

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

Unity, community, no BS, no baggage

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

Well, I've been here five years and I've, um, been very active in the community. I was president of the Malibu Adamson House Foundation. I was president and currently vice president of the Malibu Democratic Club. I'm an active member of the Community Emergency Response Team. I'm vice chair of the Malibu Public Works Commission. I'm a regular attendee at city council meetings. You know I speak, I speak up a lot. Uh, I don't hold back. And, um, I'm—this is my community. I live here. This is the place where I live. I've always contributed and given back to the community in which I've lived regardless of where it was and, uh, now that I'm retired, I have even more time to give to the community and the most important thing for me is: I'm thinking long-term. I'm thinkin' about the future. As a father of two millennials, my whole focus for the last almost 30 years of my life has been: how can we leave this place better off than we found it? At least as good as we found it, but hopefully better off. And, um, I've spent the bulk of my professional and personal career since 1992 working on sustainability issues and environmental issues. And that's all about the future. That's not about the here and now. That's about, "What is this place gonna be like when we people, my generation, are gone?" And that's why I view it as important enough to want to disrupt my retirement, uh, and devote as much time as I can to making this the best place that it could be.

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

I think that I have a much better, um, handle on name recognition today than I did two years ago. I think that the run two years ago helped promote me, um, uh, in the public sphere. For instance, I met Mikke on the campaign trail two years ago. I think one of the highest compliments that you can be paid is for a person that you've been in, you know, semi-competition with--one, respects you enough to ask you to be his appointee to public works commission. I take that as a great honor. That means that we were successful two years ago in running a campaign where there were no recriminations, no personal, uh, um, tirades one way or the other. Personalities did not enter into the discussion. It was, it was really one of the most civil exercises and I've been in politics all my life. I spent 20 years workin' in politics. It was the most civil election I can either remember being a part of or participating in. So I think, uh, that my, I think I've increased my name recognition, uh, sufficiently. This is a very, very difficult environment in which to run a campaign. Uh, there's no personal interaction. Um, there's no mass gatherings. I've turned down several mass gatherings, people that have wanted to do things and I basically told them all the same thing and I really had, I really had to agonize over this for a while. Um, and I told them, "As much as I appreciate you wanting to do this, ah, I could not live with myself if I held an event for my potential political gain and someone got sick. Or someone died." I couldn't live with myself if I did that. As important as it is, it's not that important. So yeah. I think, uh, I think this will help get my name recognition out there, we've got a, uh, a social media campaign that we're conducting. Um, which is really about the best option that you can choose when you're strategizing how to win a campaign, uh, today, with no mass

gatherings, no meet-and-greets, no personal interaction. So we'll see. Um, it's not gonna deter me one way or the other from, uh, putting forth the things that I find are valuable in public service. And I've written books on public service, I mean, I've devoted a lot of my life to making absolutely sure that public service is viewed as a noble thing. Because I've been in public service my whole life. And I do find it noble. And to the extent to which we need to restore civility and comity, C-O-M-I-T-Y, comity, and to the extent that we need to restore confidence in both leaders and institutions. Institutions, very important thing! Um, we've gotta grab a hold of this and get it back because, as we were talking earlier, on something as critically important as public health—but public anything! Anything that has to do with citizens, anything that has to do with the public. If you don't have the confidence from the constituency, you're in trouble. And we gotta restore that. That's, that's what I aim to do.

So you mentioned, um, that you're not holding campaign events because of the virus. Um, we did notice on your website that you do have a portal for campaign donations.

Yes.

I'm wondering, without there being events, with there being a pandemic with a lot of economic stress on the community, what are you raising money for?

Well, uh, I, I have hired two, uh, young people to do, um, a social media campaign. Because I will be the first one to tell you that, at 67 years old, social media and Instagram and Facebook, which I actually—I actually really enjoy Facebook, but I don't pretend to know how to use it to my advantage. So I've got—I'm hiring people to help me get my word out to as many people as possible. Also, you have to buy things like, um, yard signs and banners, and, uh, you need to, um, be enormously careful—this is one of the first things I learned in politics—you need to be enormously careful on how you manage your finances so you don't get cross-wise with, you know, the authorities on campaign finance. You gotta hire people to keep you honest, basically. I mean, I would be honest, but I don't pretend to know all the FEC, you know, fair practices rules. And, and this stuff costs money. And at the end of the day, it all starts to add up. Uh, it's not like any of us are gonna get rich off of, uh, off of a campaign, but you do need to pay the bills if you're not wealthy—and I'm not! So, uh, I need, I need to supplement my own—I put in a certain amount of my own money, um, and I'm supplementing that with—all my donations, by the way are from friends, it's all personal friends. I'm not taking—I don't, I don't take corporate money. There are a couple of PAC donations which I take, and once again, they're political people that I know and respect. Uh, and have the same, um, feelings on public policy issues as I do. But I'm not gonna be hypocritical and take money from people, uh, that I would, you know, then say, you know, "To heck with you when your policy comes up." So I avoid that.

So I last interviewed you two years ago.

Mmhmm.

When you ran for council in 2018.

Mmhmm.

What has changed in your life since then and what have you done over the last two years to make yourself a more viable candidate?

Um, I have, uh, once again, become very active in the Community Emergency Response Team, which is an incredible opportunity to give back to your community. Uh, you're basically, you know, you're basically one step removed from a first responder. I mean, you can be called upon, uh, to be very active in a very dangerous situation. And given the environment in which we live, um, with, you know, fire season being a year-round thing, uh, will always be ... you know, threat of extreme weather events. Um, if you're called upon, ah, to be on the front line, um, that's an enormously important thing to the community. And that, for me, was spurred on by something which happened the day after the last election. Um, and, um, that's one thing that's changed. I have, uh, been very active on the public works commission, um, particularly on public works projects. Um, I am a, I am a bicycle enthusiast. I believe in, uh, public safety as well as, uh, public works. Uh, and I've advocated very strongly for, uh, on any project that we're doin', I've advocated for bicycle lanes. Uh, in fact, if you read my platform, the second thing on my platform is redesign of Pacific Coast Highway—which I live on, Pacific Coast Highway. Uh, and I have, uh, secured the assistance of a world-renowned urban architect, who's developed things all over the world! China, Hong Kong, everywhere. And I said to him, I said, "Put together what we can do. If we can secure—if I can secure, uh, the assistance of the state government, because it is a state highway, if I could get that, what can this thing look like? And how can it be improved? How can it be made safer? How can it be made more environmentally, um, um, valuable? Uh, how can we, uh, make it pedestrian friendly? How can we make it bicycle friendly? Uh, how can we reduce air pollution? How can we, um, uh, keep a run-off from going into the ocean?" And he put together—and you'll see pictures of this on my website, I have a before and after picture, and if you, if you concentrate on the stretch between Topanga Canyon and the civic center, uh, area, um, using the space that we have allotted by shrinking in the lanes a little bit, putting in a center median, uh, um, with shrubbery and trees, um, making it aesthetically more pleasing as well as more functional from the environmental standpoint and putting bicycle lanes on each side, if you can keep the bicyclists away from the cars, that's a good thing. Um, I'm not sayin' it's gonna be perfect. Um, but just as a, just as a person who bikes every single day, if I see two lines that are designated for me, I'm gonna stay in those lines. I'm gonna hope the cars stay in their lines, too. They may not. But I think the chances are better that you can keep these two separate. Um, this is not something that's gonna be done next week, next year. It may take ten years. But you gotta think long-term. And if you don't start that conversation now, then it's gonna take 20 years. You know, the journey of 1,000 miles starts with the first step.

Do you think it's realistic to put forth a proposal for a highway project when city council doesn't have any control over the public works of Pacific Coast Highway?

Yeah, and I'll tell you why. Because as we embark upon the new normal, the new era that we're in the beginning of right now, uh, we are gonna have enormous budgetary and financial constraints placed upon us. We already are. And that's going to continue. Which means that's gonna place a premium on gathering resources. It's gonna place a premium on doin' what I've

done practically my entire life. Practically every title that I've ever had in government has intergovernmental affairs attached to it. I've worked for federal government, I've worked for state government, I've worked for city government, I've worked for counties. I know how these things work. And I know how you need to pool together to enhance your position, resource-wise. We're gonna need to do that! We're gonna need somebody who, who is not afraid to get on up to Sacramento and engage the right people. And convince them that CalTrans needs to work with us to make a difference on a highway. How many sirens do you hear when you're sittin' in this building every day? I live on this highway, I can tell you. And I can tell ya it's fiercer now than it was two years ago and two years ago it's fiercer than it was two years before. So I'm, uh, I'm somewhat of an optimist that if, if you can talk to the right people and make convincing arguments, you can move things. Doesn't move quickly. Sometimes it's glacial speed. But you know what? Ya gotta start somewhere. And so yes, I believe that, I believe that the environment in which we're approaching, financial environment which we're approaching right now, demands that we do that. And I feel that there's probably nobody in this, um, in this list of candidates who's got as much experience in that area, uh, as I do.

OK. Um, the city—from my understanding—city council members do go up to Sacramento—

Mm.

The city employs a lobbyist.

Mmhmm.

The city is active in the COG. So what sets your plan apart? I mean, how would you go beyond what the city's already doing?

Because in most instances that's a, that's a, uh, problem du jour. That's a problem which is immediate that they're responding to. I'm trying to lay out a platform for the future. Yes, we're gonna have to deal with immediate problems, too. Absolutely. And we can and we will. But you gotta have a vision! You gotta have a vision for where you wanna be down the road. It's enormously important in order for this community to remain viable, sustainable, and resilient is to look down the road and say, "Where do we wanna be in ten years? Where do we wanna be in five years? How do we get there?" And the first item in my platform is formation of a citizens' visioning commission. And I had, I set up the first office of sustainable development in the federal government in 1993. Was an Al Gore initiative and he called me and asked me if I would do it. I was workin' for the U.S. Conference of Mayors at the time. I could've retired at the conference of mayors. Beautiful, wonderful job. Fun job, too! But this was a calling. I went and I set this office up and as I traveled around the country, I ran into—and particularly this was true in the Pacific Northwest, places like Seattle and Portland, I ran into communities that were busy, uh, formulating what goals they had for their city. What was important to them? But the goals had to conform with measurable output. So in other words, you had to have a way to measure it. So if you have clean air: well, there are ways to measure clean air. Clean water, because these two usually always top the list. Alright? And then you work your way, you work your way—pedestrian friendly, uh, um, bicycle trails or, or trails—I mean, you, you—and you can

span the gamut of issues. Whatever it is that's important! And it's all directed by the citizens. It's a citizens advisory group. And at the end of every year you can quantifiably measure whether you're making progress on each one of 'em. Because you got metrics. I'd say, "OK, the air's either cleaner, it's dirtier, or it's the same." And so it acts as a report card on the city council and the mayor. And it's coming directly from the citizens.

Doesn't gathering metrics cost a lot of money for a city like Malibu?

Well, it's not that you have to reinvent the statistics. It's really that you just need to, in the most instances, gather them! They exist. There are, there are organizations, there are studies, um, that abound. I'm not talkin' about creating, you know, an institute where you have to start from ground zero and build a set of, uh, quantifiable measurable statistics. I'm talkin' about, uh, goin' to National Highway Traffic Association and getting their statistics on traffic fatalities. Or goin' to a clean air organization and getting their statistics on, you know, what, what the air quality is, and hell, you could just go to the city or the county and get this stuff. So no, it doesn't—we're not creating stuff. We're utilizing what already exists.

I have one more question about your PCH plan. Um, how does it address the issue of RVs and homelessness?

Mm. I have that in a separate, ah, section of my platform. Um, and I live down right next to Las Tunas. And uh, for a while there last year, I was, on a regular basis, counting the number of RVs and cars which were stacked up alongside of the road every day. And it grew and grew and finally it got to a point where it was completely full. Couldn't put anything else on there. Um, homelessness is—I, I mean, look. I am not one, I am not a person that wants to deny public access to resources. Nobody owns these resources, they're everybody's. And everyone should have the, uh, um, ability to avail themselves of these resources. But. On the homelessness situation, we have a moral responsibility as fellow citizens to take care of those that are less vulnerable than ourselves. And if you were to take, uh, one of these properties that we now own in the city and convert it into a safe parking place, and I know Mikke has talked about this in city council, and provided opportunities for homeless people to 1) be safe, and 2) be, um, have, be able to take advantage of, um, porta-potties, sewage treatment, stuff like that, I mean, and if, if we also reach out and offer them an opportunity should they wanna avail themselves of it, of, um, trying to find employment, um, making sure that they're fed, um, if we do that, that'll solve the problem of them all stacked up on Corral Canyon, which is, which is kinda the more favorite place now. Um, and we can have reasonable, um, reasonable parking restrictions. We're finding that out. I mean, we've done it along PCH down below Topanga. We put, you know, no parking restrictions on there from 12-2 and 2-4, seen a mass exodus, you know, across the street, ah, we're gonna do the same thing over here. Um, so there are ways to control—but, you know, um, we can't, we're not gonna put gates up on all the entrances to Malibu and force you to have to have a passport to get in. That's just not gonna happen, nor should it happen. So we gotta work with what we got. People are gonna come here! Why wouldn't you? It, it is absolutely paradise as long as I'm concerned. I mean, you're talkin' to a kid from Philadelphia, you know, I mean, I died and gone to heaven here. And other people feel like that, particularly in a time when a lot of people are not working. So, so it's one of those things. We're gonna have to get creative with

our solutions. We're gonna have to have real solutions to real problems. You just—"miraculous"—they're not gonna go away.

Uh, I know you were endorsed by Mikke Pierson and he also appointed you to the public works commission.

Right.

What would you have done differently if you had been elected in 2018? Compared to Mikke. Because obviously it seems like you two are aligned in a lot of ways.

I think Mikke and I have a really, really good high agreement quotient. Um, we talk a lot, um, and I do the best that I can to give him, um, you know, my feedback on public works issues. And we talk about other things, as well. So I think, for instance, one of the things which he really kinda got banged on the head for was doin' that letter, alright? Now, was it the most artfully worded, uh, letter? Probably not. He'll probably be the first one to tell you that, as well. But the fact of the matter is this: it goes hand in hand with what I was talkin' about before. We're gonna need the resources of the county. We're gonna need the resources of the state. We're gonna need the resources of the federal government to help us together work through some of these issues. Or else we're gonna need to raise taxes sky high on everybody that even steps a foot in Malibu. Um, and, and I think that Mikke did, under the circumstances, exactly what any good leader—and all of our city council people are leaders, they've all been elected to lead—and he did what any good leader would do under the circumstances. And just, you know, sharpen the skills on the letter writing next time, and nevertheless, the bigger issue is, ah, I thought that he was attacked for even doing it, like, "Why should we work with other communities?" No, you gotta get real. We have to. Nobody can go it alone right now. We're all in this together. We really are. As a society. And there's so much divisiveness in society, uh, from, from the top to the lowest levels of, you know, organizations in government. There's so much divisiveness, we gotta get over this. We gotta work our way through this because it's tearing the society apart. And, uh, and I would think that, um ... ah, you know, is there—I can't think of, I can't think of an issue where I deviated ... um, and I wrote a letter to the editor just last week, you know, on that marathon meeting that was held the other night. Seven hours! I wrote the letter at, uh, letter to the editor at 1:30 in the morning on Tuesday. As they were wrappin' up. Public policy—and I used to teach public policy. I've worked it and I've taught it. Public policy is not easy. It's like sausage-making. Alright? It looks ... if you saw it bein' made, you would never eat it. But when you get in the store, it tastes pretty good—and you cook it up, tastes pretty good. And, um, and, and so ... the way that they worked through, in painstaking fashion, an issue which obviously is enormously important to our community, obviously. It's been kickin' around for years. I think it's a real testament to the fact that you've got a city council that actually is yearning to get to the right position. And that's a positive thing. That's a good thing. We need more of that.

Then I guess that leads me to: if you are aligned with Mikke in your feelings, do you see yourself as a candidate who wants to make a lot of changes or do you see yourself as a status quo candidate?

Oh no, I'm not status quo. If you look, if you look at the, uh, seven items that I've put forward, I'm, I'm thinking long-term on most everything. The short-term stuff, uh, there's no way that I'm gonna let myself get hung up on the short-term stuff, we'll deal with that, as well. But I wanna focus down the road. So we're not just makin' it up as we go along. Um, I think that, uh, well, I think you just need to read through the seven items that I put forth there and, uh, everything is directing my energies towards what I said before: leaving this place in better shape than we found it.

Going back to the Mikke letter ...

Mmhmm.

Council members are more and more becoming targets of national and local disdain.

[Laughs]

There's a lot of skepticism that's out there about the motivations of council members. Would you feel ready to field the level of potential hate that council members have come to expect from the role at this point?

Oh yeah, absolutely, because I don't have a doubt at all—all the experience that I've had and the years that I've been involved in this type of thing, if you can't take ... if you can't take the heat, get outta the kitchen. I wouldn't be doin' this if I was, you know, a shrinking violet. Um, and, and these things that I'm talkin' about, I'm putting my—first of all, I'm putting my reputation, my, um, my thought processes, uh, everything that I value in life: I'm puttin' it all on the table. Everybody that's running is, if they have a platform. You're puttin' it out there! And you're puttin' it out there for scrutiny and you're puttin' it out there for ridicule and you're puttin' it out there for all, all sorta nasty things that can happen. But you're putting it out there for good. And if you really believe it, you stick with it. And if you stick with it, you know, it may take a long time, it may happen after you're gone. But if it's the legacy that you leave your kids and the future generations, it's all worth it.

The city manager is predicting there's gonna be a crisis in the budget next year because of the economic downturn caused by the pandemic. Where would you propose to cut from the city's budget?

You know, I was senior economics council to a United States senator on the U.S. Budget Committee, Senate Budget Committee for six years. I know a little bit about budgets. Those budgets were a little bigger than these. And we didn't have to balance them. Budgeting is really not that sophisticated an exercise. You got income. You got outgo. And the city level, you gotta make 'em whole. On a federal level, it just doesn't matter. But you gotta, you gotta match the income with the outgo and in the process, in order to get there, you're gonna have to make some really, really tough decisions. They're tough decisions because you're not cutting fat out of the budget, you're affecting real people, you know, real people's lives and, you know, careers. Um, but tough decisions are gonna have to be made. And, um, hopefully, if you have a forward-looking approach, at some point, you begin to reap the benefits from that. But look, this immediate future is gonna be really tough. There's no doubt about it. It's gon' be tough for a

while. That, that in itself is why we need to work with other units of government. We need, we, you know, it's like we all need to come together and be on the same team now, because we're all gonna be hurtin'. All of us. And that's why, when Mikke writes that letter, he's speakin' for Malibu, but he's speakin' for other cities, too. He's saying, "Come on guys, let's, let's get together and see how we can maximize our potential by utilizing other people's resources too, in a collaborative way," and, and that's the coming together part, and we're so divisive right now, we need this in the worst, worst, way. And I'm hoping—you know, I'm an optimist—I'm hoping that after November, we will be in a position of collaboration instead of the infighting.

But if a cut did have to be made—

Yeah.

I mean, is there something--do you see it from a city staff, uh, angle, which is sort of what they've been working on? Do you see it from city services that could be cut or, or pared down?

You know, there are two types of people when in leadership positions, um, they diverge. Some people make decisions impetuously and some people cogitate and think about things in a measured way. I'm the latter. Until I sit down and I take a fine tooth comb through this budget and people make their presentations on why this way versus that way, I can't say. I literally am not qualified right now. I'm not sufficiently well-versed in all the options. And anybody who, um, who argues impetuously, you know, a lot of times the decisions look good at night but they don't look so good in the light of day. So I'm not even gonna venture, uh, a guess as to where you cut. But it's gonna be painful, and I been through this before, and on a large, large scale, um, you have to have a measured response, you have to have all the facts in front of you, you gotta know that I've got this decision versus that decision and you have to rely on your ability to make the correct call.

Um, this is a question that we're asking all the candidates: Do you think it's reasonable for Malibu to increase its sheriff's department budget, uh, while—

I'm sorry, to increase what?

Its sheriff's department budget?

Oh, OK.

Especially consider that, uh, it's been decreased at a LA-level and with the added scrutiny the department is currently under?

Yeah, uh, whoo! That's a tough one. We need to increase our police presence here. Period. We need an increase and whether it comes from CHP, whether it comes from private sources, whether we double the VOP, um, budget or, or some combination of all of 'em, we need to figure out a way to have more of a presence in Malibu. And, um, given what's goin' on with the LA County Sheriff situation right now ... I don't know what the answer is but I know—I know where we have to go, but I don't know how we get there. And where we need, where we have to

go is we need more of a presence. And, um, ah, a lot of this stuff is gonna have to shake itself out, um, because the budgetary problems are gonna affect across the board. Gonna affect everybody. It's gonna affect the county, the cities, it's gonna affect the state. At some point, it's even gonna affect the federal government. Um, and, um, that's why collaboration is so important. I can't stress it enough, it is, it is just so readily apparent to me what we need to do, which is, we need to all get in a room, sit down, roll our sleeves up and figure out how we get through this mess together. I don't have an answer. Alls I know is—I would, by the way, and I have, uh, spoken about this already, I would support, um, doubling our VOP program. Um, and that's only from the standpoint of at least trying to make a dent in ... in the lawlessness which is going on, just, just parking on the, just parking on the side of the road. I mean, I travel the highway everyday. And on the weekends, I'm on a bicycle or a motorcycle. I'm only on two wheels. And you know, I see people ... I can't tell you the number of times I've come down PCH goin' westward and I get to around Paradise Cove and I see people runnin' across the street with their kids in tow, blankets wrapped around, boogie boards, and they're grabbin' the kids and they're runnin' across PCH! That, this is a disaster waiting to happen. We gotta take the cars off PCH, we gotta allow those people to live and need PCH for parking, we gotta get a permit system from them, we gotta put, we gotta put people, if we're gettin', you know, fifteen million people per year in here as visitors, we gotta figure out a way to park 'em. And then we oughta institute shuttle service to the beach. I said that two years ago. Um, and I'll say it even stronger now because we're gettin' more people now than we did even two years ago. Um, but, um ... but we have to, we have to take care of this problem. I mean, it is above all a public safety issue.

It's generally acknowledged in Malibu that the Woolsey Fire and its response were mishandled.

Mmm.

Do you agree and who do you think was responsible for mishandling the fire?

The worst thing about the Woolsey Fire, aside from the fact of all the destruction of the homes, the worst thing is that the lesson that was learned was, if a fire comes and you wanna save your house, you gotta do it. There could not be a worse lesson! There could not be a more dangerous lesson! We only by the grace of God avoided a catastrophe on PCH because the winds didn't blow one way instead of the other. Was it mishandled? Yeah, it was. And um, and I'm, I have offered, in my platform—heh, another one you need to read—the formation of a California fire reserve. We don't have enough resources. Especially now. I mean, look at the number of fires in the western part of the United States. We don't have enough resources to fight this. So we've gotta train people, professionally train people because God, I love those guys that were out there protecting their neighborhoods. Love 'em. They're heroes! Absolute heroes. But, oh my God, look at the, look at the risks! Look at the danger! While we have fire trucks sittin' around. Uh, whose fault was that? Ah, I don't know how you ... I don't know how you blame it on anything other than a lack of preparation for the worst scenario. I mean, every, every organization I've ever worked in in government, um, you do scenario-playing. And you go from the worst to the best. And you have options for each. You prepare for them. Um, we

weren't prepared. Uh, and we weren't prepared for the confluence of events which forced, you know, an inordinate amount of people to the north and left us kinda high and dry and then we get people from Arizona and Nevada, Texas ... I, ehhhh. In their defense, you're not gonna take a firetruck up a canyon unless you know you gon' be able to get out. Ah, I mean, it was just ... and then I do think that there was, um, lax communication on the part of the city. Um, a command and control center should've been here. I mean, Pepperdine was safe enough for everyone to tell the kids that were left to hunker down and shelter in place. It was good enough for the kids to shelter in place, it would've been good enough place to have a command and control center, um, because distance away from—I, I mean, there's nothing that beats being right in the center of the action so you can appropriately gauge how bad it is. It's just, you know, bein' on the spot. That's my humble, humble, uh, belief. So, um, so I think there's plenty enough blame to go around but I think maybe, uh, once again, this is something we're gonna have to work with the state on. A California fire reserve corps. Uh, just like the national guard. Um, that'd be something. Have to go to Sacramento and have to sit down with the governor's people. And you just have to make your case. And you know what, you do it over and over and over and over again. Until it sinks in.

Do you see the fire reserve corps modeled somewhat like CERT or more ... like you said, national guard, I mean, how, how many resources are they gonna have? What's the training gonna look like?

Well, I think initially you start out with 20,000 statewide and you train them to fight fires. I, I see it way beyond CERT. Um, I mean, we, we need to increase our resources to deal with the next one. And uh, we need to, to increase our preparation for the next one, I think there's some of that has been done, uh, the extent to which hopefully we've learned from the last one. Um, but I think the fire reserve corps is, uh, is necessary. Uh, I would think that it would, that it's not just gonna be seen as a Malibu idea. With three quarters of the state above Fresno on fire, I mean, we, we, we gotta, we gotta come up with—these fires are inevitable at this point. I mean, climate change is real and it's happening. It's happening right in front of our eyes. You don't need to be a scientist, you don't need to be a meteorologist. Alls you gotta do is you just gotta look at what's going on. And some of us, you know, I mean, I've given over 100 lectures around the world as climate change messenger, ah, for 20 years now. I mean, it's here. And we gotta deal with it. And just parenthetically, I'll say, we, we can't afford to have, uh, climate deniers on the city council. Period.

Um ... so between the fire reserve corps idea, which sounds like a very, uh ... how would I put it ... you're envisioning a program with more people in it than people who live in Malibu.

Yeah, but it's a statewide program.

Sure, so you're thinking on a statewide level. Obviously, you have a lot of federal experience—a ton of federal experience! Why run for Malibu city council and not shoot for something bigger and broader at this point in your life?

At this point in my life, um, as much as I, ah, have continued to have a thirst for being involved in the community that I'm in, ah, I don't have any desire to go to Sacramento or Washington, D.C. I spent 22 years in D.C. I worked in Sacramento for a year and half and I couldn't get outta there fast enough. Um, too far from the ocean. This is my—this is where I live. I'm very comfortable, uh, in my existence here. Whether or not I'm on city council, I'm comfortable. Uh, some people look at me and say, "You out of your mind?!" Especially after a seven-hour marathon the other night. They said, "You wanna do this? I mean, you're not being forced to—you actually wanna do this?!" And I say, "Yeah," because 1) it's what I know how to do and I wanna, I wanna bring the experience and the skillset that I think could place me apart from all the other candidates. We all have our strengths. Um, I wanna put it to good use and place—I am ... like I said, I'll, I'm from Philadelphia. This is like I died and went to heaven. You know? I mean, I want—I wanna be here. I don't wanna be anywhere else. I'm 67 years old, I have no illusions of grandeur that I'm gonna, you know, start a political career at this point. That's what I said to people. I said, "This is not a career move, this is a passion." This is a passion ... it's a passion of wanting to contribute to the people and the place that surrounds you.

So you wrote on your website—

Mmhmm? [Laughs] Uh-oh! Gonna get quoted now.

I'm quoting here that "resolving the separation of our schools into our own district is critically important." Uh, how realistic do you think it is to have, uh, an independent Malibu school district with enrollment fallen as low as it has?

Boy, it's gettin' tougher and tougher for sure. Uh, this is another one of those instances, uh, Ben Allen, by the way, who is on the, ah, Santa Monica school board and is a state senator. Ben Allen and I are really good friends. And we actually together, we, uh, taught public policy at Santa Monica College several years ago. And I filled in for him a couple times and he filled in for me a couple times, so, ah. We need, we need to just continue to carve out a niche for us. Had a long talk with Craig Foster a couple weeks ago. And he's got some ideas about, um, training people for the jobs in the 21st century. You know, making our school system so specialized as to be of enormous value. Um, I don't know how to resolve that issue, by the way. I don't pretend to know how to resolve that issue. I do know that, uh, that we need to continue the discussions.

Why, why is it important for Malibu to have its own district at this point?

I think because the citizens of Malibu have spoken. Uh, and uh, we, we just may have some ideas about how to do things which we think are better than other people's ideas. School systems around the nation are very localized things. And, um, if people feel more comfortable with decisions about the schools in which they're going to send their kids, uh, being made at a local level, I think that's something which has a real history to it in this country. Uh, so people seem to believe that that's just the way it should be. And if that's, and if that's the way they feel, then we ought to do everything we can to try to accommodate, uh, the desires of people that live here that one of the most important decisions they make in their entire lives is where you send your kids to school. So, uh, that's why it's important

Uh, so another one of your seven proposals on your website—

Oh, you have looked at them!

—has to do with mayor—with Malibu becoming a strong mayor city. You mentioned, um, that you're interested in debating the possibility. Based on my understanding, only five of California's 482 cities are strong mayor cities. So do you see it as something that's viable and worthwhile for a debate?

Oh, I see a lot of things that are viable for a debate. I think that, uh, I think that, uh, what distinguishes a representative democracy—not a democracy, a representative democracy, which is what we are—what distinguishes our system of government and, you know, Churchill said democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others. Um, I think that, um, that debate and discussion about how you want your government to represent you is, is American as apple pie. So is it worth a debate? Um, yeah! It is. And you know what? Rather than act—remember I talked about impetuous versus cogitation?—rather than act impetuously and just say, “Well, we don't like the city manager, we're gonna get rid of all ... we're gonna have a new form of government! We're gonna have a strong mayor!” and everybody goes, “Oh, that sounds great.” No, no, no, no, no. Let's put it before my visioning commission and let's have experts come in and tell us the pros and cons. There's a reason why most small communities in California are, um, city manager council forms of government. And there's a reason why five of them are, uh, strong mayor. Well, let's see what works. Let's see what fits. Is this what you ha—because it makes, it makes it sound good on paper. But when you get in, when you get i—the devil's always in the details. When you get down in the weeds, it may not be for you. But at least, we're, we're, we're ... I think there's a crisis of confidence in all communities across this country right now. And I think they just, they just don't feel they're bein' listened to. So you bring the citizens into the process. You don't let them make all the decisions, that's why you have elected officials. But you involve them in the discussion. And you have the kinda discussion which, which makes people think. And therefore it's not an impetuous decision. It's not just off the top of your head, “that sounds good, yeah, yeah, yeah.” Or if you're angry and a lot of things sounds good when you're angry. Um, so, everybody, cooler heads prevail, calm down, we'll have civility, we'll have comity (I mentioned that before), um, and we'll work our way through pros and cons. And then, and then, our elected officials will make a decision. And you can even throw 'em out or support 'em. But that's the way it should work. That's the way a representative democracy should work. And you know what, I just wanna add one other thing here: um, as you know, I, I've written a column for, I don't know, about the last eight months or so with Don Schmitz, uh, “From the Left” and “From the Right.” You would not believe how many comments, both, Don and I, both—and we're as different as night and day—we probably don't agree on a whole lot. But we're civil. Civil arguments. We have our disagreements and there's no punchin' back and forth. You know, when we, when I came up with this idea for Arnold, I wanted it to be, look, we won't see what each other is written until it's published. Because I don't wanna get into this chain of ignorance, SNL parody, right, back and forth. We never attacked one another. We stayed our positions. And we do the best job we can of trying to be forceful, but informative. You wouldn't believe the number of people come up to me and say, “You know, I really like the fact that you guys aren't fightin' each other. It's really interesting.” Don, and, ask Don! He gets the same. That's what we need, more of that.

City council takes up a lot of time.

Mmhmm.

Can you afford to be on council at this point?

I got nothin' but time, I'm retired! [Laughs]

[Laughs]

No, but look. I do a lot of writing. Um, I'm very, uh, active, um, as I said, you know, kayaking, bicycling, motorcycling, writing, I, I write a lot. Um, this is, this is, uh, I thought about this, this is the way I choose to spend what time I got. So yeah! The answer is yeah.

OK, this is the last question. What do you think is the No. 1 issue facing Malibu today—it's a two-parter—and what will you do in your first year in office to tackle it?

Hmm ... I think the most pressing issue facing the city is gonna be, um, budget and finance. Because, you know, at the end of the day, your, heh, your government, your community is only gonna be as strong as the resources that you put into it and you can only afford the resources that you can afford. And very, very tough decisions are gonna need to be made. What can I do, you know, after army first year in office, what will I have, ah, um, you know, felt good about doing? Putting my ideas on the table. And seeing if we can structure a system that engages the public, thinks down the road and may not come to fruition maybe even, you know, after I'm gone. Um, but that's what's—if you, i—if you—and you've read my seven points, that's what's important to me. And it should be important to all of us. Because hopefully we're gonna die before it gets here. They, they're gonna be here and they're gonna inherit what we've left them and we damn well better do a good job at leaving them something that they can work with. And um, I, I'm, uh, hopefully optimistic that through all the din and all the fog of war, heh, that surrounds our, you know, political system right now, we will eventually do the right thing.