

TOWN OF SAN ANSELMO
525 San Anselmo Avenue
San Anselmo, California 94960
(415)-258-4660

Town Council
Application for Appointment

Applications must be in the Town Clerk's office by 5 PM on **Thursday, June 20, 2019.**

Applications may be received by email or hand delivery. Interviews, which are open to the public, will be held at an upcoming Council meeting. Once a date is determined, the Town will alert the public through its website and Town Manager weekly newsletter.

An appointment is expected to be made at the regular Town Council meeting on **Tuesday, July 23, 2019, at 7:00 p.m.** Please note, the term for this appointment will be until November 2020 at which time the position will come up for election.

Please note that the completed form and the answers to the questions on the form are public records upon receipt by the Town Clerk and are subject to full disclosure.

If you have any questions about the application form, the appointment process, or the duties and responsibilities of a Town Councilmember, please feel free to contact Town Clerk Carla Kacmar at 258-4660.

Date: June 20, 2019
Name: Alexis Fineman
Address: [REDACTED]
Phone Number(s): [REDACTED]
E-mail address: [REDACTED]

I am a registered voter in San Anselmo: Yes No

I have been a resident of San Anselmo for 3 years, and my occupation is
Schoolteacher, 3rd/4th grade, Marin School for Gifted Education

Signature of Applicant: [REDACTED]

Date: 6/20/2019

Please answer the following questions:

1. Please describe your educational background, including degrees, special distinctions or honors, and the dates received. Special training and/or skills should also be noted.

- Graduated with honors from Wesleyan University in 2016. I majored in Cultural Anthropology and received a certificate in Social, Critical, and Cultural Theory. My thesis research employed ethnographic techniques to study food and consumption in Marin County and was used by my advisor as the foundation for an upper-level Anthropology course in food, justice, and ritual.
- Completed a Permaculture Design Certificate under Penny Livingston at the Regenerative Design Institute (2018). Although this is not a professional certification, it does reflect a broad survey of techniques and “best practices” in sustainable design, including water and land management, building considerations and techniques, and agriculture.
- Received a Regents Scholarship Award (2012), the most prestigious merit-based scholarship offered to undergraduates in the UC system, although I did not matriculate.

2. Please summarize your involvement in community and civic activities. Include any offices held and/or significant accomplishments.

I am a regular volunteer at the Elders’ Garden in Memorial Park, and I was very involved in the visioning process for the future of the garden in the Memorial Park Master Plan.

I serve on the organizing committee of the Fairfax Festival and am the Volunteer Coordinator for the Festival.

I was recruited by Brookside Elementary School’s principal to serve as the Garden Teacher during a vacancy in the garden program (paid position).

3. Please explain why you wish to be a member of the San Anselmo Town Council and describe what skills or unique qualifications you would bring to the Town Council.

I wish to be a member of the San Anselmo Town Council because I care deeply about the place I call home. I was born and raised in the Ross Valley, and I represent a younger generation that is re-committing to sense of place, community, and a livable future. I am interested primarily in the policy-making work of the Council, as I and my generation will have to live with the long-term consequences of today’s planning and policies.

Here is some of what I have to offer to the Council and the Town:

1. I do my homework and I listen. I take in both information and “intent.”

2. I can bridge the micro and the macro.
3. I think long-term. Councilmembers need to be able to anticipate consequences – primary, secondary, tertiary, intended, and unintended – of various actions and inactions.
4. I notice soul. San Anselmo has many soulful corners and pockets that make our community unique. I celebrate these and encourage more!
5. I can communicate effectively to different audiences.
6. I'm not interested in games, and I'm honest about my assumptions.

4. Look 10 years into the future and describe what you want this Town to look like and why.

To answer this question, I would like to peer into two crystal balls: the first reflects the future as I want to see it, and the second reflects the future as it is. Looking into the first crystal ball, I see a vibrant, connected community. People of all ages are out and about, enjoying our Historic Downtown, Creekside Commons, and the restored Memorial Park. Public. Smart affordable and workforce housing means that San Anselmo is a friendlier place to live for the members of our community who are low income. Public art installations and live music events celebrate San Anselmo's schools, artists, and history. Our local businesses offer a diverse array of goods and services with "something for everyone," attracting loyalty from residents and visitors alike. Our award-winning bicycle and pedestrian projects have people out of their cars, slowing down, and reconnecting. For those who rely on cars, traffic calming and infrastructure improvements have eased the flow.

The second crystal ball does not negate the first, but it acknowledges the ways in which San Anselmo is influenced by factors beyond our control, beyond what we simply "want." These factors could include a market downturn, heavy storms and floods, heat waves and power outages, and wildfires and smoke, all within a very tight operating budget. Given these and others factors, my wish for the next ten years is for San Anselmo to influence what we can and prepare for what we can't.

Many of the actions we can take to prepare for emergencies have positive ripples for our town. For example, focusing on "compete streets" and traffic reduction measures to increase emergency access and evacuation routes positively impacts quality of life and bike- and walkability in Town. Similarly, neighborhood-based preparedness programs (FireWise, Resilient Neighborhoods, CERT) can create a greater sense of comm-Unity among neighbors. Alternative energy sources (home-scale solar, microgrids) have the advantage of reducing our carbon footprint while also ensuring that we are prepared for multi-day power outages. Framing preparedness and resiliency in terms of quality of life is important for morale.

5. What are your three top priorities for the Town?

1. Public safety: disaster preparedness and community resiliency
2. Infrastructure: Roads, traffic, and bike/pedestrian; reducing emissions
3. Retaining and enhancing town character, community, and charm

“Sustainability” is not a bullet point on my list because it is a framework for implementing each of the above and should not be compartmentalized. Each of these priorities should be implemented according to the Town’s Climate Action Plan and with great ecological wisdom.

6. What do you see as the role of Town Council? What do you see as the role of Town staff?

The Town Council provides strategy and direction for the Town regarding finances and policy. Town Staff makes recommendations to the Council and implements policies made by the Council. The Council has a duty to consider carefully the resolutions, ordinances, and presentations brought forth by the Staff. The Council also needs to have sensitivity to and appreciation for the time and workload of the Staff.

Both the Council and the Staff represent “the Town” to the public. As such, each has a responsibility to be accessible, friendly, and informed, as well fair and consistent, when interacting with residents and businesses alike.

More than that, though, the Town Council reflects and shapes the public “tone” for the Town in a more symbolic way. By this I mean that the personalities, styles, and attitudes behind the dais can and do influence how people view the Town and their relationship with it.

7. Give an example of how you would resolve a situation where your personal philosophy is at odds with what is best for the Town.

To me, this question is a bundling of two distinct questions: how would I resolve a situation where my personal interests are at odds with what is best for the Town; and how would I resolve a situation where my ideologies lead me to hold a different belief from the prevailing view about what is “best” for the Town.

To answer the first question, if my personal interests interfered with the interests of the commons (the Town) in such a way that I could not simply put them aside, I would recuse myself from voting or wielding influence on the issue at hand. Public officials have a duty to be fair and honest in their analyses, their wielding of power, and their responsibility to the people.

The second question is a little juicier: what happens when ideologies about what’s “best” for the Town differ? Truthfully, I believe it’s a good thing to for local governments to have different ideas about what is “best” and how to get there. If everyone on the Council, or in the town, held the same assumptions and values, there would be blindspots in how we govern ourselves. It is precisely because no single person or ideological system knows what is “best” that we have an elected Council as well as opportunities for public input. In a civil democracy, different perspectives are valuable, as they lead to more nuanced policy decisions.

If I were on the Council, there would be times when my view as to what's "best" is different from the view of (an) other Councilmember(s). How would I resolve this? Rosenberg's Rules lay out the procedure, plain and simple. If my ideologies about what's best for the town differ from fellow Councilmembers, there would be opportunity for discussion and input, and ultimately a vote that honors the will of the majority. (And for the sake of finality, a motion to reconsider can only be made by a member of the majority. If I'm in the minority, that's that!)

8. What would you do if you were contacted directly by a resident or business to resolve a Town related problem?

Every time a constituent or business entity contacts a Councilmember, it is an opportunity for that Councilmember to draw that constituent into the workings of the town and educate them about the various channels for public engagement. Depending on the situation, I would refer them to the appropriate staff member, invite them to speak during Open Comment at the next meeting, introduce them to "Connect San Anselmo," or offer to meet. I would leave open the possibility that the issue rises to the level of a Town Council meeting and would take the appropriate action, if necessary.

Having said that, Councilmembers should all follow roughly the same guidelines for what to do when a constituent or business brings an item to a member's attention. The key is consistency. In other words, the "treatment" of a given issue should not depend on who brings what issue to which Councilmember. If there isn't a set of guidelines in place, one should be established, and I would want to seek clarity on *ex parte* communication under various circumstances.

9. If you are currently contracting with or providing services to the Town, are you willing to suspend those activities if appointed to the Town Council?

I am not currently provided services to or contracting with the town, but if I were, I would be willing to suspend those activities.

10. What do you see as the biggest challenges facing the Town in the next year?

I think the biggest challenges facing the town next year are the threat of wildfire, PG&E power outages, and funding to implement the Memorial Park Master Plan.

11. What do you feel needs to be done to maintain and enhance the Town's economic health?

After reading this question carefully, it wasn't clear to me whether this question refers to the economic health of the Town as a governing agency or "the town" as in independent retailers, vendors, merchants, services. I am going to answer assuming latter; the former will be addressed in my response to question #12.

To maintain commerce and business health, I believe that the Town should provide the necessary support to create an experiential downtown that attracts a variety of businesses and appeals to a variety of customers, balancing the needs and

interests of residents and visitors with different demographics EDC has outlined a number of action items and opportunities for both the Town and for existing and prospective businesses in the Economic Development Plan (2018) and the Action Plan (2017). The Council should continue to support these action items, consider the opportunities listed, and review benchmarks and challenges to makes changes and updates as needed.

12. Circumstances outside the Town's control can and have impacted dramatically the Town's budget. What approach would you take as a Councilmember to balance the budget or address the issues?

In addressing the budget, I would want to look at revenue-side issues and expense-side issues and come up with ways to rank potential actions on either side. One thing that would be helpful is to have multiple sensitivity analyses. On the revenue side, I would want to see the best case scenario, the worst case scenario, and a realistic scenario for revenue projections, as well as sensitivity analyses for unfunded liabilities.

Additionally, I would want to have a conversation with other Councilmembers and Staff about how much public input we want and the best way(s) to gather that input regarding budget priorities. Finally, I would listen closely and carefully to Staff, the Financial Advisory Committee, the public, and my fellow Councilmembers, several of whom have extensive financial expertise and business acumen.

13. Have you reviewed the Town budget and are you familiar with where and how the Town receives its funding?

Yes; Yes.

14. Have you reviewed the Town's General Plan and Work Plan?

Yes.

15. All persons serving on the Town Council are required by State law to disclose both their own and their spouse's investments and income. In addition, the appointee to the Town Council must be prepared to make a significant time commitment. Please indicate if there are any personal or professional time limitations on your availability to serve as a Councilmember.

I am prepared to disclose my income and investments. Because I am a schoolteacher, I am typically unavailable between 8:00am and 3:30 pm.