that other cities have, but we do. We need transparency and a clear statement that acknowledges these issues at all levels of the city (not just the Police Department). That is the first step in building trust with stakeholders, but it's a long way from a solution. We then have to bring people together to develop policies, perhaps in a process as open and thorough as the Voices to Vision program the city offered regarding plans for waterfront.

If elected, what would you advocate the City do to address the needs of unhoused individuals and families? Limit 100 words. *

When it comes down to it, the people of Albany (indeed, California and the U.S.) need to be prepared to provide more money to offer the mental health and substance abuse services needed to address the failures of our society to provide for the ill, needy, and vulnerable. We should consider additional funding that could be used to staff a position to address issues related to homelessness, perhaps drawing some of that money from the Police Department budget. Meanwhile, we need policies that do more to encourage building inclusionary housing. We need public restrooms on the greenway near Solano Avenue.

If elected, what would you advocate Albany do about the housing crisis? What would you advocate Albany not do? Limit 100 words. *

Albany will need to build a lot of housing in the coming decades. An important part of that is recruiting and offering incentives to developers to build multi-family buildings in commercial corridors. The San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan is a start. We can't "keep Albany small" without sacrificing inclusion and the environment.

More housing means more students. Maintaining the quality of Albany's schools while inviting more people to live in Albany might mean a new school being built, or existing schools being expanded. It could mean a fee for each new residential development that would go to school infrastructure.

Why should the people of Albany vote for you? Limit 100 words. *

I keep coming back to the fact that I have a history of listening, engaging, and bringing people together. I understand our business community, and I understand our parent community. I am a lifelong environmentalist, and I've actually studied, written, and taught topics like Ethics and Justice. I'm a pragmatist. I've seen a lot of instances of the perfect being the enemy of the good, but we're a small town and must always work together in good faith to come to the best solution we can for Albany. Once we come to that, we have to move forward together.

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

Google Forms