



Neighborhood Parks Council
2010 Board of Supervisors Candidate Questionnaire

District 8- Bill Hemenger

1. In what ways do you feel parks contribute to San Franciscans' quality of life?

Parks are oases of calm in often hectic urban environment that allow residents and visitors to take a break from the hustle and bustle of a busy day or week. They allow all of us to recharge before heading back out onto the streets. They offer solace and relaxation and a peaceful place to take our kids and to walk our dogs. As public spaces, they also act cultural melting pots, allowing people from different walks of life and social the opportunity meet one another and exchange thoughts and ideas.

2. What park in your district do you use most and tell us what you like most about it.

I use Christopher Scott park several times a day. I like it because it is large, many of use it to meet up daily for coffee and to let our dogs play. It is really an outdoor community meeting room. I have met some of my closest friends in that park over the years - not to mention raised my dogs there. It is fairly well kept and safe, with plenty of room for everyone. Its proximity is also key; itsits on the edge of Glen Canyon, just a couple of blocks from my home.

3. Which park in your district appears to need the most help and what do you propose to do about it?

Dolores Park. This park is the subject of a great deal of attention -- and no small amount of controversy, due both to the violent crimes that have occurred there as of late, as well as the somewhat questionable efforts to improve the park. Given the park's size, its accessibility, its breathtaking view, and its location at the intersection of three different neighborhoods, I fully support making Dolores Park a world-renowned public space to which tourists will flock and through which the City can demonstrate all of those things that we as San Franciscans are proud of. I do, however, want to make sure that every dollar being spent on park improvements there is being used most effectively and that the end goals of the park's refurbishment will result in added value for both residents and visitors.

4. From your observations, what are the 3 most important issues facing recreation and parks in San Francisco? How will you begin to address these issues if you are elected?

a) Safety. Although we think of city parks primarily as day-use spaces, we need to ensure that visitors after dark can also feel safe. To achieve this, we need to get

creative. Cameras? More lights? More foot/horse patrols? Citizen organizations, akin to neighborhood watch?

b) Accessibility. Everyone needs to be able to enjoy our parks, handicapped, elderly, kids, etc. This includes providing clean, well-maintained restroom facilities.

c) Functionality. They need be places of relaxation and a place you could spend the day if you wanted. Concession services provided by private, third-party vendors can serve both to meet this goal and supplement funds for park maintenance, which can assist in improving the safety and accessibility of parks.

5. What is your view of the role of volunteer community park groups? What commitment do you make to working with these groups to improve our public open spaces?

I welcome the involvement of community park groups. They bring together all the things that we love about San Francisco and its residents -- their innovation, diversity, and commitment to involvement. Again, just as parks themselves act as great levelers of the different community strata, so too would a community park organization bring together disparate individuals for a common purpose. And the volunteer community recognizes that our parks are assets that bring talented residents and tourism dollars to the City. Without the assistance of these volunteer groups, we simply cannot keep our parks to the standard that they should be. I would make every commitment to working with these volunteer groups.

6. ParkScan.org is a website that enables park users to report maintenance concerns to the Recreation and Park Department. If elected, how would you promote this tool?

Technology provides an efficient way of monitoring concerns and ensuring that nothing falls through the cracks. As the medium itself is web-based, promotion via Facebook, Twitter, Four Square etc. are obvious ways of promoting ParkScan.org. We must educate 311 operators to direct anyone calling about park issues to go to the web site. We could advertise in available public spaces like inside the Muni trains, buses, and bus stops. We could place banner ads on site like SFgate.com, SocketSite, etc., We could also make the rounds to all the neighborhood association meetings to give a 5 minute talk to each of them. The community park groups above could also play an important role. And as parents and children are frequent users and observers of our park spaces, getting the message out to schools is also key.

7. NPC's Green Envy study identified many neighborhoods that lack playgrounds and neighborhood parks. How would you address these park and open space deficiencies?

I would stick to my platform of jobs and responsible to attract businesses from large to small so we can get our tax-base back, therefore allowing the City to afford to support these programs.

8. Deferred maintenance of things like irrigation systems continue to plague the park system. With little funding available to fix these types of problems, what would you propose to improve park maintenance?

See #7.

9. San Francisco currently has no citywide open space requirement for new development. In areas such as the Eastern Neighborhoods, which are already deficient in open space and could see a tripling in residential density in the near future, this oversight could create unlivable communities severely deficient in parks. Would you support a citywide open space requirement for all new residential development so that every neighborhood can have green space for play, exercise, and respite from urban life?

Yes