

## Eric Knight

### FINAL QUESTIONS FOR NOV. 2020 ELECTION FORUM

#### Introduction:

I am very grateful for you taking the time to watch this candidate forum, and I also want to thank the first responders who are protecting us. You May be Asking, “Why is Eric Knight running for Town Council again?”

Well, first, my Commitment to Yountville began 50 years ago with my family’s local hardware store and regular visits to the Veterans Home. More recently, Peggy and I raised a family here -- and I Served you on the Town Council from 1997 – 2005. During my past Council service, we reduced the threat of flooding in Rancho de Napa and Buena Vista by securing Federal, State, and local funds to build the Flood Wall and divert Hopper Creek. We invested in our Water and Waste Treatment systems, funded a local shuttle, dedicated funding for our community center, and expanded Parks and Rec programs.

I decided to run again for Town Council – Because, Now More Than Ever – we must **MAKE NEW CONNECTIONS** and **MOVE FORWARD TOGETHER**, as we Await a Return to a **NEW NORMAL**.

Tragic local events, like wildland fires, shooter/gun violence, and COVID-19 have **REMINDED US** of the **IMPORTANCE** of **COMMUNITY** and Caring for Family and Neighbors.

After 30 years of local Business Experience, Volunteerism, and Civic Involvement, I have learned that **LISTENING**, **AN OPEN MIND**, and **TEAMWORK** helps Build Community and Improve Decision Making. I will use this experience while serving you again, and I will hear your concerns.

Finally, I will Always **ASSESS** how Council Actions will Impact Our **RESIDENTS** and **NEIGHBOORHOODS** -- So We Protect Our Small-Town Residential Character and Close-knit Social Fabric. Thank you for your attention and Take Care.

1. During the COVID-19 pandemic it has become clear that the Town's General Fund revenues are very dependent on tourism revenue. If the revenue shortfall in TOT and sales taxes continues for a longer duration what impact do you see on the Town's budget? And how would you approach adjusting the Town's budget to meet available reduced General Fund revenue?

If revenue shortfalls in TOT and Sales Tax continues, I will review monthly revenue reports and expenditures and support a Sound and Responsible fiscal policy. I will expect Town staff recommendations to be forward thinking so Town Council spending and investments will guarantee that we are good stewards of the community's pocketbook. 60% of town expenditures are in Public Works, Public Safety and Parks and Recreation. I will review Public Works and Park & Rec and our Capital Improvement Projects for short-term savings, but Public Safety spending and contracts will not be reduced. We have been in a similar place after September 11, 2001, when I served on the Town Council. While the COVID-19 epidemic will have a longer impact on Town revenues, I expect that when increased travel and tourism begins again, it will return sooner to the Napa Valley, just like it did after 9/11.

2. What is your position on Measure T and why?

I recommend a NO vote on Measure T. Let me be clear, I support its private use, especially as an alternative treatment for medical issues. Medical marijuana CAN be purchased in Napa and delivered to Yountville. Measure T wrongly approves a cannabis business without a clear understanding of the impact on our NEIGHBORHOODS, OUR SMALL TOWN, and our SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSES.

The Town Council should encourage more retail diversity and local serving businesses, but in our new General Plan, on page 105, it states a Cannabis business does not add to retail diversity. The cannabis industry and retail businesses are in their Infancy. I suggest we continue to watch how Federal and State regulation changes so we can better understand the effect of a cannabis business in Yountville.

Again, I recommend a No Vote on Measure T.

3. Our Veterans are an important part of our Community. How do you plan to engage with the residents and staff at the Yountville Veterans Home?

I believe in the importance of Making Connections, and because of COVID-19 rules, Veterans Home members have been more isolated from our community. It is time to begin working toward Re-Building our Connection and Partnership with the Home. I cannot think of a better symbol of Building Connections than replacing the current walking path with a wider, safer path that will accommodate wheelchairs. I also strongly support the Town creating a permanent Standing Committee for Veterans Affairs so we work together with Administer Peake, CALVET, Senator Dodd and Assembly woman Aguilar-Curry on the Home Facility Master Plan and reopen soon a valuable asset, the Veterans Home pool for Members and All Town residents.

4. How would you propose the Town meet the state mandated housing requirements given we are nearly built-out?

The Town will be updating our Housing Element in the General Plan soon. The Housing Element is our goals and guide for future housing. After consultation with the CA Veterans Home members, the Town should support CALVET's effort to provide more workforce housing for staff and their families. We can also continue to support well-designed neighborhood Accessory Dwelling Units or second units and support and protect our neighborhoods from short term rentals. Finally, I believe we need a clear policy in the Housing Element that housing is our first land use priority. When we support a creative and diverse housing policy then we guarantee a sustainable and vibrant residential community for people to live, work, and for residents to locally shop in Yountville.

5. The Town's water and wastewater systems are critical for Yountville. Given predictions that costs will continue to increase, what will you do when the town council needs to review and reconsider the rate structure for these systems? How does the Veterans Home factor into your consideration?

The Town actively monitors the funding and expenses for the Utility Enterprise funds. I support Town staff's proactive efforts to keep our water and sewer fees at the lowest possible cost. Efforts, like upgrading equipment, and identifying wineries and vineyards that can use are treated wastewater help keep costs lower.

The Town commissioned a rate study in 2018 and authorized a specific annual increase. I support smart regular increases and the Council's decision to allocate some Emergency Water Funds to support the fee structure.

The Veterans Home is a long-standing partner; We purchase State water and share the waste treatment plant. Here's another reason why I support the Council creating a permanent Veterans Standing Committee, so we schedule regular meetings with Veterans Home staff to proactively resolve shared concerns.

6. What is your process for validating people's concerns on issues, even if you do not agree with their position?

So, I believe it is the responsibility of a council member to encourage dialogue, listen to residents and business owners concerns and presentation with an open mind, and then to seek consensus. I may not always agree with someone opinion or their understanding of the facts, but we can agree to disagree and still come together, find common ground, and move forward. When we can safely meet in the future the Town should plan Annual Government Open House Day so residents can meet Town staff and discuss issues away from formal Council meetings. Our focus is to ensure residents know their opinion and perspective has been heard and that will result in greater community support of Council decisions.

7. What is your opinion about the Town's retail diversity policy? What would you do to improve or modify retail diversity in town?

Bringing more local serving retail and retail diversity to Town is a difficult task when we live just nine miles from a city. I do not have a quick solution to increasing retail diversity in Yountville. But the current Town's retail diversity policy needs further review, interpretation, and must provide clearer direction for future development. I suggest that Town Council and staff, residents, businesses, and the Chamber of Commerce create a task force to discuss opportunities for more retail diversity in Town. In the short term we can encourage innovative individuals to offer pop-up retails,

8. By many accounts, Yountville is the envy of the small towns in Napa Valley. What is your vision for the future of Yountville? How do we evolve as a community?

My focus will be to successfully implement our New General Plan's vision to protect our small-town residential character. We achieve that goal by always considering the impact of a Council decision on residents and our neighborhoods. We are first and foremost a residential community; visitor's travel here because of a keen interest in the exceptional food, wine, and hospitality that Yountville and Napa Valley restaurants, wineries, and hotels offer them, but many visit Yountville again because of our welcoming community and charm. We should always make every effort to support our largest neighborhood, the CA Veterans Home and its members.

My hope is we continue to work together to build a successful, diverse, caring, and beautiful community in the Heart of the Napa Valley.

## Final Statement:

Thank you for listening to the Candidates Forum Today. When I first served on the Town council in 1997, I was 36 years old. Today I am 59 years old and since the end of my second Town Council term in 2005, I have continued my involvement in Yountville's community affairs. I am a 25-year member of Yountville Kiwanis, and Yountville FOCUS volunteer helping to raise college scholarship funds for Yountville youth and better our community. Now is OUR time, to not only choose the national candidates and their vision for the future, but to choose local candidates to lead our beautiful community. I humbly ask for your support and your vote. I look forward to serving you again.