

Why Lou La Monte? Why not take a chance on a new candidate?

Aftering being on the council for four years, I kind of understand how to get things done. I know who to call and how to get them to respond. I've reached out to a lot of other cities to kind of form alliances and a lot of the things we're doing as far as water quality and the drug rehab issues we've had for some time. It just takes a long time to get things done. My feeling is that there's a couple projects that we're kind of in the middle of. One is the Bluffs Park, the plan to figure out what we can do with that and the plan to get public input to find out what we can do with those 83 acres that now we have a lease on, and I wanna be part of that process.

With the lease swap, I understand no development can take place, but do you have a vision for that park?

I have an idea of what I'd like to see, but I'm just at this point one member of this community and I wanna hear what other people have to say about it, what they'd like to see there. I know a lot of the parents would like more sports fields and so would I. I think the fact that the City of Malibu only has one soccer field just doesn't make any sense for a city with as many kids in AYSO playing soccer that live here.

What about the Crummer parcel that's gonna be donated to the city? There was some argument that the city pushed forward with the swap without considering other possible options like building a field at the Crummer site?

Well, that's less than 2 acres, this is 83 acres. In addition to just building a ball field, those 83 acres give us utility to park a lot more cars there, number one, and also we're gonna develop some of those hiking trails, more passive recreation things as well as that. I think most of the landon center could be a place where we build some sort of a community recreation center. We have some money already put aside to improve the Landon center, we've had it for several years and I think that's all open for discussion, and I think that's what's more important than just, you know, one little baseball field. This is developing the master plan of the whole park. And it's right in the heart of our town.

As far as Charmlee goes, did you have any reservations about the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy's ability to maintain that park? Winding Way residents are very frustrated about hiking trail and the Conservancy's management of it. Do you believe the conservancy can properly take care of Charmlee?

Well, I think the Winding Way issue and Charmlee issue are completely different. As far as Charmlee is concerned, part of the lease agreement is for them to have personnel there, and Charmlee doesn't have the same kind of attraction as Escondido Falls, and a lot of that's on private property. I think the area up there is not handled well at all. I think basically the neighborhood is getting overrun on weekends and I wish there were a better way to handle that. I

think a lot of that falls on the conservancy and should be done differently. I don't think that's the same issue that exists at Charmlee at all.

Are you worried that camping will be installed or developed at Charmlee?

I'm not as worried about that happening as I would be if there were 40 campsites at Bluffs Park. That's much more worrisome to me. In addition, at Charmlee, there's a 200,000-gallon water tank within yards of the proposed campsites, and they're also cold camping sites, which are not open campfires and I'm not so sure they're ever going to happen anyway.

Tell me about your history in Malibu, how long you've lived here, what your day job is.

I've lived here for 23 years. My wife and I raised two children here. I moved here in 1991.

Right when the city was being incorporated?

Right after the city was incorporated. We moved here on Labor Day in 1991, so we were already a city for six months. So we were privy to all the high drama that was happening at city hall.

Did you get involved at the time?

Not really, I just kind of watched it for a while. I make television commercials for a living and I was very busy with work and at that point one young child and eventually we had another. So I was kinda like a lot of Malibu residents where you kind of live in this place and you love it and it's a really great place to come home to and you look at the ocean and have a fantastic time. I wasn't really getting involved in civic projects. I kept track of what was going on, I read the papers, I did all that.

What was your call to action?

In Big Rock is where the original business model for the rehabs, the luxury rehabs began. In our neighborhood, Promises opened and suddenly became very popular with the celebrity set. It was before that they would all go the Betty Ford Clinic and have to clean toilets, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. They came to Promises they could play tennis and lay by the pool, so that seemed like a much better idea as far as rehabs were concerned for them. And it got to be incredibly lucrative and it began to spread throughout the neighborhood and Promises started buying up other properties and they were taking advantage of our neighborhood. There were huge trucks and sports cars running up and down those curvy roads all the time and that got me a little concerned. I had been going to homeowners meetings but that wasn't really an issue until when it became an issue, that's kind of when I got involved. I thought that they were overrunning our community, and so I got involved in the homeowners association, got elected to the board of directors, was vice president for a couple years. I spent eight years as president of the Big Rock-Carbon Mesa Property Homeowners Association, which is one of the largest associations

in Malibu. We represent about maybe a little under 250 families. In order to get things done in the neighborhood, I had to get more involved in city politics. Eventually I got appointed to the Public Works Commission so I began to see how the city was being run and how you could accomplish things or not accomplish things and that's what got me involved and it evolved from there.

Did you serve with Laura Rosenthal on the Public Works Commission?

Yes, I did. Laura and I have known each other for around 15 years. We met at Bluffs Park on those aluminum benches because Walter, her husband, was the coach of my son and her son's little league team and we went to all the games, we became friends and that's where it all began.

In the next four years, if elected, what specific issue is the biggest one you'd want to address and how would you go about it?

Well there are several issues...the most important one is safety on the PCH. It is absolutely, unequivocally the most important mission that we have, and over the last four years we managed to get the [California] Highway Patrol back patrolling with the Sheriff. And so far, I have asked every one of the Sheriff's candidates that I've run into whether they would continue to support the policy that Sheriff [Lee] Baca put in place, which is working cooperatively with the CHP, and every single one of them so far has said yes. So that's an urgent thing for us. As you know, we got some grant money and now we're proceeding on actually four specific projects that we're doing, which is the left-turn signal at Big Rock, the La Costa crosswalk, the Kanan Dume arrester bed, and, as part of the bike lane project, we're going to widen Morning View [Drive] so there's not a traffic jam while people drop their kids off at school. So, those are things we're dealing with. We're dealing with Paradise Cove, trying to make that safer. I saw it again yesterday. People with baby carriages are walking within two inches of PCH and it's completely unsafe, and we have to find a better way to do that.

Do you think the 'No Parking' signs near Paradise Cove on PCH have been effective?

They've started to be effective. We went through a whole deal of trouble to get those parking signs there because one of the problems is it's just too damn narrow to park. And people are opening their doors literally onto the PCH and putting their kids and baby strollers on the highway. Now, these few areas that we're allowed to have 'No Parking' on took a great deal of convincing as far as Caltrans is concerned, and then we had a huge issue with the Coastal Commission because they didn't want to eliminate any parking at all. We just applied for a grant for a parking study of PCH. Although that doesn't seem like a real safety issue, it is absolutely a real safety issue and we have more free parking or beach parking than any other city in California. And, basically, one of the real problems is every time we eliminate a parking spot, we have to add another one. And we're just trying to address that now and that study will help us dramatically in making the point that this is an important part of the safety issues on PCH.

Do you agree with Laura Rosenthal's goal of lowering the speed limit in the Civic Center area?

Yes, I do, and we've been trying to do that and we've been running into resistance.

Resistance from who?

Caltrans has been resistant because they do traffic studies and they take their information from the studies. But there are other ways we think that we can achieve this and we've established a really good relationship with the secretary of transportation, the undersecretary of transportation, the new district director of Caltrans, Carrie Bowen, who is one of the first people that has realized that the mandated rules of all the other highways in California don't necessarily, can't necessarily, apply here because we have a mountain on one side of the PCH and we have an ocean on the other side of PCH.

So, all the various rules that they have in various places don't necessarily work here. So she has been very flexible and interested in helping solve the safety issues we have here and she was just appointed to permanent director. She was interim direction for a while. She was very helpful in getting these projects approved that we're starting and I intend to phone her for this too because she's a reasonable person and she understands safety is the most important thing.

One of your opponents, Hamish Patterson, has argued that the city doesn't put enough focus on the infrastructure of the city, especially the Civic Center, where all these development projects are coming down the pipeline. Do you think the city is failing to address that concern?

Here's what I think, I think that it used to be that each of individual project would do their own little traffic study that applied to them and I believe we recently sent them all back to where they started so that they would understand that the traffic isn't just applicable to their particular location, it has to be addressed in the entire Civic Center area. In all the EIRs we've done, those are the comments we've started with. That's the beginning of that process.

But the real solution to that entire issue is the Civic Center master plan. We have approved, the RFP I believe is due at the end of this month. And that will address all of the issues of the Civic Center because my feeling is that all that empty land in the Civic Center is on private property, and if there's an opportunity for it to be developed I want it to be with the voice of citizens of Malibu having input on those decisions. I want us to be able to have input on where the buildings should be, whether there should be open space in between, whether everyone should be clustered together if there's open space around it. All of those issues are open for discussion and they need to be discussed by the people that live here in this town, not the developers that are coming from somewhere else, and that's part of the master plan. So the design guidelines will begin to make it look the way we would it to look. That's what's important. We need to have a voice in exactly what's going on.

Have you read the "Your Malibu, Your Decision Act" ballot initiative?

I read most of it, I didn't read it all.

Do you agree with the idea of putting commercial developments over 20,000 square feet to a citywide vote?

I'm not sure I agree with that.

Do you think the ballot initiative is a proper alternative to what the city council is trying to accomplish?

I'm hoping that that the master plan will move ahead so quickly [that] the ballot initiative might be unnecessary.

What if it passes?

If it passes then I promise to enforce it.

Should the city still complete a Civic Center Master Plan either way?

Absolutely, either way. Because from my understanding my reading of this...it seemed that these are addressing individual projects that are over 20,000 square feet, individually with each specific plan. My feeling is we need to have an overall plan for the entire Civic Center area. Each one of these, if it passes, would have to still fit within the guidelines of the master civic center plan.

Do you think the Civic Center is becoming Rodeo Drive?

No, I don't. I don't think it's going to become Rodeo Drive. There was a moment in time when that looked like it was going to be an option.

When did it look like it was gonna be an option?

A couple of years ago when the recession happened, things changed, a lot of those chain stores that came here are no longer here. I don't think we are in danger of that.

So when you walk through the Country Mart, Malibu Village, what sense of character do you get? Is that Malibu, a microcosm of Malibu?

Well it's actually, that's part of Malibu. If you really want to look at old Malibu you can come to my neighborhood where A&B Hardware is and that's about as old Malibu as you can get. And we have the post office there. That's the little town of Malibu. We have the best hamburgers at Country Kitchen, that's kind of old Malibu. This [Civic Center] is a different part of Malibu. You have to remember that we're also across from "Billionaire's Beach" and it seems to me that

somewhere between the Malibu Pier and Duke's there are enough people that could write the checks that could retire all the land in the Civic Center, and that would be a wonderful thing for them to do.

Why support an independent Malibu school district?

There are so many reasons. First is local control, number one. I don't think anybody but the parents of Malibu should be responsible for how their children are educated. I think we are, it goes back to that basic principle, kind of, of taxation without representation. We don't have a member on that school board. When AMPS was formed originally, it was designed to heal the rift that was between Malibu and the district over the failure of the Point Dume charter school, and it was altruistic and it was definitely designed to make the lives of the children easier in Malibu. And my assignment when it started was to meet with every one of the school board members individually to see if we could get one simple thing, which was a seat on the school board dais. We would have exactly the same rights as the high school students, which would be, we would be able to expound our views on issues longer than the 3 minutes they allow at the podium, and we wouldn't even vote, we would just have a seat at the table. I met with every single one of them and ultimately since most of them kind of agreed, yeah that would be a good idea, but when it came down to it, they decided that it would open the door for special interest groups to demand a seat. My concept of that was we're not a special interest group, we are a city and we are supposed to be a partner in the school district, and we need to have a voice. And we couldn't even get that. So I think that's what led to, this isn't the first time separation has been discussed, it's been discussed several times in the last 20 years. But I think this is the time that it's going to be successful.

Is it economically feasible?

It's more than economically feasible, and I know you've talked to Craig Foster, but I know that the \$2 million that Santa Monica sends our Malibu's way will be spent in Santa Monica, which will make their schools \$2 million better. We will be able to keep more of our property taxes, so we will have \$2.6 million more than we have now. It's just a no-lose situation. It's better for both districts.

Would it prevent more parents from sending their children to private schools?

I think it would give more parents the options to send their kid to public school, yeah, because I think we could have the best school district, not only in California, maybe the state, possibly the country.

How do you feel about the way the district has handled the Malibu High environmental situation? Was there a cover-up? Did the district or city council not do enough to fix what might be wrong at Malibu High?

I first heard about it when everybody else did, and I went to the meeting where [Supt.] Sandy Lyon tried to explain it. I told her that day, I think it was probably whenever the first meeting was, I told her that I know that this was not a city responsibility but I offered her every possible help that we could give her as a city. [City Manager] Jim Thorsen I know sent her information because we offered to help.

Did she take you up on that?

I know she corresponded with Jim but basically my feeling is ultimately that district is so top-heavy they're having a very difficult time being transparent. I can't believe that all this time has gone by and they just finally signed the contract that included soil testing.

Laura Rosenthal has been criticized for possibly knowing about toxic soils. Was there a cover-up?

I don't think there was a cover-up and I certainly don't think Laura was responsible for it in any way. She sends her kids to that school. There was no issue if she thought her kids were in danger.

What regrets do you have as a city councilmember? What would you have done differently?

One of the things that I think I would have done differently and am going to do differently is those 50-plus businesses [out of city code compliance] that we inherited from another city council, the 20-year--

Now, that was interesting because that was a file-and-receive city council report [in October]. At the time, did anybody look at it. Did anyone say, 'wait a minute'?

Yeah, yeah, we looked at it and basically what they [the planning department] were going to do was examine it and see what could be done about it, and that was their job, and that's what they were assigned to do. So we were happy to let them do that and then come back to us with results, responses, answers. It kind of wended its way through the system and it's due back to us very soon, and I can tell you we'll all be looking at it again.

At that point in time it was somebody 20 years ago kicked the can down the road and now it's time for us to kind of look at the can, and that's what we're doing.

Is there a chance you'll kick the can again?

No, I don't want to kick the can, I'd like to eliminate the can because I don't think that any of those things necessarily need to be pursued. But I'm going to investigate it and when it comes before us, that's when I'll make my decision.

How soon is it due back?

Soon, I don't know when. Probably within the next month or two.

The Planning Department is given a lot of new things to work on, and there's been a lot of staff turnover in the last year. Why can't the city keep its planners?

Well they've kept the planners for a very long time, and the planners that have left have gone on to much better jobs, most of them. I know that somebody like Joseph Smith, who's an excellent planner, wanted to be closer to his family, he took a better job. My feeling is that when you graduate from the City of Malibu planning department, you get a job anywhere on the planet because we have of very strict rules and people doing a lot of work. They investigate and delve deeper, I think, into issues than most planning departments, so I think it's kind of like a doctorate degree. And if you survive Malibu, literally, you can get a job anywhere else. Stephanie Danner occasionally works for us again, on a freelance basis. She got married and moved away. That's kind of the turnover that happens. Ha Ly got a better job in Pasadena. So now we have to get the next generation of planners. Most of the turnover in the city has been pretty rare in the last 5 or 10 years.

It just seems like a lot in the last year.

It's been a lot...we miss a lot of them. You really need to understand Malibu and it's not an entry level job, you have to have some experience.

Single biggest achievement on the council?

It's hard to look at single biggest achievements, really. I'll tell you, there's so many things. This is such a complex job that there's so many different levels. I'll tell you a couple of things that I'm proud of doing. I'm proud of getting the CHP back on the highway, I'm proud of this land swap, I'm proud of the \$14.4 million reserve that we have, and being on the Administration and Finance committee, I helped get that there. I'm proud of the Cultural Arts Commission. I'm proud of the progress we've made with AMPS.