

We're asking everyone this: In five words or less, what is the theme of your campaign?

Improving quality of life of Malibu residents.

Tell me about your history in Malibu. What prepares you to take on this role?

Well, it's my history in Malibu and also my history outside of Malibu. Uh, prior to getting here, I had a business career, and that business career encompassed a couple of things. One, I was a senior executive in a Fortune 500 company back in Chicago and what that taught me was how to work as a team, how to listen to facts and make decisions that had an impact on what we were trying to decide. So, you know, you had to do stuff that came up with a positive result; otherwise, they'd find somebody else to play that game. From there, I joined an internet company where I was doing new business development and sales and marketing for them and the same thing, that got me involved with more of the technology piece and I've learned a lot of that. Uh, so, those two things gave me, I believe—expertise is the wrong word—but some experience of how to make decisions, how to make good, solid decisions. Now, once I get to Malibu, back in '95, '94, someplace in there, I got involved in a couple things. Initially, there was a—let me go back. I'm sitting in my yard, I get a call from Ozzy Silna, who says, "Do you have any idea"—I had no idea who Ozzy Silna is—"do I have any idea what's going on in the Civic Center?" That's when they were doing a Civic Center specific plan; they were going to build a million-plus square feet in the Civic Center. But I got involved in that, at least listening to what was going on, learn sort of the concept, who was playing the game. And that project went belly-up; it never went anyplace because the city council said "no." But, subsequent to that, we came up with the Malibu Bay development agreement, OK? Which was an agreement the city council put together that I thought was just horrendous. It gave Jerry Perenchio the right to build stuff all over the place and the city got nothing for it. So I fought that. And we stopped them from building a 185,000-square-foot shopping center in Legacy Park. In addition to all the other development, then when they decided to buy, we raised 500,000 bucks to help them buy the land. And once you get into this stuff, you can't get out. [Laughs] I mean, so, subsequent to that be it Measure M, Measure W, uh, dark sky ordinance, Trancas Park. I mean, you sort of get, you're in and you've got to keep doing stuff. And that's what I've been doing the last 26 years.

Um, at this point in the election, most candidates have published a list of platforms and priorities and made some campaign promises, but I haven't been able to find a website for your campaign. Why is that?

Two things. One—I think I mentioned earlier—one of the things, I got started late. I originally did not have a plan to run for city council. I decided to do that probably five days before the filing deadline came in. So I'm catching up. You know, I'm playing catch-up. My website came live yesterday, my Facebook page is coming live on Friday. I think I've put together the foundation to allow me to go up and fight this campaign, so it's coming, but. My plan forward, I mean, the plan forward to me is pretty simple. There's three basic things that I think we gotta do. One, I think we gotta find ways to do a better job of protecting our environment and our rural character. OK? Uh, I think we've got to improve, find ways to improve the quality of life for Malibu residents. I think that has gone downhill since I've been here and I can give you reasons of why that is. And the third thing is, I think I can help the city council make better decisions. I mean, some of

the—and, and they're not bad people. Right, I don't want to give anybody that impression. However, some of the decisions they make are questionable. And let's take one that's coming up Monday night. We've got short term rentals. And one of the items on their agenda is an enforcement initiative or enforcement ordinance for short term rentals. When you read that ordinance, there's nothing in there about how they're going to enforce compliance. I mean, so we're passing ordinances with no compliance. At least in my experience, I don't know how you can do it halfway there. It doesn't work. I'll give you another one. The Smith parcel, where they have the wetland. OK, prior to that, 27 residents went up to the city council and said, "Gee whiz, I'd like to hook up to this wastewater treatment system," and my neighbor is one of 'em. He lives down the hill from me; it's costing him a fortune to get his septic system pumped out. He could simply run a tube down to where La Paz is and hook up. And they told them all no. And then this developer comes in, who [City Attorney] Christi Hogin says we don't have to worry about because we can beat him if we go to court, everybody just says "Yes, man!" I just—things that I don't understand. There may be good reasons for those, but they confuse me.

Um, you mentioned that, uh, you decided at the last minute to jump into the council race.

Yes.

What makes this the year, after being involved for so many, to run for council?

I, I looked—the thing—I looked at the candidates that were running, OK, and, at least in my mind, OK, and whether the voters think I'm right or wrong we're gonna find out, but at least in my mind, many of them have a different vision for Malibu than I had. OK? And I thought that many of them had a, a vision—there were too many of them on the other side of my vision. OK? And I thought at the very least, "Look, I've been here for 20-something years, I been active, I owe the voters a chance to get a different opinion." We'll find out if I'm right.

So I thought that your phrasing was a little bit interesting where you said, "On the other side of your vision." Reminded me of a question that I had been planning to ask you a little bit farther down ... um ... which is that your bio that you submitted to us lists both environmental protection and recreational opportunities as priorities.

Sure.

But it seems like in Malibu a lot of times those are opposing forces. So what types of recreational opportunities are you advocating for and do you see a conflict there?

No. I mean, look, the ... your question's got multiple parts do it.

Yeah. [laughs]

And one of the parts says, "What has happened to the youth in our city? Where are they?" Right? I—go back and take a look at the high school. High school's got 940 students in it right now, which is one of the lowest numbers they've had. The two grade schools, you put 'em all together, you got 600 kids, OK? Where did they go? And are we gonna get 'em back? And what is the city gonna do to bring 'em back, OK? Because if you don't have youth, you don't need a

whole bunch of recreational facilities. That said, we bought the land where the chili cook-off is. We bought the land where, uh ... the Triangle Parcel and the Trancas stuff. And the city council promised us that what we would do is have a robust and transparent discussion about from the residents and what we're gonna use that stuff for. If the residents want recreational stuff, let's build it. OK? But they should have the right to say what they want; it shouldn't be done by somebody else. Did that answer your question?

Um, how does that interplay with being opposed to development?

OK, because I don't believe that soccer fields or a baseball field is anything comparable to what they're doin' at La Paz trying to build a 120,000 square feet of commercial development when I get empty stores all over Malibu. I mean, there's a diff—I, well ... I think Malibu right now has enough commercial development to last it for a couple years, K? Uh ... and I have no i—look, I have no idea how La Paz is gonna fill those stores. Whole Foods has been around for a year and a half, they still have empty stores in there. Alright? And I don't think it's a good vision for the city to have, have either businesses that wanna get in or—come in and see empty storefronts. I mean, what does that say about the vibrancy of your community? I mean, so ... and I don't understand the retail business so I have no idea why this guys' doing that. But that's commercial development. We don't need, look, again, improving the quality of life of Malibu residents. I think that—the people I've talked to, that's the key of what they're looking for. You know? My wife is afraid to walk through Legacy Park because she gets harassed by homeless people. She's afraid to go to Ralph's at night when it's dark. And she's not the only person, OK? And I'm compassionate for the need to try and do something to help the homeless, but if I'm chasing the residents and makin' 'em stay in their house, there's something wrong with that.

Do you have an idea for what the city might do to help with the homeless situation?

I think, I think—well, OK, two things. One, I think the problem's gonna get worse before it gets better. Everything I read, OK, and who knows whether it's good stuff or bad stuff, says that when this moratorium on rentals, OK, gets lifted as a result of COVID, the homeless population across the country is gonna, gonna blossom. Gonna increase. And I anticipate we're gonna see the same thing happen here in Malibu, OK? I don't know if we're prepared to do that. I don't know if Malibu by itself is big enough to deal with the homeless issue. I, you know ... I think we gotta partner with the county or whatever organizations we can to help us find solutions. I think you're right—I mean, we gotta find a place to help them stay, right? Uh ... I don't think that's in the middle of the Civic Center. I think we gotta deal with the fact that we got all these RVs parked along PCH dumping sewage onto the beach. That's nuts! OK? And we've gotta come up with solutions to those, whether those solutions are finding places for them to go, more enforcement that says there's some things you can't do. Some combination of that stuff! And I think we, again, I don't think Malibu in and of itself is big enough to do it alone. We're gonna need some help and I think we—look, we got lobbyists and we got connections, let's use those things and get some people to get together and do it right versus lettin' the city get overrun, which I think is a bad idea.

When you say “getting help from the county and other agencies,” do you mean help in terms of money, help in terms of, uh, permits? Or ...

Could be any combination of things! I mean, I know of people who are working right now trying to reach out with Sheila Kuehl where potentially there's enough room that we can put up some kinda shelters where the homeless can be given a place to sleep. OK? Uh, the county's got much more land than we have. You know, they got—look, the state, go down to Topanga, those little cabins right off, you go down to Topanga, those things have been empty for how many years. OK? If they're gonna stay empty, why don't we use 'em for something? I think there's some outside agencies who have got the ability to help us come up with—they may not be permanent solutions but they're solutions that in the short run can help us make everybody's life a little better. And I think we gotta pursue that. That's part of what I believe governance is supposed to be. You're supposed to reach out, find ways to get stuff done, get other people to help you. I mean, there's only so much Malibu can do. And once you ... the old Clint Eastwood thing: “A man has to know his limitations,” alright? And I think you gotta realize that and then figure out where you can go to get help and then pursue it.

Would you, hypothetically, be open to some sort of services, be it safe parking, be it a sewage dump station, something like that within Malibu city limits?

Well, I think a sewage dump—look, having people dump raw sewage on the beach. I don't know what part of the country you come from, but I came from—I don't remember any part of the country I've ever lived in where that's an acceptable solution. OK? You know, it's hazardous. They had hazmat teams over on, whatever it was, Tuna Beach there, OK. You gotta be kiddin' me! Alright? So yeah, some ways to figure out where they can dump it and some enforcement to make sure it's dumped. Again, big problem with a lot of the stuff we do is we pass an ordinance and then there's no enforcement to make sure people are doing what they're actually supposed to do. The ordinance makes you feel good, but there's no result that you can turn to and say, “Boy, this is something good that we did.”

Do you think there's money in the city budget for enforcement?

OK. Yes. OK? I think that, look, managing budgets is a math problem. There's no magic, OK? We got 23 or 20 million something dollars in the bank. So it's not like we're goin' belly up tomorrow morning. Our main revenue stream is property taxes. They ain't goin' away. Not gonna be as big as they used to be, but that's OK. Uh, and now it's a matter—and I'll give you a couple things, OK, there's a couple ways to look at it. One, we gotta go try and find new revenue sources. OK? And we got this TOT tax they're gonna try and increase. That's a step in the right direction. But there have gotta be other places. I mean, if you, and—look, OK ... you gotta go another place. There are—Let me give you one example. The company I worked for back in Chicago had been in business since 1915. And the problem was they hadn't changed anything. They were makin' money, everybody was happy, OK. So what they had—they sold a bunch'a different products. Some were, like, \$5000 products; some were ten dollar products. OK? And because these things had developed over time, all this information they had in different databases. So if you called me up and you wanted to order one of my big products and

one of my small products, you had to talk to two or three different people. OK? OK, so we changed that. We put together a caseworker thing, took everything and put it in the same database, and now you could call up, you got one person, they could take care of your whole order, I could reduce headcount and I made the customer happy. OK. I had a friend recently in Malibu who had permits for all their houses ready to go. Car got ripped off, stolen, got lastimo. He went into city hall, I mean, you would think somebody could hit a button and say, "Print out all of my permits." Doesn't happen. He had to go to every single department, OK. So there's technology things we might be able to implement that would not only make more efficient in terms of what the operations going on, can make our residents happier and save us some money. So there are plenty of places to look, alright? So to sit back and wring our hands and say there's nothing we can do. I been through budgets and tough times and good times; there's always something you can do. You just gotta have the willpower to do it.

So it seems like your business experience comes into play with the way that you think about the city and the city's needs—

Yeah, I mean, I don't think it—directly—relationship to the city. I think these are sort of principles that, whether you're in a city or—Right? You wanna make smart decisions. You wanna balance your budget. You wanna make sure that the initiatives you got going on can be covered by whatever the budget is, OK, and that the initiatives you're putting in place are going to have a positive impact on the residents. Whether you're dealing with your customer base as a business, I think the same rules sort of apply. Maybe I'm wrong, but like I said, we'll find out.

Um, the other, it seems to me, piece of experience you have is, of course, your time on the planning commission.

Oh, yes!

I think it's safe to say you've made some waves during your time on the commission—

Ah, you know the old rule, "you're not makin' enemies on your way up, you're not doing something right."

[Laughs] Um, will you describe how you see your record on the commission so far?

Yeah! I think, you know, look ... there's a difference between the way we make decisions on the commission than they do at the city council. I'm respon—I—one, the planning commission does not set its agenda. I mean, if all the planning commissioners got together tomorrow and said, "We wanna talk about total development square footage," which is an, OK, we can't do that. We can't put—that's gotta come to us from the city council.

Mm.

The only thing we can talk about are the projects that are coming before us. And then those projects that are coming before us, I've got Coastal—LIP, I've got a municipal code and I've got a general plan. Those are the rules when I joined the planning commission somebody told me I'm supposed to pay attention to. OK? So I've tried to do that. And I've tried to do it, and I'll be

honest, you know, when, when, a lot of the—OK. Nobody's gonna say we've got the best-written code in the country. OK? So there are certain areas there that are open to interpretation. But whenever that interpretation came in front of me, I tried to err on the side of protecting the environment and our rural character. And I don't apologize for any of those decisions. I think I did that with that in mind, I think that's what the people who put me there wanted me to do. I'm still there. OK? There are people who aren't, they're not me, so, ah, if they didn't like what I was doin', they could've done something about it, but I think I tried to adhere to the mission they gave me and do it right. And, and follow the rules that I had to follow.

You were appointed by Skylar Peak, right?

That's correct.

Is a vote for Steve Uhring essentially a vote for Skylar Peak?

No.

So—

I'm not Skylar Peak!

So ... what differences do you see between his time on council and what you anticipate your term would be like?

What do I think the difference would be ... I've never thought about a difference between myself and—look, Skylar has been in Malibu for however long, he's been, he's, you know, I knew his dad. I was friends with his father, Dusty, alright? Uh, so Skylar has, has got a following and reputation in Malibu that has been—and not to say he hasn't done a lot of things good, but part of it has been as a result of he's been a permanent resident here for a long, long time. I'm, I'm not running on being a permanent resident. I'm running on the fact that I've got skills that I think I can bring to the table to make a difference. And I think the skillset that I bring is different than the skillset he has. Not that his skillset's bad; it's just different.

Do you think your reputation on the planning commission helps or hurts your chances of getting to council—

Depends who you talk to!

Majority of voters.

Eh, look, you know, uh. Of the initiatives I've been involved with—and it was a Measure M ballot initiative, OK, that I, through Malibu Coastal Land Conservancy, got involved with. Measure R, which was Rob Reiner's program and I ran the, the ground game for that. Measure W, which was, OK, and I ran the whole campaign for that. Every one of those things, we won 60-40. Now, is there still a 60-40 vote out there? That's what I'm running to find out. I mean, my crystal ball is no better than anybody else's. I do think there is still a desire for a lot of people to protect Malibu. To have a community that is livable, that has got facilities to take care of the residents,

that has got a direction that says “We can protect ourselves and be viable as we move forward,” and we’ll find out, you know? I could be wrong, I’m running to find out—I think I’m gonna win. If I told you I didn’t think I was gonna win, we wouldn’t be having this conversation. But I, you know, life has changed in Malibu. Uh. I have upset some people, mmkay? And most of the people I’ve upset have the ability to make decisions that are not governed by the same set of rules I have to deal with. I mean, that’s easy. I mean, I’ve done that when I wasn’t on the planning commission. Uh, but there are—I was given a mission. I was given direction that says “Here’s what you’re supposed to do, here’s what you’re supposed to base your decisions on,” and I’ve tried to do that.

Do you think the mission of council, uh, which does have a little bit more leeway ...

Got a lot more leeway.

Do you think the mission is different, I mean ...

Yeah, look, you know, look—on the planning commission, I’m not vying for votes. I mean, again, I spent four years on the planning commission, no intention of running for anything. So I was not trying to appeal to anybody. And I’m not saying that the city council is, would, would change ... or ignore the rules for votes. But I do believe when the city council makes decisions, somewhere in the back of their mind, there’s a little guy saying, “Votes!”

So does that change for a second term council member?

Why would it change for a second term council member? I don’t know why it would change.

Because they’re not, the, there’s no votes at stake, they’re not—

Ehhhh, you don’t know where a council member wants to go after he gets off the council. Right, I mean, and again, look, I have ... I failed every psychology course I ever took. Alright? So I’m certainly not capable of judging anybody else’s motivation or where they’re goin’ or how they’re getting there. However ... I don’t discount anything.

Do you feel you have the name recognition needed to win the election?

I think so, we’re gonna find out.

All right, let’s talk about the mansionization—

Ooh!

—issue. How would you respond to an elderly resident who is concerned that his home value will decrease because of a drive to make homes smaller in his neighborhood?

OK, and, and you gotta give me more detail on the question, because that’s the question asked by the people who are opposed to anything we did about mansionization. Uh, how many people in Malibu do you think, based upon the decision we made at the planning commission, would be impacted by the thing you must gave me, by the conditions you just gave me?

Uh, with respect, I think that's a question for you.

Ahhhh, it's sort of like the question that says, "Have you quit beating your wife?"

Haha.

Uh, I don't know if you remember—and you wrote it up, it was in your ... the article you wrote—what happened was is the city council came up with mansionization question, right, and they gave us a graph that said "Here's one of the ways we can take a look at reducing the size of some of these large houses." We took that and said, "OK, you can't do it the way they wanted to do it." If we go out and reduce the potential size of the majority of houses in Malibu, they will run us out of town on a rail and be justified in doing that, K? So we didn't do that. What we ended up doing is saying, anybody who had a buildable lot of an acre or less, we did not change anything of what their TDSF was. And that probably covers 90-95% of the people in Malibu. OK? Because a lot of people got lot—my lot's an acre and three quarters. But because the sun slopes, I've only got an acre of buildable land. And that's not untypical of what you find in Malibu. So I think what we did is go through a process that says, "OK, here's what the city council wanted, here is a solution that has got less impact on what's going on." Now. You wanna talk about maybe why the city council wanted to do that? OK? Uh. Take a look at your census report. 36% of the residents in Malibu have responded to the census. OK? Tell me why that is. I've hunted—nobody has given me an answer of why that's taking place. The theory, OK, burnouts, short term rentals and second homes. OK? That changes Malibu, that's true, that changes who we are. And it impacts your schools. And I don't know about you, but I wanted to live in a community that had good schools. Because having good schools when I wanna sell my house gives me a bigger population of people who wanna buy it, OK? And some of this thing, you know, this process of building 8,000, 9,000 square foot homes, those are not starter homes for families that are trying to come in and grow a family. OK? And this process of short term rentals where they've taken all these housing units off the market is not, it's a formula for bringing families in and hav—we gotta start thinking about what we want our city to be, alright? We can start doing actions that help us get there versus sittin' back and sayin', "Huh, look what's goin' on."

Do you feel ... uh, I mean, do you have the perception that that decision from planning commission was popular in the city?

Which decision?

The decision, um, that we were talking about with the percent reduction across the board.

Wh—the, the—

With lots, you know.

Nobody knew what that deci—because that decision never got—you're the only one that published that decision!

[laughs]

You did! K? Whatever day it was. Your article on ... July 3rd, 2019, said that's exactly what we did. Nobody else knew because it never got discussed at the city council level, OK, so all we heard was noise. Right, I mean, nobody ever said, "Here's what we got, is this a good i-" And the city council did a terrible job of selling what they were trying to do. They did nothing. Right? They never explained to the residents, "This is a concept, this is something we wanna look at, if we do it, here's what's good about it, if we do it, here's what's bad about it, if we do it, here's what the impact on you is gonna be." Nothing! All you heard were, "200 people or 300 people are, you know, depending on who you listen to, show up at the meeting and complain." And ... those people didn't even understand what the ordinance really—what we had suggested. So it was, it was—there's words I can use for those but none of those I wanna put on a tape.

Uh, so it seems like it came down to a lot of miscommunication, am I getting that right?

It came, it came, look. It came down to a poorly executed plan on the part of the city council. They, they, I mean, there was no ... if ... if you leave a vacuum out there, someone's gonna fill it. And that's what happened, mmkay? The people who wanted to build 9,000 square foot, 10,000 square foot house filled that vacuum. And the city council had said nothing. Said nothing! I mean, after that meeting I called at least three members of the city council and said, "I can't believe you guys sat up there while these people are screamin' at the planning commission and said nothing. Where is your backbone? It was your plan!"

OK, I don't wanna spend the whole time—

No, I'm, I'm takin', that was ... you asked a question, I'm givin' you the best answer I can!

Of course. Um ... I just, I'm curious because you said people who wanna build 9,000 square foot homes showed up, you know, to scream at council, and I'm curious, is that sort of how you account for the number of people who came up—

No, no, no, what you had, and if you go back, and, and occurred prior the planning commission, there, there, and I, OK ... Don Schmitz ... and his, at all, I don't know what his ... they sent out a mailer to everybody in Malibu, OK, and they sent it to me, that said, "Look, if this thing goes through, you're not—you can now build ... whatever the hell they think you can build," and like I said, I've got an acre and a half but only an acre of buildable land, so the information I got was wrong. And it even said on the bottom of his mailer that this was not test—was not, you know, accurate, and he refused to sign it. And so the opposition took advantage of the vacuum and filled it. And the city council did nothing. And that's a formula for losing.

What would you have done, were you on council?

Explain to people what the heck we were tryin' to do! You know, is there a benefit, is there a benefit in reducin—look, Larry Ellison's building a 15,000 square foot house over here on Carbon Beach, OK. You think that's the last one? OK? I mean, everybody in Carbon Beach plays the game that says, "You know, my ... pocket's fuller than yours!" OK, so if Larry builds one at 15, you expect someone's gonna come up with 20, and all of a sudden I got 20 ... one of

the things we decided to do with that was let's limit the size of beach houses, OK, so you ... No! And there's a benefit of doing that, you keep—again, some character of your city in place, you make 'em available for people, you know, uh. City council didn't do that. They're gettin' paid the big bucks, I'm not.

OK, I have one more question pertaining to your time on planning commission.

Go right ahead.

Do you think being a planning commissioner gives you an edge—

Sure, absolutely what it does, it gives you two edges, OK? One, it has given me a chance to watch how the internals of the city work, OK? Not us making decisions but the people that are bringing stuff to us to make decisions. What do I think they're doing? What do I think they're thinking about as they do that? And do I agree with some of the processes they're using to get there? OK? So that has made me smarter. And I've learned to observe things as I've gotten older. And the second thing it does, it's given me the ability, I've learned the Malibu Municipal Code. I mean, every, every meeting for the last four years, before the meeting, I get the staff report, I go through the stuff. If I have a question, I gotta go back into the LIP, the municipal code, and read it and make sure I understand it. So I'm much more conversant in some of the land use issues that are taking place in the city and how they should be addressed. And that's a—look, city council, OK, house on Grayfox came before 'em, OK, and it was, it was denied by the planning commission because it didn't support the neighbourhood character and the city council agreed to us. Alright and they sent it back to the planning commission to get, OK, and, uh ... so understanding what the rules are and how they're supposed to work, I think, gives you an advantage to make sure that you're treating everybody equally. I mean, one of the things that I have had a concern with is that every now and then we'll have something come in front of us, a decision or an interpretation of a certain component of the municipal code that is an interpretation that is different than what has taken place before, and it may get passed, but it's not memorialized any place, there's nothing in writing. So when the next person comes in, OK, how am I comfortable that the next person is gonna get the same thing that this person got? And if it doesn't, there's something wrong with that. And the bigger issue is, people in Malibu have got a lot of money. And they're used to using their money to get what they want. And I'll tell you what, once, they recognize that there are ways to get different interpretations for what's going on ... if that's not a recipe for disaster, I don't know what is.

How would you put a stop to that if you were on council? Assuming that you want to!

Yeah, look, there are rules, OK and again, the rules that say ... if you wanna change the rule, put it in writing and memorialize it. Put it in the code, change the code, so that the next person that comes down the street can get the same deal. And if you're not willing to do that because you think you made a wrong decision changing the code, then don't change the damn code!

[Laughs] All right. It's generally acknowledged in Malibu that the Woolsey Fire and its response were mishandled. Do you agree and who do you think is responsible for mishandling the fire?

I think it was a mess across the board. OK? Ah, look ... that, that question, and I apologize if I'm reading stuff into it, OK? Uh, there is a fairly large contingent of the Malibu residents who are upset with city manager, members of the city council and the way that was handled. OK? Uh, they had done subsequent studies, Mikke Pierson and Karen did one, whatever, and I don't know where the hell those things have gone, I haven't seen any changes get made, OK? And I'm not running to be an executioner. I'm running to be a city council person. And I'll, look—when I went to Chicago, we were merging two companies. And the organization I had, we had developed a model that said I need 650 reps to get what I wanted to get done. To put the two companies together, I had over a thousand, I think I had 1100, 1200. So I had to change that. And what I did, I made, I under—I came up with formulas that said, “How do I evaluate my people?” Because I don't wanna let somebody go that can be a real asset as I move down the line. And then the second thing you figured out is you had to let people go. That is not a pleasant experience. OK? I've let more people—I've let enough people go to last me a lifetime. Last me two lifetimes, OK! So I, I—however, if it has to be done, I know how to do it.

So ... ooh ... it seems like what you're saying is that there's a city staff component to the fires mishandl—mismanagement.

There's a ... look ... the city council is supposed to manage the city manager. I think that's how the rules work, at least the last time I looked at it, OK? And there was a failure on the part of, of some of the stuff the city did. Either preparedness for the fire, uh, execution during the fire ... city council's in charge. City council's in charge! You know, it's sort of like, you know, you don't have the CEO of the company blaming his secretary when stuff goes wrong. If you're in charge, say you're in charge and have the backbone to do something about it.

So if you are on council and there's another fire, heaven forbid, um, what would you do differently?

Well, OK, well, knowing what the fire is, I think ... but look, I think it's a process that says that the city council is supposed to be in charge. Alright? So if you're on the city council—you know, look, we've got this guy that ... better words to use, they hired a person who comes to your house to tell you if your house is safe, OK, a fire—now, I don't know how many people have taken advantage of that. And I've talked to people who have said, “What the hell you talkin' about?” Alright, so, I mean, if there are components that we have that are supposed to make people's lives better, you, you—pe—my experience in marketing stuff is you don't tell people once and have 'em all jump on and say they understand. You gotta keep pounding your story. If you think you got something that's important to say, and you think it's meaningful, it's gonna have impact on people's lives, you gotta keep tellin' 'em, you know, so you're tellin' 'em what you gonna tell 'em, you tell 'em, and you tell 'em what you told 'em. And I think that's what we gotta do and I don't think we've done a good job of that.

OK. Um, so earlier you mentioned that you think quality of life in Malibu has gone down—

Yes.

—if I recall?

That's correct.

Umm, can you tell me a little bit about why you think that is?

Sure! OK, because two years ago, a homeless person started a fire right behind the Malibu Library and I woke up at three o'clock in the morning, fire was burning 50 yards from my living room, OK? I've got, like I said, I've got people that are afraid to walk through Legacy Park. I've got homeless encampments or homeless RVs sitting on the beach that are dumping sewage onto the ground. I've got PCH, mmkay, I've got people parkin' all over the place. And nobody's doin' anything! OK, and that change—look, crime is up in Malibu. Our school system is, is—what are we doin' to try and bring families back—much less have a separate school district—to have a school?! OK?

You've brought up schools a couple times.

Yes!

Um ... I've, I noticed in your bio and I could be wrong. Um, do you have any kids?

No. Don't have any kids. And I'll tell you, what I've learned, education—I had a great education, you know? I mean, I did. I went to Catholic schools, I had nuns and Augustinian Jesuits and brothers and they beat the hell outta you, but you learned stuff, OK? And even when I was—and the last company, we were doing this Internet services business where I was hiring people—I'm interviewing people from, you know, Columbia grad school of—and you sit back, and these people are smart, alright? And you know, one of the things you wanna do is surround yourself with people that are smarter than you and I tried to do—so to me, look ... the smarter we can make our people, the better off we're gonna, they're gonna be. And so I, you know, I'm a big time favor of education, look, you know, I talk to Craig Foster and the new school development, the design up there, we've met with them three times to talk about what the design should be, are there ways we can improve it, da da da da. So I—you can't, you can't teach the kids enough. [Laughs]

Um, how do you account for the dropoff in enrollment?

I think a couple things, I think it started with the PCBs, mmkay? And if you wanna talk about a project that was totally mishandled, OK, lay your baby blues on that one, because, uh, one, they found it. They tried to hide it. Then they ignored it. And these were the people that residents believed were there to help protect the schools. OK, so the people that everybody thought were gonna be the champions are the ones who by, by either inaction, lack of their action, whatever, OK, caused that ... exodus, OK? And I think they're gonna have a hard time comin' back. I've got friends that send their kids over the hill to school and they're not, they're not in a hurry to bring their kids back to Malibu. And I'll tell you what, and the deal is, the people who live in Malibu buying the 9,000 square foot houses have got the money to send their kids to private

schools, they don't care about this, right? They're not gonna screw around with people playing petty games with stuff that can kill their kids.

If there are quality private schools, how important is it to the community, do you think, I mean, how important is it to you to have a robust private school program?

Well, look ... There are some ... private—and I, I have not chased—OK, I could be misspeaking some of this, I mean there are a number of these, look, elementary schools that are private that have popped up in Malibu. I don't know of any high school or that level school that has popped up. They're in the Valley, I mean, you go to Viewpoint, some of those places. But in terms of the—I, I've—from whatever, I've read, OK, and, and the people I've talked to, nobody has told me that a community is better off, OK, if it wants to grow and be robust by not having its own school system. Alright, and a school system that is ... effective at educating the kids. And I think it does two things. One, I think it brings people into the community and I think we need that right now, I think we need some new bl—you know, the folks who have been around for a long time, you're gettin' old, alright, so bring some new bodies in there. And I think a school system does that. I think a school system allow—again, improves your ability, the value of your house. I mean, if I don't have no school system, I got a fairly small population of people who wanna buy. If I got a school system, I take that population and multiply it, so my chances of ... it makes everybody's life better.

Do you think that you have the knowledge of the issues that are needed for you to effectively govern when it comes to school issues on the council—

No! But I got—I know people that do. Right, I mean, I've dealt with Craig Foster, I've dealt with Jennifer DeNicola, OK, in terms of—so I got difference of opinions. I know a couple of people who are on the school board in Santa Monica. Uh, I got people who don't live in Malibu on school boards, mmkay? Uh, so I've got plenty of places to go to get information if I need it. Uh, look, I—my, my guiding light in life has been, "All of us are smarter than any one of us." And I'm on that train, all right? So the more—I've always tried, in my business career, I've always tried to surround myself with people that were smarter than me. Because they make me better. And hopefully I can make them better as we go through the process.

How would you characterize the city's handling of the short term rental issue so far?

It's a disaster! Nine years! In my entire business career, I've never had a problem that's taken me nine years to figure out what the hell to do with it. And not only that, OK, like I said ... this ordinance is coming up with ... there's two basic ordinances—maybe there's three, but one of them's not gonna go any place—but there's two. One is an enforcement ordinance. And it says we're gonna put this enforcement in place. But there's no enforcement to find in the ordinance. So it says, "Yeah, we're gonna have all these—eh, we'll figure out later on how we're gonna make it work." K. Uh. That's ... OK, and then the second one is, following this Santa Monica ordinance, OK, where this homesharing piece, and God knows when that's gonna get implemented! Right? It's gotta go to the Coa—"Well, we're gonna bail out and let the Coastal Commission tell us when we can do something on that and that may be—" I just read something today, the, uh ... the STR ordinance that's sittin' in front of the Coastal Commission? They may

not even vote on that for a while because they don't have enough time. I mean, look, like I said ... we're bein' run by outside agencies. We have no idea wh—and either we're not communicating with them or we don't have the stroke—I don't know what it is, but our lives are being ... made less valuable or less enjoyable because we're not able to get stuff done to protect the quality of life of the Malibu residents. I believe.

Do you think it's a matter of additional communication? Do you think it's a matter of being more firm or, uh, pushing harder ...

I mean, here's what I know, OK? That communication is the key. Honesty is the key. OK? And I've gone to the Coastal Commission—OK, when we had the, uh ... the high school put parking lot lights up on the ridgeline up there, alright, and they had, this thing was lit up like Times Square. Alright? And so we went to the Coastal Commission, OK, and I know Jack Ainsworth, I know Steve Hudson, I know Deanna Christensen, I mean, I've dealt with those people, OK? And we sat down and we said, "This is nuts! K, you guys gotta give us some help in being able to put some controls in so we've got some—" And they did. So we can be done. K? Now, I'm not sure I—you know, look, I ... this election is not gonna be a transactional process where somebody gives me their vote and the next morning they wake up and everything's right. That ain't gonna happen, alright? But ... my track record is, I don't give up easily and I've won more than I've lost in my lifetime. Alright? And I'm hopefully not gonna change that record.

So the city manager has predicted, ah, there's gonna be a crisis in the budget next year, um, partially because of the economic downturn caused by the pandemic. Where would you propose to cut from the city's budget?

I've no idea yet. All I know is that ... I don't believe it's a crisis. I don't believe it's—look! I'll tell you what you do. Go back to whatever the revenue we're gonna get next year is. Figure out that nu—I don't know whatever that number's gonna be. And then go back to the last year that Malibu had a budget with that much revenue in it. And figure out what you looked like then. Because the population since then hasn't increased. Right? So if I take exactly what I had at that point in time. And put it into effect today—I, that was my budget crisis.

If that means slashing city staff—

That means I'm gonna model exactly what I had then because what we had then was dealing with exactly the level of population that we had. And again, my problem, and I understand your question, but, I've looked at the budget. I've got like a high level understanding of what's there. But to do it right, you gotta sit down with the people who are, you know—look at the budget, I can't tell you there's not a number in the budget that tells you what our total salaries are. We're all spread out all—you know, I'm not gonna, I'm not gonna spend my life doin' math, somebody should put that number in. There are, there are, there are ... look, I have dealt with, again ... I've done good budgets, bad budgets, OK, I mean, I had, uh ... just for what it's worth, the Internet company we had, we were down the point that we had a meeting, OK, trying to figure out who we were gonna lay off. And 'cause we—and all of a sudden, we got a check, somebody gave us a check. So I, I, we've done this, alright? And there are ways to get this done without ...

destroying the services that we're supposed to provide to people. And just take—you gotta just work. All this stuff is work. I mean, it—it is!

It's my understanding that a pretty big part of Malibu's budget, like most cities, is public safety. Would that mean cutting back—because that contract is based on what the sheriff's department says they need for that contract year. Is that something you would be willing to cut back on—

No! I mean, look, I think you gotta go the other way. I mean, everybody I talk to, OK, Doug Stewart on public safety commission, alright, it's an enforcement issue. And the problem is that, you know, at night, I live up on the hill behind, you know, OK, two o'clock in the morning, cars are doin' street racing up and down PCH, OK, and we've only got two cars that are patrolling that thing every time, whatever time it is. And you sit back and you say, "Well, if I were them I'd be racin' too! Alright, why the hell not?" And so the—the key is, OK, and I can't tell you exac—but it's taking the budget, you sit down and you say, "OK, boys and girls, these are the priorities we have, these are the things we have to do to make sure that our community is safe." You got two problems with PCH. You make sure the traffic enforcement on PCH and the other thing you have going on is an increasing crime rate. So the sheriffs who might have been available to do some traffic control earlier are now being spread thinner because they—you gotta figure that out! And you gotta provide the resources to get that done. And, and there may be a buncha different ways to do that, I—you know ... but you gotta get underneath it and see—there are things you gotta do and unfortunately the budget's gotta play some second role to getting some of those things done ... That's more than you wanted to know probably. [laughs]

[Laughs] Uh, what do you think is the No. 1 issue facing Malibu today? And what will you do in your first year in office to tackle it?

Quality of life! The decline and the quality of life of the Malibu residents. OK? And be that ... the homeless issue, traffic on PCH, increasing crime, short term rental—I mean, pick one, OK?

You pick one!

I gotta bunch of 'em! Look, it's a—there's no magic. Somebody ... the document you sent us to schedule this interview was an interview by Mikke Pierson. And if you read that, Mikke Pierson's number one objective when he got elected was taking care of traffic on PCH. Nothing happened! Not saying it's his fault, I mean, he had the fire, a buncha—the, the program says ... "Identify the issues. You identify a plan to impact those issues. And you start workin' that plan!" OK? That plan may be able to get done in a month, may take six—I don't know! But you don't, you—if you can't bite the whole apple at once, you pick the pieces you think are the most important and you make sure you get those done, because if you don't get a couple of pieces of your plate, you're gonna be overwhelmed by this stuff. Because they're all gonna get worse. So you gotta, you gotta find solutions for 'em and you gotta make sure that you stay focused on gettin' those solutions done. So that's what I want—you know, if I get elected, the game says, "Let's pick—" and I'll let the city council pick the three or four that they think we wanna work on first and let's figure out plans to go after those things, and start executing that plan! And stay focused on it. I don't care whether you gotta do it every meeting, every, you know, we

gotta—whatever! But you gotta get it done, because not getting it done just makes your life worse.

Do you think that when Mikke and Karen are talking to me in two years and I send them our interview as the example, they'll look at it and say, "OK, there have been some real concrete changes."

If not, I, you know, probably won't be there more than two years! [laughs] Yeah, look, I ... I believe ... I can make a difference. And I believe that, and you know, part of that's ego like everybody else, but I believe that because I've done it in the past. Right? Whether it's been—I was president of the Malibu Coastal Land Conservancy, I was president of the Malibu, uh, I mean, the action network. I was a member of the board that built dark sky ordinance. Uh, I mean, I have ... for reasons unknown to me, OK, been able to at least rise to a position that I've been able to have an influence in getting things done. I'm older but I don't think I've lost any of that.