

# BOS | League of Pissed Off Voters November 2020 Questionnaire

Hello candidates! Thank you for filling out the League's questionnaire. Please use THIS FORM rather than formatting it into a Word document or PDF. If you have any questions, you can contact us at [TheLeagueSF@gmail.com](mailto:TheLeagueSF@gmail.com).

## Candidate Info

Name

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Office Sought

District 3 Supervisor

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Website

<https://www.aaronpeskin2020.com/>

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Where is one place in San Francisco you'll want to go celebrate when the pandemic is over?

The South End Rowing Club.

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Tell us about yourself.

Why are you running for this office?

If elected, it would be my 5th term (4th full term), and final term in public office after over a quarter century of public service to the City and County of San Francisco. While our City has faced many challenges in that time, the challenges presented by COVID-19 are among the most severe and consequential. It is my chief pursuit to apply my experience and knowledge to helping ensure that tenants remain housed, that our unsheltered neighbors have pipelines to housing, that our public schools adapt to rapidly evolving needs, and that San Francisco emerges from this crisis in good enough shape to tackle the even larger challenges that our City and planet will face over the next several decades.

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Why do you want the League of Pissed Off Voters' endorsement?

Since its inception, I don't think I've never not had the League's endorsement, and it's one that I've always held in the highest esteem. The research and political acuity that go into the League's iconic guides is well known, and I think it's one of the more reliable - if not the most reliable - voter guides in the City. I promise I'm not just saying that out of flattery. It would be an honor to have the League's endorsement again.

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What are your values and how did you get them?

I am the son of two progressive mental health professionals and teachers who worked in the community to take care of folks. They were activists for civil rights when I was growing up and taught me the values of social justice, fighting for equity and taking care of our neighbors and community. I went to college at the notoriously "Left" UC Santa Cruz and emerged with a job at the Trust for Public Land, where I applied those values to achieving social and environmental justice - and ultimately justice for indigenous tribes of the Great Basin watershed region - through the regulation, sale and other use of land and water rights. The rest is borne of a deep love of the City and County of San Francisco, a place that has been my home for 3 decades, and as many decades of relationships and representation of some of the City's most vibrant, eclectic, beautiful and diverse individuals and communities.

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What communities do you represent and how do they hold you accountable?

I represent the entire City but am directly elected from the great neighborhoods of District 3 (Chinatown, North Beach, Russian/Nob/Telegraph Hills, Polk Gulch and the parts of the Tenderloin). Individuals and organizations with whom I have a 20+ year history hold me accountable every day and we (myself and my incredible staff) have close working relationships with all of them. At the end of the day, the voters also hold me accountable when I run for office, as I have done several times in the past.

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What three endorsements are you most proud of?

Thus far: San Francisco Tenants Union, San Francisco Labor Council, Sierra Club

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What for-profit or non-profit boards do you serve on, including political organizations?

I'm the co-founder with my wife of Great Basin Land & Water, a non-profit environmental organization that works with Native American tribes to repatriate their land & water rights. While I've been the President of a neighborhood organization and Chair of the Democratic Party in the past, I don't presently serve on any other non-governmental bodies, boards or political organizations.

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What local and state commissions and policy bodies have you served on -- currently or in the past?

In addition to the SF Board of Supervisors, the Bay Conservation and Development Commission for most of the last 20 years, the Golden Gate Bridge Board of Directors, the SF Bay Restoration Authority, the San Francisco County Transportation Authority (of which I've been the Chair for the past several years), and the California Coastal Commission. I've also been a member of almost every Committee of the Board of Supervisors and currently serve as the Chair of the Land Use & Transportation Committee and the Vice Chair (and former Chair) of the Government Audit & Oversight Committee.

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### Local Issues

Do you support San Francisco Employees' Retirement System (SFERS) fully divesting from fossil fuels within three years and holding SFERS accountable at the ballot if they do not divest?

Yes

No

Do you support San Francisco purchasing PG&E assets to create public power in San Francisco?

Yes

No

Do you support the closure of 850 Bryant, jails #3 and #4?

Yes

No

Did you support SB 50 (Senator Wiener’s Zoning Bill) as written?

Yes

No

If not, are there amendments that would make you support SB50?

Amendments that would (1) hold communities of concern (or “sensitive communities”) harmless and not repeat the shame of redevelopment of old, (2) actually get truly suburban communities like San Mateo County to do their share of housing development, and (3) incentivize affordable housing (or municipally-owned social housing) instead of market rate housing.

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Do you support congestion pricing for the downtown core?

Yes

No

Do you support creating a Public Bank in San Francisco?

Yes

No

If Costa Hawkins was repealed at the state level, would you actively support legislation enacting vacancy control in San Francisco?

Yes

No

Do you support a baseline percentage of 40% of affordable housing in developments when negotiating the number of housing units?

Yes

No

Do you support requiring 100% affordable housing on public land?

Yes

No

If not, under what circumstances would you support allowing a percentage or all market-rate housing?

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Have you previously and/or will you in the future accepted donations from any law enforcement officers or associations?

Yes

No

If yes, please explain why.

The only institutional donation that I have ever received from any law enforcement organization was \$250.00 from the SF POA in 2004. I have not solicited or accepted any donations from any other law enforcement organization and the SF POA spent \$10,000.00 on an independent expenditure to attempt to defeat me in 2015. I have received a handful of donations from friends of mine in law enforcement over the years including SFPD officers. I will not take and have not taken any donations from law enforcement organizations other than the \$250 mentioned above 16 years ago but I do have a few friends that I respect that happen to be in law enforcement who have and remain welcome to contribute to my campaigns.

What percentage of the SFPD budget do you think should be reallocated towards housing, homeless services, social workers, health, and education?

100

Would you support legislation to implement the Budget Analyst's recommendation to adopt a more efficient weekly staffing schedule for the SFPD? (Recommendation 2.2 here: [https://sfbos.org/sites/default/files/BA\\_Report\\_PA\\_of\\_San\\_Francisco\\_Police\\_Department\\_061218.pdf](https://sfbos.org/sites/default/files/BA_Report_PA_of_San_Francisco_Police_Department_061218.pdf))

Yes

No

Who are you supporting for US Representative, District 12?

Nancy Pelosi

Who are you supporting for State Senate, District 11?

No Endorsement as of yet

Who are you supporting for District 1 Supervisor?

Connie Chan

Who are you supporting for District 3 Supervisor?

Me :)

Who are you supporting for District 5 Supervisor?

Dean Preston

Who are you supporting for District 7 Supervisor?

Myrna Melgar

Who are you supporting for District 9 Supervisor?

Hillary Ronen

Who are you supporting for District 11 Supervisor?

Ahsha Safai

Who are you supporting for Board of Education?

Kevine Boggess

Who are you supporting for Community College Board?

Shannel Williams

Who are you supporting for BART Board, District 9?

Bevan Dufty

Do you support the charter amendment to create a Workforce Education and Recovery Fund for City College (WERF)?

Yes

No

Do you support “Vote 16” the SF charter amendment that authorizes youths aged 16 and 17 to vote in municipal elections?

Yes

No

Do you support the charter amendment to allow non-citizens to serve on boards, commissions, and advisory bodies?

Yes

No

Do you support the charter amendment creating the Office of the Public Advocate?

Yes

No

Do you support the charter amendment creating a Public Works Commission, Sanitation and Streets Commission, and Sanitation and Streets Department?

Yes

No

Do you support the charter amendment establishing term limits for City boards, commissions and bodies?

Yes

No

Do you support the charter amendment creating the Sheriff's Department Oversight Board and Inspector General?

Yes

No

Do you support the charter amendment to remove the minimum police staffing requirement and require the Police Department to submit a report and recommendation regarding police staffing levels?

Yes

No

Do you support the ballot measure to increase the gross receipts tax on businesses with a greater than 100:1 ratio of the pay of their highest-paid employee to the median pay of their SF employees?

Yes

No

Do you support the gross receipts ballot measure proposed by the Board of Supervisors (Yee, Haney, Peskin, Fewer) [File No. 200648]?

Yes

No

Do you support the gross receipts ballot measure proposed by Mayor London Breed [File No. 200645]?

Yes

No

Do you support the ballot measure authorizing development of up to 10,000 affordable rental units in the City?

Yes

No

Do you support California Proposition 15, Tax on Commercial and Industrial Properties for Education and Local Government Funding Initiative?

Yes

No

Do you support California Proposition 21, Local Rent Control Initiative (Costa-Hawkins changes)?

Yes

No

Do you support California Proposition 22, App-Based Drivers as Contractors and Labor Policies Initiative (AB5 Referendum)?

Yes

No

Do you Support California Proposition 25, Replace Cash Bail with Risk Assessments Referendum (Cash Bail Referendum)?

Yes

No

March 2020 Election

Who did you support for Superior Court Judge?

Evangelista, Tong, Singh

Who did you support for DCCC?

I endorsed the entire Social Justice Dems slate

Did you support March 2020's Prop D, a tax on vacant storefronts?

Yes

No

Did you support March 2020's Prop E, limits on office development?

Yes

No

November 2019 Election

Who did you support for District Attorney?

Chesa Boudin

Who did you support for District 5 Supervisor?

Dean Preston

November 2018 Election

Did you support November 2018's Prop C "Our City Our Home" tax on gross receipts of businesses to fund homeless services?

Yes

No

#### June 2018 Election

Did you support June 2018's Prop F "Tenant's Right to Counsel"?

Yes

No

Did you support June 2018's Prop H "Arm Police With Tasers"?

Yes

No

#### Past Elections

Did you support 2016's Prop D "Let's Elect Our Elected Officials" to have special elections to fill vacancies on the Board of Supervisors?

Yes

No

Did you support 2014's Prop G, the anti-speculation tax?

Yes

No

Short Answer (You don't have to write a novel.)

What do you think is the best way to address San Francisco's culture of political corruption?

When we talk about corruption we're talking largely about the pervasive culture of pay-to-play that has been the norm in San Francisco and across all politics for far too long. I've made many efforts over the course of my career to provide transparency to the culture of play-to-play and to outright prohibit activities that are a breeding ground for corruption. Most recently I've passed an overhaul of San Francisco's' campaign finance laws called the Anti-Corruption and Accountability Ordinance which included additional disclosures around so-called "behested payments," but did not go as far as I'd intended relative to the regulation of major donors to SuperPACs. I also successfully passed an amendment to the City Charter requiring that appointees to policy bodies step down from those positions of power in order to run for political office, an area that had long been rife with favoritism and bribery.

What we're seeing more recently in San Francisco, as no fewer than 3 department heads have either been charged by federal authorities or removed from public service, is on some level a healthy reckoning and levying of consequences for still-unfolding abuses of power and the public trust. Our City Attorney has done a more than capable job of investigating those abuses and complying with federal authorities in their own investigations. I believe that the San Francisco Ethics Commission probably has a greater role to play that includes holding public hearings and enforcing against corruption, and it's a disservice to their stature that they've been relegated to the field of adjudicating font sizes on campaign posters from a half decade ago. I also believe that it is the role of the Board of Supervisors to hold hearings and publicly interrogate City staff and department heads about potential abuses of power, which has been my prerogative in my last term and as Chair of the Government Audit and Oversight Committee, where we held multiple hearings on the Millenium Tower, on the fraught JC DeCaux contract, and on the Transbay Terminal that actually resulted in City officials and contractors effectively being run out of town. That work must continue, and we must have the full collaboration of City staff and elected officials across the spectrum to empower the Board and allow the public to have the utmost oversight and accountability.

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In the midst of a homelessness crisis, how can the City and County of San Francisco improve the effectiveness of our city's homelessness and supportive housing services?

As I write this, I'm working on legislation to expand protections for renters during COVID-19 and stave off a new wave of displacement of long-term and low-income San Franciscans, including taking San Francisco's largest landlord to task for misappropriation of a \$3.6M PPP loan while tens of thousands of San Franciscans are out of work and struggling to pay rent.

Keeping people housed is fundamental to "Housing First" solutions to homelessness. Over my decades-long public career, I have stood up to speculators and held the corporate rental industry and powerful large companies like Airbnb and AAU to account through legislation and litigation, removing incentives to hold units off the market and securing tens of millions of dollars for affordable housing projects. I've secured the most meaningful reform of SRO legislation in decades by extending just cause eviction protections to all SRO tenants. In recent months, I authored Rent Freeze legislation prohibiting rent increases during COVID-19, "Shelter In Peace" legislation to mitigate construction impacts to tenants Sheltering in Place, and co-sponsored Supervisor Preston's legislation to prohibit eviction of tenants for non-payment of back-rent due to financial losses suffered as a result of COVID-19.

I've also advocated for years and finally won approval for a new Navigation Center in my District at 880 Post, which will also provide workforce development opportunities for Transitional-Aged Youth. As we learned that people experiencing homelessness would be disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, I joined several of my colleagues to push the Executive Branch to spend funds that the Board had almost unanimously appropriated to house the homeless in the City's vacant hotels. Amid a spike in homelessness in the Tenderloin, Tendernob and Lower Polk neighborhoods, I authored a memorandum directed at the Department of Public Health and the Mayor's Office for humane solutions to this ongoing crisis, which I encourage folks to read here:

[https://sfbos.org/sites/default/files/Memo\\_on\\_Lower\\_Polk\\_Response\\_to\\_Homelessness.pdf](https://sfbos.org/sites/default/files/Memo_on_Lower_Polk_Response_to_Homelessness.pdf)

Over the past several months, I've worked closely with my colleagues and stakeholders around a proposal for the November ballot to once and for all "unlock" \$300M per year in Prop C funds. I strongly encourage you all to support the Board's progressive tax measure this November.

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How would you expand checks and balances in regard to mayoral appointments?

I don't think a lot of people realize just how strong our Executive Branch is in San Francisco. The fact that there are 11 Supervisors and just one Mayor lends to the perception that these branches of government are equal, when in fact this is a strong Mayor town. Over the past year, my staff and I mapped out the qualifications and appointment authority for every policy body in San Francisco. The vast majority are controlled by the Mayor, either because they are entirely or majority comprised of Mayoral appointees, and only subject to confirmation by the Board of Supervisors in limited circumstances. There are many ways to provide additional checks and balances, one of which is equal appointment authority across all policy bodies with a tie-breaker seat appointed by a separate independent appointment authority like the City Attorney or District Attorney, or a generally independent authority like the Controller. The current system wherein the Mayor alone hires and fires department heads while controlling the vast majority of seats on the City's policy bodies creates unfortunate and untenable situations where the Board of Supervisors' only route for holding massive agencies like MTA accountable is to reject individual Mayoral appointees to the MTA Board. 2016's Prop L (split 4-3 MTA Board appointments) was one of the mildest and most reasonable measures of the past 20 years to be sunk by association with more aggressive accountability measures, and if we brought it back today it would almost certainly pass.

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Would you propose any rezoning or other policy changes to increase housing -- particularly affordable housing -- while protecting against the displacement of current residents?

Yes. In fact, over the past 20 years, I've helped negotiate and co-signed every single community-led upzoning of the City, all of which involved community processes which mitigated the displacement of current residents and helped re-establish non-profit community serving institutions. One of my first acts back in office in 2016 was a Citywide rezoning to allow the construction of Accessory Dwelling Units across San Francisco, which had been anathema to the majority of Supervisors when I'd tried to pass that policy in 2004 and when Terrence Hallinan had proposed it before my service on the Board. That was followed quickly by a rezoning that provided for the construction of ADUs citywide in new construction, which is tantamount to the elimination of single family home zoning in San Francisco. I've since fought to preserve the unique structure of San Francisco's ADU program that allows these ADUs to actually be rent controlled new construction, and State legislation like AB 68 has unfortunately deprived SF of much of that discretion and chipped away at our pioneering local program to inhibit rent control. In 2016, I also led with my then-colleague Supervisor Jane Kim to restructure our inclusionary/affordable housing law to require higher percentages of on-site affordable housing in new construction, and again, I've pushed back against State legislation (most recently SB 1085) seeking to undermine San Francisco's affordable housing requirements in favor of deregulated market rate housing production. In 2018, my office was the lead co-sponsor and co-author of Supervisor Fewer's Proposition E to fast track 100% affordable housing and teacher housing on public sites, which was followed just last week by trailing legislation to allow height increases for additional affordable housing in these projects across the City, including in westside districts that have long resisted the production of new housing in favor of exclusionary zoning.

In my own District, which is one of the densest (if not the densest) in the City, the goal has been the preservation of rent controlled housing from new and innovative threats like short-term rentals and corporate rentals that tend to take this housing off the market. My policy work around AirBnB, Sonder and other corporate rentals, and AAU is referenced above and widely in the press. Going forward, I believe that we can allow for additional density Citywide paired with strict demolition controls and a rental registry or housing inventory. In 2018, I put forward legislation that sought to make it more difficult to demolish existing, renter-occupied housing, while also providing a fast track and height and bulk bonus for projects that sought to add more units of housing on a given lot. I think we bit off a bit more than we could chew with that policy, but there's merit in increasing density in exclusionary zones and issuing exemptions to height and bulk limitations and I expect to bring that aspect of the policy back in the years ahead. Of course, the other tool for inhibiting the displacement of tenants is a rental registry or housing inventory, and I am actively working with my colleagues to advance that policy, and have publicly stated my desire for a residential vacancy tax.

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If you're elected, what racial justice policies will you push for?

As the Supervisor representing one of the most vibrant and vital Chinatowns in the country, I am committed to taking my cues from that community. This means ensuring that the voices of Chinese residents in San Francisco are adequately represented on City policy bodies, it means ensuring the protection of Chinese community-serving businesses from displacement, that pedestrian safety for Chinatown seniors remains the highest priority even amid pushes from non-Chinese residents from across the City who are pushing alternative mobility services that fundamentally do not serve and even endanger that population. It also means calling out an uptick in hateful, racist attacks against Chinese and Chinese American constituents in my District, as I've unfortunately had to do on several recent occasions.

I've also supported asks of the broader racial justice movement, including supporting the closure of County Jail #4. While I've been reticent to create new departments with redundant functions, I recognize the value of the newly-formed Office of Racial Equity, which I voted to create and have committed to supporting its expanded role in a wide array of policy decisions - from housing development to transit planning to criminal justice reform.

In 2019, I authored and the Board overwhelmingly passed a law to ban facial recognition technology and create surveillance technology use policies that are publicly vetted and approved by the Board of Supervisors. Implementation of that law has been stunted by the current pandemic, and it will be my office's prerogative to ensure that we have public policy debates around the use of surveillance technology and other law enforcement weapons going forward.

My above response speaks to the work in the community of groups like DefundSFPDNow to reimagine the relationship between law enforcement and the communities they purport to protect, which in the context of disparities in enforcement is fundamentally about racial justice. I also support Prop 16 to bring back affirmative action policies to repair racial disparities in access to opportunity.

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Last Question

Is there anything else you want to tell us?

Expanding on some of the yes or no questions:

I led the SFERS' divestment charge just a handful of years ago, and I'm disappointed to say the least in SFERS' decision to fully divest by 2050

I've been at the forefront of the movement for public power with City Attorney Dennis Herrera and my Board Colleague Supervisor Hillary Ronen

As Chair of the County Transportation Authority, I've been at the forefront of the congestion pricing issue and have worked with our State legislative delegation to push for authorizing legislation

With regard to Costa Hawkins I've also been at the forefront of the conversation around a residential vacancy tax and was pleased to pass the City's first commercial vacancy tax this year

Yes I support a baseline percentage of 40% affordable housing but realistically, while we fight for a pittance of affordable housing units, the conversation really needs to be shifted entirely to how we're going to fund even greater levels of deeply affordable housing not dependent on the production of private market rate housing

Yes I support requiring 100% affordable housing on public land and was a co-author of Prop E

With regard to the gross receipts taxes, the Mayor has withdrawn her proposal and backed the a consensus measure to reform GRT.

And yes I supported March 2020's Prop D (Storefront Vacancy Tax) I wrote the darn thing!

Regarding the percentage reduction of the police budget, 100% represents the need to completely and radically rethink the function of policing in our society. Beyond being symbolic, a percentage reallocation is not the proper metric, but I've met with DefundSFPDNow to go over their budget asks line by line. I'm also in constant communication with Budget & Finance Committee Chair Sandra Lee Fewer and the Controller about moving progressive strategies forward to re-allocate funding from budgets for armed police to other public safety alternatives. We've discussed legal options, labor limitations and also necessary job creation with community stakeholders, and I'm supportive of the efforts of Reinvestin.us, DefundSFPDNow, Black Lives Matter movement leaders and the Human Rights Commission/Office of Racial Equity staff to demilitarize our police force. We've also engaged with other groups such a SF General Hospital doctors coalition and a Chinatown public safety coalition to identify alternatives to a militarization police force that still creates community-led public safety alternatives to addressing housing, homeless services, social work, health and education.

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