

## **City Council candidate interview: Andy Lyon**

### **Give me your history with Malibu, your work and tell me about your family.**

First of all, my family, I've got four kids. I've got two boys and two girls. My oldest is 24, Jake is 23 and Lana is 20. My youngest is 9. I grew up here, I'm third generation. They all went to --

### **Are they all still in Malibu?**

In and out. The older ones come in and out. The younger one obviously is, but yeah, they live close by. Not as much as they want to be in my house.

### **You're a single dad?**

Single dad, yeah. I raised the three oldest by myself. Their moms were not very capable at the time, so from pretty early on, all through their school had them. They go back and forth but mostly I had them out here by myself. What I do now, I'm a real estate agent. I've been doing that about 15 years, a little more. Born and raised right here. Grew up across the street from the animal hospital on Malibu Road. I went to Webster, went to Malibu Park junior high school and then there was no high school then so I went to Santa Monica High School, SaMoHi.

### **What was that like?**

That was a real eye-opener for people from Malibu. It was actually a pretty good thing because it's a reality check coming from Malibu. You went there and all of a sudden it was the real world. It was a little scary to be coming from the sheltered little Malibu Park junior high school. The big thing was the three schools met up at junior high, Juan Cabrillo, Point Dume and Webster, and that was like a big deal just for 8th and 9th grade. But then to go to SaMoHi was a big deal, you just had everything, a big melting pot. That was full culture shock for Malibu.

### **At that time, was the district Santa Monica-Malibu?**

Yeah, I think it was Santa Monica, I don't even think it was Malibu back then. Because yeah, you had to go to Santa Monica for high school.

### **So you've been a witness to the district and a student in the district [and a parent]. Have you noticed a transformation? Has the divide strengthened? Has there always been conflict of 'we want our own district, why can't we have it?'**

When my older kids were at the school, because the high school started a little bit before they got there, but I think everybody was just happy to have a high school. That was like the big thing, we're getting our own high school. Now people here don't even realize what a hassle it was to have to go into Santa Monica. I don't know. My kid's going to Webster, that's the school I went to.

So to have them going there, we had Phil Cott, who was the most amazing principal ever and the school, participation with the parents, it was great.

But being a single parent, I did as much as I could being there. But I never really got a vibe that was you know, 'this is terrible.' I think that came up with the funding when it seemed like funding was going to be a big issue, we were going to lose a lot of money that was going come to the school. That's when people started saying, I started hearing about it. I wouldn't notice it even today. Webster, the elementary level, I know stuff is on the block but right now if you went, I think it's a great school. I don't notice a daily thing like 'oh my god the school is terrible today because we don't have local control there.' I know it'd be better but I think that was a few years ago and I think that really came out of the whole funding stuff. Obviously, people want to have their own district.

### **Do you think Malibu should have its own district?**

Yeah, if it works out for everybody. I think the problem is the information getting to people. Because if people don't have kids and they think this is going to affect them negatively, I think you get a divided community again because it's just ... the other day at the Webster thing, somebody said, just as a matter of being devil's advocate, 'what's the downside to this?' And the answer was there is no downside. I don't know a deal that doesn't have a downside. And then the first thought that I had was if it's such a great deal for Santa Monica and it's such a great deal for Malibu, and everybody's going to make it out better and everybody's going to make more money, then why hasn't it happened? And this was an issue last time we ran two years ago and we're no closer to having separation. They say they are but, you know, I'm for it if it works out for everybody and it's like in a dumbed down version so everybody can actually see it. I guess you've got to be really in there to look at the numbers or have it explained the right way, that this is what actually is going to happen. But it seems like the explanation is being given, I don't wanna say in a--I just think if I was looking at what's more important right now, I would say dealing with the high school toxins. That's something that's like, today. And so that would be more of a precedent then to worry about separating the school then dealing with that. Do I think it would be great to have more control? Yeah, I would be lobbying right now to get more control with the board that we have if it's going to be a long drawn out process for the next four years or whatever, then why not really lobby for at least getting one seat up there.

### **Do you see any downside right now for district separation?**

I think it's a financial thing. I don't see it as being a downside, except for maybe liability, I can't imagine if this whole toxin thing came out and was Malibu's responsibility, what would happen then, if all of a sudden we had people in charge of--I don't know whose president. If you ask Laura, she's president, if you ask Craig Foster, he's president. So if you ask Laura she's president of AMPS and she knew about toxins at the high school and we separated and she was on the board of the school and knew about it and all of a sudden it comes to us she knew about it when she was on city council at the time but now she's on the board of the newly formed school district, then what happens? The liability of that, I don't know. Do we have enough to sustain the

school? Do we have enough parents coming in here? I don't know. I say the school's unreal. These people don't know what it's like to have to drive to your kids to Santa Monica. They don't know that it's great having us without like gangs and that kind of issues. It might not be a private school but it's still, it's a public school, you know.

It's a tough situation and if it was such a great deal I guess it would've already happened. We're talking about it for another election. In two years it'll still be an issue. Why is it the city council, if this is a city council issue and we're being asked about this, why hasn't the city council done anything to put money towards independent study or getting anything out there, because it seems like they haven't done anything. If that's the case then it shouldn't even be brought up. As Lou said something at the first debate, we can't even do anything about the school. Unless you're mayor of Malibu and want to ask how the conditions of the fields and scoreboards are, then you can send them an email.

**Do you think it's wrong for the city to be entrusting a group like AMPS to research separation? Should it be a city hall effort?**

I'd like it to be--I don't have a problem really with Craig Foster [president of AMPS], he seems like a nice guy, I see him at school and stuff. I'm a little bit concerned now because Laura says she's the president.

**When did she say that? I know she says she founded it?**

I've heard her say she's president, so I mean, president or founded, president, I don't know. Anytime I ever say she's a founder of it, if you ask Craig, he sort of looks weird. I'd follow up with that but I know she said that she's like--I don't know. Is this going to be that AMPS is going to take over the school board, is she going to stretch it out 'til she's off city council if she gets re-elected to the point she can step onto the new school board? Is it going to be one of these things--I'm all for, I am for more control.

I think we missed a huge opportunity the other night [March 20 Board of Ed meeting] to really throw some pressure on the school board. If the chamber had showed up, if the board of realtors had showed up, Laura, Lou, everybody had come there and forget about the 'oh don't come 'til later,' if they had packed that thing out, called the media, called the news, called everybody and really came down on them, who knows. I don't know, as it was it was just, I don't know.

I don't know how you go about it too because the one thing you worry about as a real estate agent and for values and for people that are coming here, if the first thing that you hear is we're trying to separate the schools because we don't really have a lot of control here, the perception is that the schools are bad, instantly. So if you're leaning toward one thing and you're driving people toward this idea of separation, and you're sort of using the existing is not that good, what you're left with if you fail in that is re-selling what you have and trying to convert that back to something that's good. So I think it sort of hurts you as far as maybe pressing. I see it can happen, I think it needs to be more of across the board outreach to people. There's a lot of people in Malibu that don't have kids and don't understand how this is going to affect them. If it's completely explained to everybody and they don't feel like they're getting pressured from one

thing and become like everything else in Malibu, which is you're a kid-hater if you oppose something that has to do with 'it's for the kids.' It's like, wait a second, is it going to be like, do I have to pay more money. You're just telling me you're the one that wants this. I'm not saying that that's the case, I'm just saying that that's the perception people that maybe don't have kids are worried about. Then you also have got to wonder about like, yeah, if somebody's questionable and they're in charge of this and they've got some questionable stuff going on, then if they're gonna be the new people, if the thing is to have better control and better representation at this new school board, if the person that's planning to the lead turns out wasn't very responsible and the information that was supposed to be out wasn't out forthright, then that's a problem. You're just getting the same thing. And there's a lot at stake with the amount of holdings that Santa Monica school has out here.

**The toxins at the high school -- if you're elected to city council, what role would you want to play or do you believe the city council should play in helping address what's going on at the high school?**

That should be so to the forefront.

**What should be done?**

I think that they have to have independent reviews, completely transparent independent reviews of it. If they have to fund it, they have to put some money, the city has to get involved and get the information out. It seems like nothing is really coming from the city at all and I don't know why that is. Not this last Board of Education meeting, but the one before in Santa Monica. I went to that one and it was like the whole thing had come out about Laura knowing, all that stuff came out and the big hubbub going in there. And when I met a couple of teachers, one of them was my older kid's teacher, Bridget Leonard. I'm like, 'oh yeah, I remember seeing your name,' because when the kid's going to the high school, it's not as easy to be involved in every class. When I had my kids, my two older kids were in the same year. I'd seen her at different things...she's got cancer. That's, like, my kid's teacher. My daughter was there at the same time. She was in that side room a bit but not as much still. It's like real. To them it's ultra real. So making sure these tests are done, not just brushed under, I go back to like an escrow kind of thing. Where you're hoping that an inspection goes OK, and you're like well let's make sure--somebody would be like worried, if I'm representing a buyer, I want to make sure I've got the most comprehensive investigation. And the city, they should be on that. I just don't understand.

**So you would propose hiring an independent consultant?**

Yeah, somebody to oversee other than the company doing the work or the Santa Monica school telling you that they're doing OK, not to worry. That's the worst thing, is having somebody do that work or somebody that's paying for it that knows they're in trouble, telling you 'don't worry.' They have to step up. I would have to say that would be as far as any of the school issues, that way outweighs the separation right now.

**How old is your oldest daughter?**

Third grade.

**If she were in the fifth grade going in there, would you be comfortable sending her to the middle school/high school?**

I wouldn't want her in that side, for sure. That old row, I had classes in that row, on that side there. All these old schools they all have like some tiles and different things, but this is like so different where they dug everything up and the toxins and everything in there. I know they can minimize and say well you're only in that class for an hour, I mean, poor teacher's got to sit in there all day. They say 'we're going to test it with the doors open,' all the doors are open, the windows are open — luckily [my daughter's in] third grade, I would hope that this thing's all figured out. There might be some other areas that they haven't figured out yet.

**We often hear the city council not chime in on certain issues. They'll say it's out of our hands, like the Trancas Highlands water situation, the school, anything with PCH, Caltrans owns PCH.**

It's a sign of weakness in negotiating. It's a sign of weakness. It's only out of your hands if you're not willing to put up a fight and really stand in front of stuff.

**Why do you think that is?**

I don't know. On a lot of different things, whether it's a Paradise Cove issue with not yanking their CUP and doing something about that, or if it's Trancas and not dealing with the turn lanes. I think it's just like they don't want to, you know, maybe the income coming in they don't want to lose their—I think for sure at Paradise Cove they don't want to address that kind of stuff because it's a lot of income and revenue they're going to lose if they shut them down. I just don't buy that. I don't buy that. I come from being sort of tenacious when it comes to — I have to be told absolutely no so many times before it's like I give up on it.

It was like the lagoon, it's out of our hands. And it was totally in their hands. The sewer, it's like, you know...I just think that a lot of times they let these things go and it's either they just don't want to deal with it, or they've got something else they're dealing with. The 50 businesses that are out of compliance, it's like, why are they not handling that.

**And how would you, if both you and Hamish get elected, how would you change that? What types of specific ideas do you have?**

First of all you have to be willing to make those hard calls like, you know, but it's not really that hard. You have to be willing. First of all you can't get anything done if you only have one. Like Skylar can't do anything by himself. He says he wants to bring something, he's got to get

somebody to second it. If he's instantly being told by Christi Hogin 'no, it's not gonna work,' what do you do? You can't even get her reviewed. You can't get anything done with two people.

### **Has he tried to get her reviewed?**

No but, are you kidding, he's just gotten to be mayor finally. He got personally shamed, publicly shamed. You have to be able to go in there and come in with a whole different attitude toward the thing. We're Malibu, we're not like the whole argument with the sewer thing. 'Well, up in Los Osos they've been fighting this for 20 years, you'll never win because Los Osos'--We're Malibu, and if you just tell people you can't do this right off the bat, they're gonna start believing that. And when you give them this tactic of 'you're not going to be able to flush your toilet next year or whatever.' Really? No, you're just going along with this stuff. You're not fighting the things that are important. Paradise Cove, it's like, what do you do about that. 'Well, we're going to put up some no parking signs.' It's really out of our hands. I just don't buy that. What's the point then? If it's all out of our hands then we should just give up the city. Give it back to the county. Just give up. Because what do we have then? Ribbon-cutting ceremonies and that's it?

### **What was your political call to action?**

It was the lagoon [2012 project]. That was definitely it.

### **Were you around in the 1980s [when another lagoon project took place]?**

I played little league down there. To me, it was like it was a failed plan to begin with and it finally started looking normal. All it needed was maintenance and the right placement. That's why I got into it. I just saw that these guys were going to do this project, and when I got wind of it, because it was noticed really weird. They sort of noticed it on the parking lot. They didn't really let everybody know they were gonna dig everything up. I only got a notice because I was working at Pritchett Rapf and they got a notice there. We were over by where Marmalade is. At the time our office was there. Because the parking lot was what they were noticing on, not the project. So they didn't even really get too many people involved in this public outreach thing so when I found out it was already too late to be in on getting everybody fired up on it. So that was really-- I knew that they were wrong, I knew that it was not going to work, I knew it was a big waste of money. They were just going to do the same thing and worse, which is it. If you go down there now it's worse, nothing's grown back. It's a disaster. So that whole thing and seeing how the city council was like, 'it's out of our hands, it's out of our hands.' They told us over and over, and after it was done it was like, oh well we did have control over the FEMA floodplain and they could have totally stopped the project. The thing is that I've been really upset about is that Laura never publicly stated ever her position on the lagoon. Even at the end when the vote came down and she was mayor, it got to 4-0 and she didn't have to vote. She never cast a vote on it, she never said publicly if she was for it. She was totally, she was like, you know, she's that's what the thing that really bummed me out. And Sibert was involved with the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission, so I saw this stuff going on and was like, no way. Before I was like, 'you guys are

gonna destroy Cross Creek.' But if you're gonna come out on the beach and you're gonna do stuff and the sewer's gonna come out, that's what got me going. The line I drew in the sand led right back to city hall. And once I started going to city hall meetings and they ignored us, and we packed that place. We had the biggest turnouts for the lagoon, standing room only, packed so many different times, that's what got me fired up for it.

**When I talked to Laura, she said a lot of people don't show up to city council meetings because a lot of them watch from home and she think a lot of them are happy with what the city council is doing. What's your take on that?**

My take on it is that first of all, it's unclear what's on the agenda. It's unclear if it's important to go. They're late. When you do go, you're not really treated, unless you know, you're somebody that knows the system with your expeditors and attorneys and everything. Otherwise you're not really responded to very well. Important issues are dragged on, go so late into the night that you can't stay and comment or vote, watch what happens. If everyone can sit at home..she must have a little buzzer there, that you can send in a vote. If she thinks that everybody is so happy watching from home, she's way out of touch. I talk to people all the time going, 'oh my god I watch that thing it's like it's on a loop or something.' They're just pissed.

**Do you think people don't show up because they don't think it'll accomplish anything?**

They're sort of fed up with it, it's an apathy, it's like they don't know if it's gonna be any different. They don't even know if what they're showing up for is getting voted on. Unless you follow it and you know that something's coming up, it's not something you go to regularly. So if you just tune in, it's like 'what, they already voted on it?' It's too late. I don't really like going to them and I really don't like looking up at them on the stage and them looking down on me and getting three minutes to rush through the city of Malibu and asking questions and they never have to respond. Will Jacobus has said it a couple of times and I brought it up too. It would be really nice if you could hold back some of your time as a public comment to be able to like say something to them and if they don't respond you get another minute back to respond again, so the public gets the last word. Or, you could Skype in your comments, if they had people do that I wonder how happy people would be.

I think that there should be, you look at, that's why nobody came to the Board of Education meeting. It's like, if you got to go down there, how many times have you seen where these decisions are finally voted on 11 o'clock at night, 12 o'clock at night. They stack the agenda with heavy things into the back of the agenda. They know they're important, and who's going to wait it out? A handful of people are going to stay there. That's like saying just because they didn't go there they're happy? They're not staying home because they're happy, they're staying home because they don't want to go down there. If it was a certain amount of people each time could sign up, because if you were going to do it from home, you were going to sign in, there should be a certain amount of people, the first say 10, that could actually comment from home.

They get to do the city council meetings from wherever they are. Skylar's got 'em done from other places. But they all have. They've all called in meetings, or they just didn't show up. That

would be something that really needs to happen. That's the whole thing with the input on anything that has to do with the general plan down here. People should be able to know when it's time to input and not have to go down there. Just because I'm gonna be on city council I have to go there, but if you live here you shouldn't have to go down there to get your voice heard. It's just not fair.

**Speaking of the specific plan and design guidelines, do you agree with the direction the city is moving on this?**

Not even. It's like \$650,000. They're people that they've got the plans out to, all the people that they've got that design big cities. There's like 8 of them at least that are designers of big, huge cities. It's gonna do the same thing it always does. Not enough input, then they'll come back in. By the time people show up there'll be an argument, it won't come through.

**How would you address it?**

There's like this program this thing called mindmixer where you can have virtual input. People can look at the plan before you set that up so people can get what they want in, they can comment on different projects. I'd love to see that instead of having, all these projects have these expeditors, attorneys lobbying for them. I'd love to see team captains, reverse expeditors for the public, letting people know when they need to be at a certain place at a certain time. When it's too late to comment, when you need to show up for EIRs. Have like CERT classes like they have for life-saving but for city-saving.

You show up and learn what the process is and how you get involved and learn how to tread the EIRs, comment, voice your opinion.

This specific plan thing, they tried this before, same formula of doing it. The last time they did it they argued—

We've got all this technology that they could get input from everybody on such a broader base with these kind of virtual projects. They got a great website they could deal with this stuff instead of closing it down again where people think they're getting left out one more time. I just don't like the whole, when she says we're gonna design a civic center that's a reflection of us. It just sounds so — it's like no way.

**In the next four years, what single issue do you think needs to be addressed and what would you do about it?**

The overdevelopment in the Civic Center and the wastewater treatment and the sewer, all the stuff that we've been — all this new traffic onto the highway, the safety of the highway. Just the gridlock that comes with that. First you have to look at that by bringing, the sewer — I grew up here, and it was always like, the sewers are gonna be the end of Malibu. That's gonna bring the development. And the size of the properties, it's not like no growth, it's just got to be a lot better carefully of traffic studies. You can't move around now and I see like when they decide they're going to put a sewer right across the street from my kid's elementary school. To me, that's the



linchpin of the, all the stuff happening, and that leads to all the other issues in Malibu. The traffic, the safety of the highways, the safety of any kind of emergency. If everybody's jammed in here, we overuse PCH, the infrastructure, the water coming in going out.

### **Do you think the Civic Center can handle all the projects coming in?**

There's no way. ON the weekend you can't even get into the center of town. Cross Creek is like crosswalk. It's almost like it's treated like it's a promenade. The traffic studies are completely being ignored. They look at one project per project, and the amount of projects that are coming in here at these traffic studies as one big giant ..pie. Everybody's supposed to get a little piece of that pie to tie into that traffic pool. It seems like the way they're doing these things, they're just giving whole pies out to everybody and they're not even factoring in pepperdine and that whole thing. That's another thing where you just go, just that alone and what that brings into town is so insane but then to add in all this other stuff. The most important thing is how do you slow this stuff down because once the sewer's in its full speed ahead. All these guys are just waiting out and see all these projects and they all have whatever they say is such a low FAR ratio already. It's .15 but they all have the .20 ready to go, so they're all going to promise something right there. And to say that you can't downzone from the .15 I'd say you know you can definitely go down to a .075. Maybe it's not as dense as other places, still this is Malibu. We've got one highway. One way in and one way out. It's just insane to start putting a million square fit in now.

### **So you suggest lowering the FAR ratio?**

I would look at part of that. First of all you have to start with the sewer because you just got to question why they're going to put it across the street. They're going to buy a piece of property when they already had it donated to them by La Paz that could be used for a sewer and they're not using the one that's for free but are instead giving money to the Bay Company for the one that's across from the school, which is not the preferred location. Even Jim Thorsen said the other day, 'Well technically it'd be better if it was down in the center of town, but we're going to pump.' It's just scary to think that they're just not looking out for anybody else. That's where I would get out in front of these things. You got to question. It's not out of your hands. You're putting a sewer next to a storm drain that leads directly to the ocean, across the street from a school, and all you're doing is telling a few of the residents across the street that you're gonna put trees up and in five years it'll grow in and block the view. And that's like, that's where I go 'no, this is being driven by development, and this has nothing to do with science that says that the surrounding people are gonna get jammed into this thing with all these huge assessments to pay for this thing. You're going to put the sewer in and use it for a while to prove that the existing houses aren't polluting.' It makes no sense, it's like the most ridiculous thing ever. We already did the Legacy Park, it was supposed to clean the water , the lagoon was supposed to clean the water. What next? You're gonna put a sewer in to clean the water for properties that don't even exist yet. They're gonna get benefits of that right off the bat by being able to build and we don't even have the water really to even hold it. Then it's like what are you going to do? You're going to jam the water into the ground? To me it's like the most pressing thing. They are going full steam

ahead. If you saw this presentation at the school the other day, I couldn't believe they were showing it. It was a really fluffy wastewater treatment plant presentation and I've been wondering when they were gonna start outreach with everybody.

### **Would you attempt to stop its construction?**

Yeah, definitely question that. They're putting it in such a key position and place and they say don't worry. How do you not worry? They say it was a two-inch line that they're going to be pumping the sewer out. A 2-inch pressure line uphill. It all just reeks of favoritism to the [Malibu] Bay Company. Once the sewer's in, if the sewer's in at La Paz, and they took away the Ralph's center and had to put it down there, then Bay Company would be left with a super fun kind of property across from the school that could never be built on. It'd be a great place for a skatepark..but it wouldn't be built on anything.

Of course their other property right down there where the chili cookoff zone is, which doesn't perc, all of a sudden is able to build because they have a sewer and, if these guys all had to build under the same guidelines as all of Malibu, there'd be draining fields like there was when I was a kid. Or, you'd jam them up and all of a sudden they'd realize there's not going to be a lot there and the value of these commercial lots is really what they were, is agricultural back in the day. Then it might be a real center of town like with real soccer fields and football fields or whatever they wanted right here. It would be impossible to build out to some big shopping center. I don't know, maybe it's idealistic to think you can do something like that. But I think as soon as the sewer is here, you can never undo that. So you have to make sure that you really are getting what you want, or what they say you're going to get, and why. We have a scientist supposedly on the city council, every time there's something they turn to him. And they're not using the most current science to show that everybody around here is the source of pollution in the lagoon. Like why are we getting this sewer? It's not for that reason. It's straight up development.

### **Why Andy Lyon? Why not stick with the incumbents?**

Believe me, if I thought that I could trust these guys with Malibu, I would say go for it, but why Andy Lyon? Because I'm the kind of guy that's not gonna sit back and take the sides of — I'm not a politician. I'm not doing this other than any other reason that I love Malibu. This is my hometown, this is where I grew up. I didn't come here to say I'm like Malibu and I got a license play that says 'I'm in the Bu,' no. I'm for Malibu because this is my home. This is who I am. My legacy. My kids are here, I grew up here, my dad was here, grandfather was here, I'm here. I'm not going to waiver on things. I'm going to stand up. Arnold even with his endorsements said it's the same election as two years ago. It's Andy and Hamish versus Joan and John or Laura and Lou. They vote the same way, they roll the same way. They do everything. You have to have some opposition there. Myself and Hamish are people there to stand up for residents. We're not standing up for developers. This isn't a rung in my ladder to get further along at some political career. I'm doing this because I love Malibu, I feel like the center of town is being ignored. There's no representation down in the center of town. This is where I grew up and I just want to see that it's protected and I don't think it is getting protected. So why Andy? Because you know with me

it's going to be honesty that I'm gonna be doing the right thing for Malibu. I don't need to pull the mission statement off the city website to tell you what's right for Malibu and read off that. I've been here since before the city when Malibu was a little sleepy fun town. It's a critical turning point if it's left in the hand of the powers that are down there right now that are not taking charge of this stuff. We're all gonna see a Malibu that's done.