

Editorial: The best candidates to take leadership roles in Alamo

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ALAMO RESIDENTS HAVE two major decisions on the March 3 ballot: Whether to turn the community into a legal city and which five people should serve on the first city council if voters opt for incorporation.

On the former question, we have already stated our support for Measure A, the ballot question on whether to form a city. On the later question, residents will have a tougher decision because the field of 16 candidates vying for five seats has many highly qualified people. The top two vote-getters in the election will serve for four years; the next three candidates will serve for two years.

For us, five candidates stand out: Steve Mick, Grace Schmidt, Bob Connelly, Randall Nahas and Vicki Koc.

Most of the 16 candidates support Measure A. Some have been later to reach that conclusion than others. Our five picks have all been strong and active supporters of the incorporation drive. That wasn't a criterion for us. But a clear understanding of the issues facing the new city was, and clearly these five, in their work on the incorporation drive, have studied the fiscal and organizational challenges the new city will face.

It will be important that the new city — many prefer to call it a town, but that's a distinction without a legal difference — start fresh. All residents should have equal opportunity to be heard.

The responsibilities of many of the advisory groups that have helped the county run the community in the past will now fall to the new city government. That's the way it should be.

Unfortunately, we found that some of the candidates want to superimpose the new governing structure over the old set of advisory groups. A couple of candidates, for example, want building applications to be reviewed by the long-established Alamo Improvement Association board.

They see it as an opportunity for private review before public debate in front of the new city planning commission and city council.

Those candidates clearly do not understand the implications of forming a new city. Shadow government is unacceptable. Not only would it undermine the newly elected leaders and add unnecessary layers of bureaucracy, it would violate the open-government rules the new city must operate under.

We think that the shift to cityhood will be refreshing — that transparency in decision-making is healthy. And we think that the five candidates we are endorsing are ready for the challenges and the public scrutiny.

Mick is a standout who emphasizes the importance of the new city council members to comply with the Brown Act, the state open-meeting law for local governments. A retired administrator at the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, he has served on the Alamo Parks and Recreation and Alamo Beautification committees, as well as the Alamo Improvement Association.

Schmidt will bring a keen understanding of local government issues, which should not come as a surprise since she has worked as a congressional

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field representative in the East Bay's 10th Congressional District and as a staff member to county supervisors in Marin and Santa Clara counties. She has also been a board member of the Alamo Improvement Association.

Connelly is a retired bank executive who will bring fiscal discipline to the new council. His 33-year career included five as chief operating officer and three as chief executive officer. He is currently president of the Alamo Oaks Homeowners Association.

Nahas is a commercial property manager with general contracting and real estate broker licenses who will bring an understanding of planning issues to the council. He has served on the Alamo Parks and Recreation Committee, the Alamo Roads Committee and the San Ramon Valley Unified School District Facilities Committee.

And if anyone deserves to be on the new council, it's Koc, who initiated the incorporation drive more than three years ago and served as president of the Alamo Incorporation Movement. She has also served on the Alamo Parks and Recreation and Alamo Roads committees. Her tireless work for cityhood deserves recognition.

By electing those five candidates, Alamo residents can feel assured that the fledgling city will have solid leadership from the start with council members who have proven their commitment to the community and demonstrated an understanding of the challenges ahead.

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