

The Desert Sun
9/4/2020

Linda Evans
Mayor, City of La Quinta
Candidate Questionnaire

Responses:

1. Why are you running for Mayor or City Council?

I'm honored to have served as LQ Mayor since 2014, and as a Council Member 5 years prior to that. I am seeking re-election for Mayor to continue the progress we have achieved over the past few years, continue the momentum, and address and overcome the challenges that we face as a result of the pandemic and its impact on our community and economy.

Projects/opportunities underway that require further attention include the following:

- Short-Term Vacation Rental Program
- Economic Recovery due to COVID-19
- SilverRock Hotels – Montage & Pendry
- Storm Drain / Flood Control Enhancements – in process, but not yet finished
- X-Park – Competition skate/bike/scooter park near LQ High School
- CV Link – La Quinta's 2-mile portion – to begin construction in late 2020/early 2021
- Vision Highway 111 Corridor Plan – Transformation of retail/commercial tax base
- North La Quinta Perimeter Landscaping – Using Measure G Funds – 4 year project – near completion

I remain driven by the support, participation, and engagement of our residents and am committed to them for the betterment of our city. It's a team effort – and I am grateful and humbled to be part of our La Quinta team. I love La Quinta and plan to retire in La Quinta. I want to ensure its financial success and high standards for generations to follow. I desire to seek another term as Mayor, continue to serve as a role model for other women, and encourage the next generation to serve and become involved in local government and politics.

2. What do you believe is the No. 1 issue of concern in La Quinta? Explain why and how you would address it.

The number one issue of concern in La Quinta, as voiced by some of our residents, is the short-term vacation rental (STVR) program. With the Governor's stay at home order still in place, complaints have increased and mitigation efforts are needed to ensure a

balance with our residents and our owner/rental properties. My suggestions to address the STVR issues are stated in question # 5.

The top concern for me is the economic status of our city and valley due to the Governor's restrictions as a result of the pandemic. Our three highest revenue sources are sales, hotel and property tax. They have been significantly impacted by the restrictions placed on us by the Governor. Our businesses are struggling, as are our residents. We have supported our businesses financially during the pandemic, and we will continue to work with them to find ways to ensure they remain viable in the months and years ahead. Fortunately, we have strong reserves that are available to us to assist businesses and residents through these difficult times. I will continue to advocate to the County and State for the safe opening of ALL businesses, including small group travel, so our city and valley can begin to regain employment and financial stability.

3. COVID-19 has cost businesses and cities millions of dollars. What is your plan for economic recovery from COVID-19 in La Quinta?

COVID-19 impacts have taken a toll on our economy, our city budget, our residents and our businesses. Our City quickly responded to help mitigate the impacts on residents and businesses. A few of those actions include:

- Safety: Executed a digital marketing and education campaign with various COVID-19 information messages;
- Business Assistance: Developed and implemented the COVID-19 Small Business Emergency Economic Relief and Rebate Programs with an allocation of \$1.5 million to small businesses;
- Developed an AI Fresco Program to provide financial support for restaurants creating additional outdoor space to comply with the State Industry Standards to remain open;
- Established a food distribution partnership and donated \$40,000 to FIND Food Bank to provide food for LQ residents in need;
- Utilized the La Quinta Museum for childcare (collaboration with the YMCA) for children of essential workers;
- Manufactured face shields at our Creation Station for local hospitals;
- Provided financial support for local homeless shelters and programs;
- Expanded Code Compliance service hours and coverage to better manage short-term vacation rental issues;

My plan is to continue to work with our businesses, industry leaders, and residents to provide assistance where possible to ensure their viability in the months and years ahead. This will be done while also providing services within our city with reduced resources and revenue. I will also ensure projects underway in the city, many impacting infrastructure and development, move forward in preparation for the other side of this pandemic.

4. Over the past several months, there have been discussions locally and nationally about “defunding” police. What does defund police mean to you? Explain where you stand on the issue and why; and what, if any, course of action your city should take.

“Defunding the police” to me, means erasing the investments made in La Quinta over the last 38 years that have prioritized public safety for our community. It means compromising the safe city we have built – and risk and increase in crime. I do not support defunding the police. Our council began analyzing our Riverside Sheriff’s Department contract six years ago to understand the cost and service structure. Together, we have made modifications to hours, area of focus, and desired results – all while working towards managing the contract increases that are presented each year. Our annual review and renewal provides insight and opportunity to make adjustments where needed to best serve our community.

As for policies and practices, we have begun and will continue communications with our contract partner, and our residents, to ensure a balanced approach to law enforcement exists in La Quinta – which I believe it does. Is it possible that other resources (non-law enforcement) may be needed to assist our deputies in their roles? Yes, it is possible. Should that conclusion be drawn from our collaborative discussions and community input, that investment will be made *outside* of the existing coverage and service by our law enforcement team. It will not reduce and replace what is working in La Quinta. I, and our residents, have and show great respect for the protection our law enforcement team provides to our residents and businesses. I appreciate the work that they do to keep our city safe.

5. An increase in short-term vacation rental complaints led to a 90-day moratorium on any new permits in La Quinta, issued by Executive Order on Aug. 5. What is your solution for this problem?

I believe that cities can effectively permit short term rentals (STVRs) that are responsibly managed, used and do not pose an undue disturbance to the surrounding community. I continue to support STVRs in La Quinta. However, recognizing the need to make changes to the program, our Council implemented an Ad Hoc Committee last year.

We have experienced a significant increase in complaints from our residents regarding problem rental properties since the pandemic shutdown. And, we prioritize quality of life for our residents, hence the need to make further changes to the program for successful co-existence. Our Ad Hoc Committee has reviewed the current program, its enforcements, complaints, and process to track problem renters/owners. They will be making recommendations at our City Council on September 15th for Council’s review and consideration (now scheduled for October 20th). These recommendations will be

evaluated, with resident and rental owner input, prior to Council making any changes or decisions.

I do not support banning short-term rentals in La Quinta. I do support addressing the issues and concerns and resolving them in a win-win situation. Our city needs the \$3.5 million revenue (pre-COVID) that is derived from this tourism market. We do need to ensure a balance to preserve the quality of life for our residents. I believe we can achieve that balance, as we have had the last four years of the program.

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