



LareDOS [redux]

A JOURNAL OF THE BORDERLANDS



2022

General Election

VOTING GUIDE

for City Races
GUIA ELECTORAL

Inside:

Early Voting Sites
Election Day: Find Your Precinct
Roster of Candidates
Q & A for candidates for Mayor
and Council Districts 1, 2, 3, & 6

ELECTION DAY NOVEMBER 8, 2022

Oct. 24 - Nov. 4 Early Voting
Oct. 24 - Last Day to apply for Ballot by Mail



City of Laredo Candidates



Mayor

Felipe “Flipper” E. Ramirez
Dr. Victor D. Treviño
Juan Manuel Garza
Kobby Bryand
Gus “Gunny” Gonzalez
Roque Vela Jr.
Poncho Casso
Cynthia Mares
Louis H. Bruni
Mercurio “Merc” Martinez III

District I

G. “Gigi” Rodriguez
Maxine Rebeles
Gilbert Gonzalez
Patty Tijerina San Miguel

District II

Ricardo “Richie” Rangel Jr.
Daisy Campos Rodriguez



District III

Jerry Perez
Melissa R. Cigarroa
Abraham “Abey” Lugo
Eric Wickstrom

District VI

L. “Vish” Viswanath
Rafa Dueñas
Rick Laurel
Fernando Baldazo
D. Tyler King

You are eligible to register to vote if:

- You are a United States citizen;
- You are a resident of the county where you submit the application;
- You are at least 17 years and 10 months old, and you are 18 years of age on Election Day.
- You are not a convicted felon (you may be eligible to vote if you have completed your sentence, probation, and parole); and
- You have not been declared by a court exercising probate jurisdiction to be either totally mentally incapacitated or partially mentally incapacitated without the right to vote.

For further information

City Secretary
Jose A. Valdez, Jr.
956-791-7308
jvaldez5@ci.laredo.tx.us

Webb County Elections Admin.
José Luis Castillo
956-523-4050

• Campaign Finance Reports •
Read online at the
City Secretary’s Site at
cityoflaredo.com

Early Voting Sites

Casillas de Votación Anticipada

MAIN EARLY VOTING SITE

Billy Hall, Jr. Administrative Building, 1110 Washington St.

Monday, October 24 thru Friday, October 28, 2022	8:00 am to 5:00 pm
Saturday, October 29, 2022	8:00 am to 8:00 pm
Sunday, October 30, 2022	12:00 pm to 6:00 pm
Monday, October 31 thru Friday, November 4, 2022	8:00 am to 8:00 pm

PERMANENT BRANCH EARLY VOTING SITES

Barbara Fasken Recreation Center (Library), 15201 Cerralvo Dr.

Laredo Fire Dept. Administrative Ctr, 616 E. Del Mar Blvd.

City Hall Annex Building, 1102 Bob Bullock Loop

McKendrick, Ochoa, Salinas Library, 2901 Palo Blanco St.

Monday, October 24 thru Friday, October 28, 2022	8:00 am to 5:00 pm
Saturday, October 29, 2022	8:00 am to 8:00 pm
Sunday, October 30, 2022	12:00 pm to 6:00 pm
Monday, October 31 thru Friday, November 4, 2022	8:00 am to 8:00 pm

TEMPORARY BRANCH EV SITES

Rio Bravo Community Center, 1607 Orquidia Ln., Rio Bravo, TX

El Cenizo Community Center, 3519 Cecilia Ln., El Cenizo, TX

Fernando A. Salinas Comm. Ctr., 520 Reynolds St.

Laredo Medical Center, 1700 E. Saunders St.

Texas A&M Int'l, 5201 University Blvd

Rio Bravo Community Center, 1607 Orquidia Ln., Rio Bravo, TX

El Cenizo Community Center, 3519 Cecilia Ln., El Cenizo, TX

Laredo Medical Center, 1700 E. Saunders St.

JP Precinct 4 Building, 8501 San Dario Ave.

Texas A&M Int'l, 5201 University Blvd

Monday, October 24 thru Friday, October 28, 2022	8:00 am to 5:00 pm
Saturday, October 29, 2022	8:00 am to 8:00 pm
Sunday, October 30, 2022	12:00 pm to 6:00 pm
Monday, October 31 thru Friday, November 4, 2022	8:00 am to 8:00 pm

Laredo College – Main Campus, West End Washington St.

Monday, October 24 thru Friday, October 28, 2022	8:00 am to 5:00 pm
Saturday, October 29, 2022	8:00 am to 8:00 pm
Sunday, October 30, 2022	12:00 pm to 6:00 pm
Monday, October 31 thru Friday, November 4, 2022	8:00 am to 6:00 pm

Laredo College – Main Campus, West End Washington St.

LISD Transportation Dept., 3302 Springfield Ave.

Monday, October 24 thru Friday, October 28, 2022	8:00 am to 5:00 pm
Saturday, October 29, 2022	8:00 am to 6:00 pm
Sunday, October 30, 2022	12:00 pm to 6:00 pm
Monday, October 31 thru Friday, November 4, 2022	8:00 am to 6:00 pm

Bruni High School Gym, 619 Avenue F, Bruni, TX

Monday, October 24 thru Friday, October 28, 2022	9:00 am to 5:00 pm
Saturday, October 29, 2022	9:00 am to 7:00 pm
Sunday, October 30, 2022	12:00 pm to 6:00 pm
Monday, October 31 thru Friday, November 4, 2022	9:00 am to 7:00 pm

2022 GENERAL ELECTION KEY DATES



OCTOBER 24, 2022 FIRST DAY OF EARLY VOTING

OCTOBER 28, 2022 LAST DAY TO APPLY FOR
BALLOT BY MAIL
(RECEIVED AT PO BOX 233, NOT POSTMARKED)

NOVEMBER 4, 2022 LAST DAY OF EARLY VOTING

NOVEMBER 8, 2022
ELECTION DAY AND
LAST DAY TO RECEIVE MAIL IN BALLOT*

* November 8, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. if carrier envelope is not postmarked, OR Wednesday, November 9, 2022 (next business day after Election Day) at 5:00 p.m. if carrier envelope is postmarked by 7:00 p.m. at the location of the election on Election Day (unless overseas or military voter deadlines apply)

WEBB COUNTY ELECTION ADMINISTRATION 956-523-4050
SCAN THE QR CODE TO VISIT OUR WEBSITE.



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WASHINGTON'S
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A Celebration With
Something for Everyone!



JOIN US FOR THE
11TH ANNUAL
LAREDO BIRDING FESTIVAL
FEBRUARY 1-4, 2023

Keynote Speaker
TIFFANY KERSTEN
2021 100 YEAR NATIONAL RECORD
WITH 726 SPECIES SPOTTED

Panel Speakers
LAURA KEENE **FABIOLA BAEZA-TARIN**

Register at bit.ly/RegLBF
For more information visit
laredobirdingfestival.org



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print & web design

956.284.0784
918 HIDALGO, LAREDO, TX
vantagegfxdesign.com



FRONTERA
Beer and Wine Garden
Laredo, Tx

FEMALE, VETERAN, & FAMILY OWNED
(956) 645 1212

Pan American Courts **Karaoke** **Dine-In**
3301 San Bernardo Ste. 24A **Friday** **Pick Up**

November Events

- Sat. Nov. 5: Live Music - Midnight Buzz
- Sat. Nov. 12: Conchafest
- Sun. Nov. 13: Drag Brunch
- Thu. Nov. 17: Drag Loteria
- Sat. Nov. 19: Swap/Free Mkt.; Live Music - Dollface
- Sat. Nov. 26: Friendsgiving Concert - Slyk Willy

December Events

- Fri. Dec. 2 & Sat. Dec. 3: Double night of Karaoke
- Sun. Dec. 4: Drag Brunch/Loteria
- Sat. Dec. 10 & Sun. Dec. 11: 9 a.m - Noon
Stained Glass Workshop
- Sat. Dec. 10: Live Music - Slyk Willy
plus Vintage Market
- Sat. Dec. 17: Live Music - Dollface
- Sun. Dec. 18: Nightmare Before Christmas Brunch
- Thurs. Dec. 22: Christmas Concert!

ELECT
Roque
 vela jr.
FOR MAYOR



*'A vote for me is a vote for stability
 anything else is a vote for uncertainty'
 'No votes por los millones
 vota por las convicciones!'*

Political Ad paid by: Saul Zambrano Jr, Treasurer



219 E. Del Mar
 956-516-7651

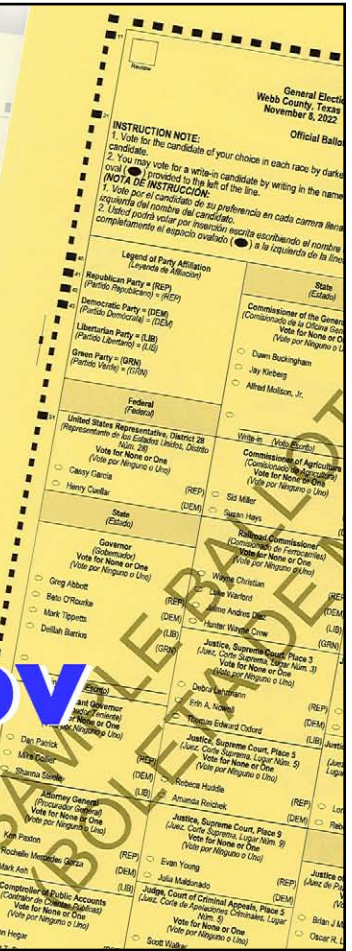
Mon - Fri: 11 am - 8 pm
Saturday: 11 am - 3 pm

2 x \$22 Tuesday

Any Panini + Any Side + Any Lemonade



SAMPLE BALLOTS
FOR YOUR
PRECINCT
AVAILABLE AT
webbcountytx.gov
(ELECTIONS)





Felipe "Flipper" E. Ramirez



Dr. Victor D. Treviño



Juan Manuel Garza



Kobby Bryand



Gus "Gunny" Gonzalez



Roque Vela Jr.



Poncho Casso



Cynthia Mares



Louis H. Bruni



Mercurio "Merc"
Martinez III

Un-edited answers are printed verbatim and without grammatical correction

The Mayor's Role

Define the role of the Mayor and her/his working relationship with the City Council and the City Manager. Which of your qualities make you the best candidate to serve as the Mayor of Laredo?

Dr. Victor Treviño:

Besides the duties of the Mayor being clearly stated in Section 2.15 of the City of Laredo Charter, the Mayor is the representative and voice of the entire Community at Council Meetings and represents the City as the head of local government. I am a person that believes in leading with transparency and integrity. As a public servant at the Health Department and in private practice for over 35 years I have always believed this to be true, and this belief was reinforced during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Juan Manuel Garza:

My best qualities as a candidate are that I am a natural leader and am a good median when it comes to finding solutions. For this reason, it is important that the next mayor, city manager and city councilmen are elected with precision and care because

we all must unify and find common ground to advance in the best interest of Laredo's community.

Kobby Bryand:

The role of the Mayor is the Executive Branch head of our local Government limited in power but keeps in an important role being the chairman during council meetings. The Qualities I bring to the table are my youth and my willingness and commitment to serve the people of Laredo. Guided by my conservative views I know progress can be made.

Roque Vela Jr.:

I believe a good mayor should only promise what he can control. My management and leadership abilities to move others from point A to point B and understanding leadership is knowing where point B is

located. As your Mayor, I can provide direction to city council and the community. I learned a lot as a former council member and took my time to understand how city government works. My knowledge of our city our city budget and understanding of it is a crucial quality that gives me the advantage to start the process of bettering our city right from the get-go. I believe in bringing a sense of stability, accountability, communication, and honesty to city hall and our community.

Alfonso "Poncho" Casso:

The role of the mayor as defined by the city charter as follows: Section 2.15 Powers and Duties of the Mayor (1) Shall preside at Council meetings; (2) Shall be recognized as the head of the City Government and as the official representative of the City but

(Continued on next page)

shall have no administrative duties; (3) Shall only vote in case of a tie of Council Members; (4) Shall have the veto power and his/her veto shall be executed within the next two regularly scheduled Council Meetings, and may be overridden by a vote of five (5) Council Members made at the same meeting as the veto; (5) Shall make the official state of the city address by January 31 of each year of the Mayor's term of office at a public place open and free to all of the people of Laredo. The private sponsorship of the official state of the city address is prohibited. 6) Shall have the right to initiate motions at City Council Meetings; (7) Shall have the right to add items to the Council agenda; (8) Shall consult with the City Manager regarding proposed agenda items to be included in the agenda of a regular and or special Council meeting; I'm the most qualified of

the candidates running for mayor because I have the most education and experience in the private and public sector relevant to the U.S.- Mexico border and the international trade community. Please see my website for more details regarding my experience at cassoformayor.com.

Cynthia Mares:

The Mayor must be able to work diligently alongside the City Manager without interfering with the Manager's administration to ensure that the priorities and goals the City has set forth for the constituency are attentively accomplished. There must be an open line of communication between the Mayor's Office and the City Manager's Office. I have always believed that communication is key to ensuring an effective working relationship, and this is no different. I

bring over 40 years of experience in public service which distinguish me from all the other candidates running for Mayor. My experience on the Laredo College Board and working with the college presidents during my tenure also contribute to guaranteeing that under my leadership, there would be a superb working relationship with the City Manager.

Mercurio Martinez III:

The mayor must be someone who is honest, with integrity, civility, and the reputation needed to lead and build consensus among officials in City Hall. I have spent my entire life in Laredo, and I have the temperament, character, and experience to take on the responsibilities of this position. My approach is always to focus on tackling difficult challenges by finding and implementing practical solutions.

Restoring Confidence

List three steps you would take as a leader to restore confidence in the City Council's ability to move forward cohesively on the hard issues of water, taxes, sustainable economic development, and traffic.

Dr. Treviño:

Restoring public confidence in our local government will be challenging but essential to empower the community to trust the decisions being made.

- 1) Having a transparent local government. Activity within local government should not be hidden, even if the activity is not popular or errors were committed.
- 2) Having a truthful government. Advocating for qualified candidates. Telling the truth about challenges that the City is facing and the solutions that are being proposed.
- 3) Having a government that encourages community participation.

Garza:

- Step 1 - Get together with the City Council, City Manager and everyone that is necessary to approach each topic, respectfully.
- Step 2- allocate the correct personnel and funding for each particular issue
- Step 3- make sure we don't lose focus of what these issues are and make sure they don't repeat themselves and/or worsen.

Bryand:

To restore confidence it starts with the voter on election day. Democracy is about having a choice and making your voices heard restoring confidence is one of the reasons I decided to run for Mayor I knew the same names would be running and that the same issues would be said and so I took action and made it my mission to run. In hopes of giving the people a choice this election a fresh face who is young and determined to work for the people. If elected I promise a new beginning a fresh start for our city as part of restoring confidence.

Vela Jr.:

- I am prepared and ready to tackle all the issues affecting our community, regardless of how complex or unpopular the issues may be, with honesty, integrity, and as a team.
1. Honesty – Citizens need to feel they have a Mayor that demonstrates honesty and integrity and is fighting for them.
 2. Communication – As Mayor I ensure to communicate efficiently and effectively and

remain open to the City and citizen's needs.

3. A vision – Creating policies that address the most pressing issues, such as poor infrastructure, water, taxes, and economic development. Setting a direction with council to improve our municipality while providing the best quality of life to our citizens and encouraging growth.

Casso:

The first step is to lead with a moral compass and to set the tone on city council that corrupt behavior will not be tolerated and will be placed on the agenda for public discussion. The second step is to obtain a copy of the Water Master Plan that the city refuses to release to the public. They are fighting my open records request for a copy of the Master Water Plan with the Texas Attorney General. It's been almost three years since the contract was let out for the Water Master Plan at a cost of \$1 million dollars and we still have nothing. Nada! The third step is to adopt my Robin Hood Initiative for government reform

(Continued on next page)

to stop the bleeding that is making us poorer as a community. Please refer to robinhoodlaredo.org.

Mares:

I offer a “Five-Star” platform to Laredo voters and its constituency. Just like every other Laredoan, I am tired and frustrated with the water situation and promise to bring secure, clean, safe and reliable water to the consumers. Our streets are in dire need of repairs and our major thoroughfares are congested. We must plan properly and accordingly for the future development of our community and immediately address

the many traffic issues we are facing. I want to improve our streets by investing in replacement projects to ensure Laredo continues to thrive. Public safety is a top priority, and I plan to invest strategically in our fire and police forces. Applying my finance background and experience, I plan to lower our taxes by stopping wasteful spending and bringing accountability to our city’s finances. Lastly, I give my word to put City Hall to work for us and end corruption by establishing the first-ever Municipal Public Integrity Unit to investigate and prosecute the Mayor, City Council, or any other official for committing any

ethical, charter, or ordinance violations or wrongdoings.

Martinez III:

My goals for the City of Laredo are to ensure stability in our city government, improve our water issues, develop infrastructure and urban development and improve the way we do business.

We must reduce employee turnover, develop a strategic water infrastructure plan to replace all lines consistently and efficiently and repair roadways and sidewalks as we scrutinize the budget to ensure taxpayers are not negatively impacted.

Citizen Comments

- **Citizens making public comments to the City Council are all too often treated with disdain, as though their comments are a waste of time that lengthens City Council meetings (when often it is the uninformed rants and platitudes of Council members that waste time). What will you do to accord citizen participants in their own government (that their taxes pay for) a more inclusive presence at the podium?**
- **Citizens have a three-minute limit to speak. Should there be a limit on how long Council members can grandstand?**

Dr. Treviño:

It is important to encourage citizens to participate in local government. I believe that there is no such thing as too much access. I would also propose phone and zoom access for those that cannot participate in person. I believe that there needs to be mutual respect for everyone’s time and thoughts regardless of their title. The Mayor plays a big role on this issue by presiding over the meetings.

Garza:

I will have a designated position in the city that will entail citizens to have a direct line to email at and this person can delegate these issues to me or to the proper department as they come in. No, citizens should not be given a time-limit to speak on their concerns.

Bryand:

As a young man interested in knowing

what went on in the council I would watch on my phone or computer. There is a president of these things but maybe what will motivate them is a young Mayor in that position who is willing to talk to them and not intimidate or ignore their concerns. I believe our elected officials should hear all the concerns no matter their grievances and believes our citizens should be given 5 to 7 minutes instead.

Vela Jr.:

Running for an elected position is dealing with citizens and citizen groups. Keeping citizens informed about our local government is an important step in maintaining a cooperative relationship with the public. A crucial component is the need to make information available to our citizens. I would work to build standards for encouraging public comments to go beyond a meeting into a larger priority of improving local services to the citizens

and businesses. One idea I would like to initiate is a follow-up step in responding to all citizen comments whether it is the City manager’s office or a department head replying to the concern after the meeting. Following up would ensure the citizen is being heard but also sees the commitment being honored and steps being taken to help resolve the issue or concern. As your Mayor I will ensure decorum. At times council members take it upon themselves to make the council meeting about themselves. It’s the Mayors duty to reign in this type of behavior and ensure our city council meetings are run in a professional manner.

Casso:

I have written numerous commentaries on social media regarding the lack of respect for the truth and for the citizens of Laredo.

If I’m elected mayor I will do away with the 3 minute rule and stop the nauseating

fawning sycophancy by the city council.

Mares:

Engagement is what is needed to make a much more inclusive presence at the podium during public comments. However, public comment is governed by State Law, which prohibits that engagement due to regulations of the Texas Open Meetings Act. Nonetheless, as Mayor I would set the tone to the entire Council before people that have signed up for public comment to ensure that the constituents are not treated with disdain. Additionally, I would for the record state if a member of the council has walked out, to ensure that the minutes

reflect the lack of respect the respective Council Member has displayed. The Mayor serves as the Chair of the meeting, meaning the Mayor plays the role of ensuring parliamentary procedure is adhered to. Part of parliamentary procedure is adopting time limits, if needed, for each item discussed. It would not be a bad idea to looking into giving each member a set amount of time per item discussed, where members can also yield their time should they not want to engage in discussions. This would also serve the purpose of not lengthening the meeting unnecessarily to keep the public engaged and not drag them on a Monday night through 11:00 p.m.

Martinez III:

As an elected official, it is my civic responsibility to be the voice of my constituents and to give the podium to those in attendance that want to express their comments and or concerns. I am a great proponent for Robert's Rules of Order for decorum of public meetings. Citizens that took the time to address the Chair in an open session, should be heard and not ignored. Grandstanding should be limited to the topic at hand and it is the Chairs duty to move the meeting along.

Water & Environment

- **Water has emerged as an urgent priority for Laredo for two main reasons: an aging distribution and pipe system and a new drought cycle that is impacting the river. Laredo leaders have failed to connect those two dots. There has been a lack of vision and lack of understanding that explains how investing in restoration of the river, is investing in the long-term protection of Laredo's drinking water supply. How do you plan to change that?**
- **The proposed bi-national river conservation project is a 6.2-mile project that would profoundly transform our community over the coming decades. The Binational Working Group, formed at the urging of Ambassador Ken Salazar, has focused on river restoration, border security, economic development, and quality of life. Unfortunately, a small group of ill-informed naysayers would have leaders shoot down this project without understanding its impact. What are your views on this project, and how can you move it forward?**
- **South Texas, and this part of the continent are moving into an era of intensifying drought. Yet, Laredo lacks a comprehensive plan to increase water supply in the river over the short- and long-term. Groups like the Rio Grande International Study Center are working with city officials on drought restriction measures, as well as longer-term solutions that involve removal of water-thirsty invasive species from the riverbanks and other innovative pilot projects that would recycle wastewater. How do you plan to work with these community researchers and leaders to make Laredo more water secure?**

Dr. Treviño:

We need to prioritize issues that are impacting our daily lives, and there needs to be more public information and input on improving our water quality and sourcing from the river. I have always been a big proponent of working in collaboration with our neighbors to improve the public health, security, economic development, and quality of life in the region. We saw the importance of this during the pandemic. What happens on one side of the border impacts the other side. These water challenges have existed for several decades, and the lack of long-term planning has contributed to the current state of crisis. For example, Laredo's own 50-year water plan expects that the City's growth would exceed its water supply by 2040. I believe that we will reach this point sooner.

From a short-term planning perspective, we need to protect our water sources from depletion and contamination. Protection of our critical assets, such as the river, is critical. We need to encourage personal responsibility in the form of "responsible water usage" at homes. By educating and informing the public that we will accelerate our water problems if we do not adapt to this emerging reality. If private households account for 65% of Laredo's water use and most of that use is for watering lawns and gardens, then people need to decide. The other problem is that over 30% of the City's pipes are more than 40 years old so we need to make a substantial investment and be honest with the public about the cost. There needs to be more collaboration and participation from the business and other sectors of the community. This issue should incorporate all sectors of the community because water quality impacts our public health and quality of life for generations to come.

Garza:

I believe we can have a beautiful 6.2-mile project without it becoming a bi-national park. If congress approves funding for it, I'll construct it immediately. If the state funds it as a state park, the same goes. If it's going to be Laredo's citizens tax dollars to construct a multi-million/billion park. It loses my interest and support. We need to conserve our river as much as possible, but we also need to accept that some forces are out of their control. If we have to bring

water from Carrizo Springs as a secondary source of water. I'll do it. I'd like to propose a special river conservation department in hopes to keep our main source viable. But to see how city council responds to that is out of my control. I am actually a volunteer with RGISC, I understand these issues. I am their ally. Same goes with the Clean Air Coalition. I will give them more city funding for their preservation and restoration projects. 100%

Bryand: The river is flowing still and the demand for it is high our city must invest more in our "Water Reserves" for when the day comes our city is in a complete drought elected officials in the future will have time to resolve for a new form of source. Because for now, our main concerns should be the quality and infrastructure.

Vela Jr.:

Because it has been marketed incorrectly, when you say it is a binational park people assume it's just a park and the citizens of Laredo cannot and don't want to foot the bill for just a park. However, it is the Mayor's job to work with the federal government and the International Water Boundary Commission to get this project on the ground. This project is not a water park it is a restoration project. We all agree we have water issues right now and for us to just abandon our only source of water and start looking for a secondary water source right now is a mistake. We cannot dismiss a secondary water source it has to be part of our long-term plan but in my opinion we have to do everything we can to restore our Rio Grande river. We need to make it clear that this project is a restoration project we must be able to get rid of some of that vegetation that is water thirsty and be able to dredge it out so it can hold more water. As your Mayor, I will go to Washington so we will not have to foot the bill because whether we can afford it is not up for debate the people of Laredo cannot afford a billion dollars. As a community all of us together both sides of the river are going to go lobbying in Washington making them understand just how important this project is and not because it's a park but because it's a water restoration project and that's the miscommunication people have in our community, we all understand how important water is needed.

Bryand:

We can not build a Bi-National park until we secure our border, clean our river, and stop the fentanyl from reaching the hands of children. If elected I would call forth Section 2.11 to create a special and independent committee under the surveillance of the executive branch to investigate and devise a plan in tackling four things:

1. Quality
2. Infrastructure
3. Consumption
4. Preparation

Casso:

The binational river conservation project is a misnomer, because what is being proposed is a binational river park that is 6.2 mile/1,000 acres. The binational working group is misleading the community because the mathematics doesn't add up. Are they proposing 6.2 linear miles or square miles? Regardless, whether it's linear or square miles, 1,000 acres is equivalent to 769 footballs and the city doesn't own enough water rights to irrigate such a large park. And the argument that the proposed project will conserve water by removing the Carrizo Cane and other invasive species along the Rio Grande is a ruse because a separate program already exists when the 84th Texas Legislature, in 2015, directed the Texas State Soil & Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB), through Senate Bill 1734, to develop and implement a program to eradicate Carrizo cane along the Rio Grande. More importantly the city doesn't have the funding for a binational river park, when the city is currently facing the issue of an aging distribution and pipe system that will cost at least half a billion to replace. The first priority is to modernize our water system prior to embarking on costly boondoggles Laredo cannot afford to maintain. I suggest we instead develop the Zacate Creek as envisioned by HB Zachary 75 years ago and preserve the oldest barrio left in Laredo, La Azteca Neighborhood. If Laredo wants to pursue a binational river park equivalent in size to Central Park in New York, then it should create an endowment of over \$200 million, consisting of contributions from residents, corporations, and foundations. The Central Park Conservancy raises the

(Continued on next page)

Park's nearly \$74 million annual operating budget and is responsible for all basic care of the park. Laredo would have to do the same for a viable park. To begin with the Rio Grande International Study Center has turned the language of environmentalism into meaningless babble. RGISC has divided this community because their executive director has worn two hats in different advocacy organizations thereby politicizing the nonprofit by undermining democratic governance by threatening the city's sovereignty and, sometimes, is seen as a form of the partisan liberal wing of the Democratic Party. If RGISC wants to receive future third party funding from local governments, then they should refrain from such toxic and divisive behavior and rededicate themselves to their original mission of protecting the Rio Grande.

Mares:

The bi-national river conservation project is a key project to ensuring we continue to preserve and protect our border while bringing quality of life and economic development. We are blessed to being a border community and we cannot let the opportunity the federal government has

provided us through Ambassador Salazar. We must come together, the county, city and college district to make this project a reality. We must move the project forward by continuing the discussions with the US federal government and Mexican authorities to ensure this project gets funded. Infrastructure must be set as a priority. The Utilities Department operates an enterprise fund, a fund where paid fees are deposited, and expenses must be in connection with the purpose of the fund. Like a business, the enterprise fund must be treated as such. The City has already bonded to fixing our water infrastructure, but that is only the tip of the iceberg. Hundred of millions more are needed to ensure we just don't put a band aid on this issue. When elected, I will propose establishing a restricted fund, in addition to the enterprise fund, to continue fixing our water infrastructure without raising water rates, something the current council has resorted to do. The only way we will be able to accomplish such a thing is by "trimming the fat" when evaluating the budget to ensure we eliminate wasteful spending and we apply the budget adequately to address the needs of that matter to the everyday

lives' of the constituents. We must invest in a secondary water source. Like our water infrastructure issue, a secondary water source is needed to ensure we increase the water supply in our region. We must begin to conduct research to identify where we can get more water rights and expedite the acquisition of a secondary water source and not depend solely on the Rio Grande.

Martinez III:

When we turn on the faucet, we expect good, clean water to come out. As your Mayor, I will work with the experts to improve our water issues and ensure Laredo has plenty of reliable, safe and clean water for every citizen. Our River is our life and we should work towards eradicating the Carrizo Cane and Salt Cedars that rob us from our water supply. We must explore and implement a plan for a secondary water source as an alternative to our river.

The Bi National River Restoration project headed by Ambassador Salazar is a bold and aggressive plan which, when executed, could accomplish all of our goals for water restoration of our Rio Grande and can spur economic development as has been seen in other cities.

Climate Change

An unprecedented amount of money is being released to states and municipalities by President Biden's administration for climate and sustainable infrastructure and green energy. Laredo doesn't seem prepared to take advantage of these types of funds for innovative climate projects. How will you change that?

Dr. Treviño:

The City should take advantage of any funds available that can improve our quality of life. These projects need to be weighed on their own merit and the community should be asked for their input on large investments.

Garza:

I worked in the solar and wind energy sector, including on building the foundation for the turbines in Zapata. I don't agree with wind turbines in Laredo. There is no high elevation nor high winds for it to be efficient. However, the fact we haven't used the strong solar rays to benefit us with a solar energy farm or current flow from the

river to create clean energy is beyond my guess.

Bryand:

If elected I would advocate that the purchased green energy sources such as solar panels be manufactured only in America as head of the city's government I would make sure the product is American Made only. If that offer is not on the table then we will maintain the same cheap solution of fossil fuels.

Vela Jr.:

Seeking innovative solutions to address climate risks and reduce emissions going beyond the direct control of our city. To

start we can push towards increasing transit, promoting environmental goals, developing a green workforce starting within our city departments. Looking into the budget and seeing what funds can be utilized to take climate action and equity focused projects.

Community Development Block Grant or (CDBG) is money we get from the Federal Government every year the amount is in the millions. Currently this money is used mostly for council members pet projects. Some more viable than others. This money can be used for brick-and-mortar projects

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sidewalks, rec centers, pools, etc. currently this is how council has been using this money. Another allowed use of this money is green projects. As your next mayor I will create a program incentivizing citizens to put solar panels in their homes and businesses.

Casso:

The first thing I will do if elected mayor is to create a grant writer czar to oversee and

coordinate all the grant writing projects in all city departments. This will solve the problem of the city failing to compete for state and federal funding due to a lack of coordination. For example, the city failed to obtain funding from the Water Development Board and the excuse the city came up with was that Laredo wasn't poor enough.

Mares:

The City should introduce and pass ordinances for incentives for Laredoans who choose green energy. Additionally, developers should too be engaged in providing sustainable infrastructure and green energy in their developments through incentives. The City should also furthermore, require that any new city improvement be green energy, as leading by example is the first way to make the needed change.

Ethics

A council member broke the law for political gain when he violated the sealed juvenile records of his opponent in his last reelection bid; a Council member, an anesthesiologist who reimbursed Medicaid \$340,437.68 to resolve allegations he falsely billed Medicare for the use of electro-acupuncture devices (DOJ, U.S. Attorney, So. District of Texas news release, June 11, 2021) — these are but two front-page examples of the questionable ethics of some who have served on the Council. How would you have acted in the capacity of Mayor to raise these ethical issues as a Council discussion with possible action?

Dr. Treviño:

Issues that involve ethical violations should be sent to the Ethics committee or alternatively a hearing before City Council.

Garza:

No response.

Bryand:

When it comes to ethics in city government no matter the situation my duty will be to allow discussion of the concerns of the citizens and the elected representatives of each district. In any case, where there is a concern or lack of trust by this city's citizens if elected will continue to allow debate and hold an environment of respect.

Vela Jr.:

As your Mayor I will concentrate on the things I can control. One of the reasons the city has such a lack of direction right now is due to the fact that our current administration was more worried about trying to control things and situations that do not pertain to the duties of the Mayor than actually running the day to day business of the city. What the Mayor can

control is what happens within the city and what council members do while working as council members. I will set the example as to how a council member should conduct themselves and handle the duties of a council member while meeting with staff and during council meetings. It is my belief that one of the reasons our council members break our charter as often as they do is because they have not had a Mayor that has lead by example shown them how a stable city should be ran. This administration will ensure that council members understand Robert's rules of order and our city charter and will be held accountable.

Casso:

I would invoke section Section 2.06 Investigation of the Laredo city charter which is as follows: "The City Council shall have the power to inquire into the official conduct of any department, agency, office, or employee of the City. For this purpose the City Council shall have the power to administer oaths, subpoena, witnesses, and to compel the production of books, papers, and other evidence material to the inquiry. The City Council shall provide by

ordinance penalties for contempt in failing or refusing to obey any such subpoena or to produce any such books, papers or other evidence, and shall have the power to punish any such contempt in the manner provided by the ordinance." The manner in which the Ethics Commission operates and commissioners are appointed is corrupt and unethical. The Ethics Commission acted as a fascist organization in order to muzzle and punish a citizen's first amendment rights. If I get elected I will try and wash away the unconstitutional fines and attorney fees imposed on a Laredo citizen. More importantly, I plan on revamping the structure of this Kangaroo court of ethics. As an example, you have a former council member sitting on three separate council member-appointed committees, including the Ethics Commission, and whose business has contracts with the city. He is also a candidate in this election cycle.

Mares:

The City's Ethics Commission should have initiated such conversation and sent a recommendation to the City Council. In the case that the City's Ethics Commission

fails to do such a thing, it is the Mayor's duty as the Chair of the Council to bring such discussion forward.

Martinez III:

No one is above the law; as Mayor, I would investigate all allegations of violations of the Ethics Code and bring it to council

as well as present violations to the Ethics Commission for recommendation.

Budget & Taxes

• **The majority of the City's operating budget is Fire and Police, with healthy union and pension contracts. Would you move these negotiations to off-election years in order to minimize campaign contribution influence?**

• **How would you ensure that these negotiations and contracts are financially sustainable for the City long-term?**

• **One Council member is working to stop sponsoring outside community events to minimize the extra strain on Parks staff and other departments for these events by all 8 Council members. Do you support this move?**

• **As a citizen, you understand that property tax is one of the key revenue sources for City government. As Mayor:**

What sources of data would you want to review/study in order to prepare and lead the questioning discussion prior to adopting the annual property tax rate?

If you answered budget, you do realize the complete proposed budget packet is approximately 600+ pages in length.

• **In your leadership role as the Mayor – Do you think a list of expenditures for the current budget line items should be prepared to compare to the expenditures for the proposed budget, with a narrative description for each expenditure line item that is increased? Would that be a beneficial tool?**

• **If so, how would you use this data when deciding to increase a property tax rate over the No-New-Revenue property tax rate?**

Dr. Treviño:

I do believe that the influence of same-year elections could detrimentally impact negotiations. The negotiations should be conducted by the City Manager and professionals that are trained in these areas to advise the City Council. I do not believe in defunding any service that is essential to the health and safety of our community. This is too broad for a general exclusion, so I will reserve comment based on a case-by-case basis. Our City should be run by the City Manager, so City Manager input will be vital resource. Everyone on

the Council should read the budget, even if it means some lengthy reading. Yes, the most successful businesses are run in the same manner. In order to make an informed decision, one needs to have proper reference and context to see if the impacting expenditures are transitory or long-term.

Garza:

Great question, I would be open to that. Take the money out of politics and you're left with a world full of good people advocating

for the greater good. Change regulations of these negotiations and contracts to benefit the community and city of Laredo. Not in the best interest of the contractors. I don't understand the question 100%, but the city council needs a stronger presence in the community. We can't let these departments do all the work. Whatever demonstrates a move towards progressing Laredo, I am for it. I would focus on data of what the annual property tax rate is in the fastest growing cities across the US. Create a program that

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gives me the most viable solution based on demographics, income and quality of life. Move in that direction. I'll get the best possible solution done. Yes absolutely. The people of Laredo are very low-income. Until I resolve this issue with higher wages by incentivising large companies to come to Laredo to operate. I am against increasing the property tax rate.

Bryand:

The contracts and projects are handled by the city Manager if there were to be a whistleblower or form of information that a city council member financially benefited then I would bring to motion Section 2.06 to find clarity and restore the trust in the local government's ability. Laredos Appraisals raise based on the value, location, and federal reserve and what they do with the dollar.

We have to make the wage of living in Laredo reasonable which starts with Lowering your property taxes. And this challenge is not just local if elected Mayor I will work night and day with local, state, and federal governments to get it done. I know the stress of this worried about perhaps the rent that's due but your wages are just too low the solution is fewer government taxes and having a stable Dollar conservative principles will create a functioning city. The goal will be to make Laredo "financially able" for our citizens or newcomers looking for a place to live or start a business. This creates attraction and investment.

Vela Jr.:

Property taxes are only 10% of our total consolidated budget. Now don't get me wrong \$85 million dollars in property tax is still an enormous amount of money. And Yes, Public safety does take 65% of our \$230 million general fund but our consolidated budget is closer to \$900 million.

The Question was would I move the negotiations to an off year? Yes, this is something we could entertain but we would have to wait until the next negotiations and give a 5-year contract instead of the usual 4-year contract which is not really a problem. The bigger concern is this changing back to the current status quo once I am no longer in office. To me the biggest issue is the black hole that our general fund has become. We need to shrink the pie. By that I mean we need to

stop dumping money into the general fund. If we do this, then the amount of money available to contribute to public safety lessens. Now I want to make it perfectly clear that our administration needs to and will invest in public safety, but we will also be fiscally responsible. By lowering our property tax by 2 cents every year until we get to .55 cents and stopping the massive transfers from our enterprise funds solid waste, bridge, UTILITES, etc. We not only force ourselves to become fiscally responsible but also encourage growth in the private sector and keep more money in our enterprise funds so we can invest it into those funds instead of constantly raising fees in order to continue to provide these services. I would also like to amend our charter to disallow council to sell bonds for the purposes of "discretionary money" the reason for the change in charter is this is the only way for us to ensure council doesn't go back to status quo once I am no longer in office. As for understanding a 900-page budget. Yes, this can be overwhelming as can many of the other duties being mayor. In my time as a council member, I learned that with time your mind begins to slow and absorb this information. The budget process is months long. Most council members only participate during the 3- or 4-day budget workshops. In order to fully understand our budget and ensure that it is as lean as possible you must be active throughout the entire process. This is one reasons I was able to be very effective as a council member bringing forward important projects for district 5 in a fiscally responsible manner extension of Bartlett. Bartlett soccer complex and pool, ambulance and hiring firefighters to man it, Zacate Creek improvements, paving streets, water line replacement, and countless others. I will be involved and engaged in the budget process and day to day business of the city of Laredo. By doing this I will be accountable for everything that happens during my tenure.

Casso:

The current percentage of expenditures for public safety is 65.2% of the General Fund and the ratio for consolidated expenditures is 18.87%. I plan on solving this issue mathematically and by also eradicating the illegal city council pension plans that put a strain on the budget. For example

State's unfunded pension liabilities persist as a long-term challenge. According to the Pew, "For most states, unfunded pension liabilities are the largest of three major long-term obligations weighing on their future finances, ahead of unfunded retiree health care benefits for public employees and outstanding debt." The same could be said for cities throughout the U.S. I fully support the elimination of city council pachangas or political rallies funded by the taxpayer. This is an issue I have exposed in many of my social media commentaries. If the city wants to do something for the citizens of Laredo, then it should organize only one event without the illegal self-pandering and political advertising. And just these week Council member Albert Torres is desecrating the Laredo City Cemetery by sponsoring a drive-in theater at the cemetery. The most important documents in the calculation of the tax rate other than the budget are the Certified Totals and the Tax Rate Calculation Worksheet. If I get elected I will have a year to date amount versus the budgeted amount listed on every line item expenditure on the agenda item the council votes on. This will establish the framework for lowering property taxes by creating realistic metrics and meaningful goals that will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills for establishing an optimum level of taxation to operate the city without burdening the taxpayer and hindering economic growth in our community. I would adhere to the Truth-in-taxation concept that is embodied in the Texas Constitution that requires local taxing units make taxpayers aware of tax rate proposals and to afford taxpayers the opportunity to limit tax increases. The central piece of my platform is to eliminate property taxes for individuals 65 and over for residence homestead through local option exemption in accordance with Property Tax Code Sec. 11.13 (d) in the amount of \$500,000.

Mares:

Yes.

We must invest in our fire and police forces effectively. However, it is prudent that the city's financial state be sustainable for the long-term. I would ensure that these negotiations and contracts are

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Candidates for Mayor

financially sustainable by following the recommendation of the consultants that are hired by the city to represent our best interest. Community events are important to ensure we bring our constituents together. Families throughout the City look forward to such events. I agree in reducing the amount of events currently allocated per district, but not eliminating them in its entirety. The tax rolls and valuations must be reviewed. Budget is a lengthy document, but it must be read and reviewed thoroughly

to ensure that line items that are not needed be eliminated to reduce wasteful spending. Yes, and it would be a beneficial tool. Each line item should have a narrative to justify increases or decreases, for both expenditures and revenues.

Martinez III:

Laredo has recently been named one of the safest cities in the nation and we are well recognized in fire prevention and was

the first in the State to have an accredited College within the Fire Department. Their contracts run concurrent and are negotiated months in advance of their expiration. Market Square, Jalapeño Festival and Jamboozie are just a few of the outside community events that were started in our parks that have gone on and provided entertainment for our citizens. As a proponent for quality of life venues, I will continue to support events where Laredoans gather for entertainment.



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Resiliency: how the city will catch the interest of experienced applicants to begin the journey towards a wise choice of city manager

Si queremos, podemos

Resiliency: “The capacity of individuals, communities, institutions, businesses, and systems within a city to survive, adapt, and grow no matter what kinds of chronic stresses and acute shocks they experience.”

**The Rockefeller Foundation’s
100 Resilient Cities Project**

It is election time and the forthcoming new council and mayor will have the most important decision to make concerning our form of municipal government, choosing a city manager. Will they choose wisely or poorly? It is a question of great consequence because the very future of the city depends on their decision. That is, no city plan is implementable and measured without a city manager and their experience in best practices.

The consultant hired to do the search at the recent city manager public workshop assessed that, given the turnover of city managers the last 8 years, it would be difficult to attract experienced candidates able to address the steep challenges of the city, unless council and administration paid serious attention to following best practices in local government. He fell short of explaining how local governments make following best practices possible. It would have been helpful guidance to explain the prevailing wisdom regarding what generates the best results in cities, and it would be wise to join the wave of cities across Texas and the country that have adopted open government principles.

The wave began in 2008 with the Federal Government’s Open Government Initiative which took measures to institutionalize the principles of open government i.e., reliance on data and evidence, transparency, participation, collaboration, and public engagement. The initiative prompted States and local governments across the country to adopt these imperatives. A google search for “open government cities in Texas” yields

many results and descriptions on what they have done to institute these principles as the basis for how their city works. In order to telegraph to city managers, management, citizens, and people who want to do business with the city that there is a sea change in how the elected body will make decisions on policy and that the duty to the public of transparency, participation, and collaboration in government are of paramount importance.

Understandably, this effort has little chance of creating the fundamental change towards a more sustainable city without resolve. In 2018 in Laredo, there was a start of a shift prompted by a group of young professional advocates who recognized that local data was needed to innovate a better quality of life in the city. They convinced the City to apply to Bloomberg Philanthropies’ program What Works Cities. With the help of the foundation’s program, the Sunlight Foundation, and Johns Hopkins University, Laredo passed an ordinance and open data policy (it can be found in [Laredo Municode](#)). The overarching effect desired was to support open government by committing to make decisions based on data and evidence but has fallen short of meeting the requirements of the whole policy which included, among other important features, measuring the effectiveness of decisions being made. Happily, however, the ordinance and the open data policy do exist and [openlaredo.com](#), a program of the open data policy, is hanging on, and the mantle can be passed to this future elected group. Any potential

city manager, with experience in open government would regard Laredo’s open data policy as a good beginning to a best practice and good beginning to further commit, take stock, and act on helping make information useful to citizens.

According to [The International City/County Management Association](#), ICMA, “the professional and educational organization for appointed management executives and assistants serving local governments,” the result of implementing best practices should be “building resilient and livable communities.” It is the outcome that Laredoans so desperately seek, the lack of which has sowed discontent and mistrust in the community. The Rockefeller Foundation’s 100 Resilient Cities Project, defines resiliency as the “capacity of individuals, communities, institutions, businesses, and systems within a city to survive, adapt, and grow no matter what kinds of chronic stresses and acute shocks they experience.” This suggests that every endeavor from social to economic, that is every person who lives in cities, the economic engines of regions, including the global supply chain depend on how resilience is built into city systems. Planning for and building resiliency requires an operational approach that considers resource management and asset management as one interconnected system so that service is sustained. City managers with experience in building resilient municipal systems and programs would be the most valuable management

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skill to have. Specifically, in Laredo's case, in management of the water supply and distribution system, and management of the primary data resources and information system.

First, water is life. A city requires a supply and fixed assets to distribute it. Water is a resource. Like any other resource, it must be managed. Equally, the distribution pipes and other equipment are assets that have a finite life and need maintenance and repair. They need to be managed. Both resource and asset are one system. A city can have the best pipes and equipment but no water or polluted water, or the best supply of clean water, but a poor distribution system, and the system will fail to deliver. The system can also face catastrophic failures from nature, and planning for recovery is also part of a system. Elected officials do not manage the water system or any system. But if the principles of open government are valued, they do have a responsibility to the city manager and the citizens to commit to best practices.

An example of confusion on this point is playing out today, but if it is true that everyone believes the water system is in catastrophic failure, it is important to change the discourse. It has been vociferously expressed by some in the public and echoed by the candidates that they believe it is a failure of leadership that the City finds itself at this juncture of an aging system, a dwindling water source, and lack of water source redundancy. But leadership will not solve the problem because the question of who is to blame for a failing water system does not address the operational approach that created the problem in the first place. The most important question to ask and answer is what best practices make cities' services resilient - because that is not what

we have today. The best question to ask city managers applicants is - please describe and provide examples of the experience you have in building resilient systems in cities, specifically, the water system. Because without resiliency being the driver of planning, the failures in the system will persist. The City will go through the "secondary water source" (if we can find one) as haphazardly as it did with the first, the river; it will not have a plan to replace aging pipes and equipment as a matter of course. It will not have a plan for recovery from climate events. In short, when the consultant said that the city will not attract many experienced city manager applicants, unless the council and management paid serious attention to following best practices, this realignment of ideals and strategies is what he was talking about.

Second, Information is powerful. That is why open government in a democracy is so important in the advancement of equality, the economy, and quality of life and place. Open government principles require a kind of synchronization of efforts (fueled by the primary data and evidence) between citizens and local government, that is what is meant by participatory and collaborative government. A transparent local government means having strategies and technology in place for information management so that data is attainable, easily understood, meaningful and usable to the public. One can find, uploaded on many open government websites, information on budgets, decision making workflows, policy key performance indicators, implementation of plan goals and outcomes, system capacities, procurement outcomes, just to name a few. Often misunderstood, transparency is not the opposite of corruption, it is the

antidote to corruption. The ICMA defines it as "the principle of allowing those affected by administrative decisions to know about results and about the process that led to decisions." Many citizens assume there is pervasive corruption when, in reality, there is a lack of easily accessible information on subjects that matter to them. When coupled with little or no public engagement for strategic planning with sporadic evidence of follow through, the perception that government is not working for them and only for those in charge feels like reality.

The refrain of this election season in Laredo, is that it feels very different. The pervasive belief is that there are not too many chances left to get it right. The citizens and candidates have focused on the stresses on city infrastructure and systems, the importance of citizens having trust in their local government, and the absolute necessity of having a city manager with experience to right the ship. The consultant hired to conduct the search for city manager made it clear that the city council needed to focus on best practices in local government to attract experienced candidates. This consultant will soon produce the brochure for the solicitation of the city manager. The brochure typically begins with the mission and vision of the city. Here is where the city's resolve and commitment to open government principles of reliance on data and evidence, transparency, participation, collaboration, and public engagement, and its desire to build a resilient and livable community can be stated. This is how the city will catch the interest of experienced applicants and begin the journey towards a wise choice for city manager.

Si queremos, podemos

- José A. Buendía

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District I Candidates



Gigi Rodriguez



Maxine Rebeles



Gilbert Gonzalez



Patty Tijerina
San Miguel

If elected, what three concerns would you prioritize for District 1?

Gigi Rodriguez:

My plans for District 1 are to improve our infrastructure resolving the water issue by exercising all means in replacing the water lines; and to improve our community's safety by installing more lights and speed bumps to prevent speeding violations.

Maxine Rebeles:

My priorities for District 1 are:

Air and Water Quality and Infrastructure
Affordable Housing
Access to healthcare

Gilbert Gonzalez:

One of the most important issues that needs addressing is improving the aging

infrastructure for the City's water treatment plant. I believe that clean water is a human right and as City leaders we need to do our part to ensure our community has access to safe drinking water! Another issue I plan on addressing is the high traffic congestion in South Laredo and increasing traffic safety in residential neighborhoods. I want our children to grow up safely and to feel secure when playing outside. We can discourage reckless driving by installing speed humps to reduce speeds and invest in more lighting for our roadways. I would address the high traffic congestion in South Laredo by working closely with TxDOT to find alternative routes in and out of South Laredo.

Patty Tijerina San Miguel:

I believe that the current pressing issues that are affecting our community include reliable and safe drinking water, wasteful spending, and corruption. We must invest diligently and effectively in our water infrastructure. Water is life, and we must guarantee quality water for the present and future. As I knock on people's doors, I hear the constant complaints of wasteful spending and the lack of effectiveness in city projects. We must bring accountability and smart planning to guarantee the taxpayers that their tax-dollars are invested prudently. Lastly, promoting public trust and confidence in our local government is vital and fundamental to ensuring our municipality works efficiently for all of us.

What sets you apart from the current District 1 Council member?

Rodriguez:

I believe Mr. Gonzalez has done a good job representing district 1. Quite honestly I'm more concerned about what my vision is for all of South Laredo. We have had strong leadership in the past so I want to continue with innovated solutions for our part of the city. It's important that we prioritize business investment so we can provide employment and entertainment opportunities for our residents.

I also believe quality of life is a right of all Laredo residents, and my goal is to equalize as much as possible the ability for all residents to have options within their

residential area to have these opportunities.

Rebeles:

Many talk about being from Laredo and the history they have with our City but no one talks about how they are serving Laredo. After my service in the Navy, I returned to my city to find the lands violated by a wall, the roads and buildings crumbling, displaced families that have been here for generations, and families like mine struggling with little to no access to healthcare.

Business-as-usual on our City Council is not working for us anymore. "Good

Enough," can no longer be the standard because Laredo deserves better. We deserve a City Council that will be transparent, accountable, and bold. That is why I am running for Laredo City Council in District 1.

Gonzalez:

I have two very important qualities that set me apart from the rest: My diverse public service background and the fact that I plan on retiring from Webb County to focus on serving you full-time. For the last 24 years I have worked in various departments

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within the County including, Juvenile Detention Center, Justice of the Peace 2 Place 1, Commissioner Precinct 1, and the Sheriff's Department. Throughout my career in public service, I have gained an understanding on how public organizations work, understand the importance of a healthy and balanced budget, and have had the ability to serve constituents on a one-on-one basis. My entire career has been dedicated to serving the citizens of Laredo and Webb County, and as a result, my

transition from the County to the City will bring great things to the City and my South Laredo community.

Tijerina San Miguel:

Experience makes me stand out in the field of candidates seeking to be elected for City Council District 1. I bring over 30 years of experience as a public servant, having worked nearly twenty years in the Webb County's Sheriff's Department and over ten years as Administrative Assistant

for Commissioner Precinct 3. The three decades of experience and dedication as a public servant have taught me skills not only in management but recognizing the importance of representing our local government's needs and interests at the federal and state level, but also the importance of managing a budget and being fiscally responsible to ensure taxes do not increase and are lowered.

Please characterize the typical residents of District 1 and what they have told you their needs are. In what part of District 1 do you reside and for how long?

Rodriguez:

The residents of district 1 are truly a melting pot of the entire city. We have highly educated professionals, as well as, blue collar workers who are the backbone of our local economy. We have a robust middle class, as well as some areas of lower social economic conditions. Their concerns are more about safety needs such as installing more lights and speed bumps to prevent speeding violations. Our job is to level the playing field when it comes to basic services regardless of your economic status. We have to do a better job of providing the most basic of services and do the job well. I currently reside in the Wright Ranch Subdivision and have since April 2017.

Rebeles:

They are water quality issues, having enough water pressure, clean water. District 1 has

flooding concerns due to poor assessments of land, design, and engineering. District 1 residents need affordable and accessible healthcare. They want transparency about what is being built, what it costs, and how it will affect them.

I've lived in Lomas Del Sur subdivision for 6 years.

Gonzalez:

For the past 20 years, I've had the pleasure of living and working in District 1. I live in the Colonia Las Palmas neighborhood. District 1 is made up of humble and hardworking people. My agenda has always been the needs of my District 1 neighbors: the water issue, addressing the high traffic congestion in South Laredo, and increasing traffic safety in residential neighborhoods by installing speed humps to deter speeding

motorists.

Tijerina San Miguel:

South Laredo is an area in our City that is rapidly growing. In order to grow effectively, we must invest wisely to ensure South Laredo continues to thrive. When elected, I plan to bring more city funds for a new water system to guarantee our families reliable and clean water. Additionally, the safety and wellbeing of our community is key – that is why we must invest in our first responders to safeguard our police and fire protection. Our infrastructure is in much need of betterment, and we must bring more city funds for better streets and roads. Lastly, our trash service is in need of attention, and we must work diligently to beautify South Laredo and bring cleanliness to our community.

What about you do you believe invites the electorate's trust in your ability to serve without compromising or violating their trust?

Rodriguez:

Honestly I believe any political officeholder or Candidate running for office can only build trust and confidence by their actions. Too many people running for office promise so many things that they know they cannot comply with or accomplish. The business of government is a complicated maze of bureaucracies that can only be tamed with persistence and dedication to the people we serve. So I hope to gain my constituents' trust by having them believe in me and trusting me to get the job done so that they can see that I am a person of action and

deeds and not of hollow promises.

Rebeles:

Residents of District 1 trust me because I am one of them. I'm the daughter of working class immigrant parents. I'm the sister who shows up to your medical appointments when you need me. I'm the mom that is working to break generational trauma within her own family. I'm the teacher at your schools fighting to teach the truth in our classrooms. I'm the Laredoan calling for clean air and water, land protections, access to affordable housing, and healthcare

as a right. I am dedicated to improving and protecting Laredo!

Gonzalez:

I am a family man who is heavily invested in the success of my district. As I have repeatedly told my constituents, I am doing this for US! My resume speaks for itself. I've dedicated my entire career to serving my people, the people of South Laredo. Win, lose, or draw, I'll always be here in support of my people!

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It is no secret that there are morale issues among City employees who have witnessed the micromanaging of City staff and department heads, and the demoralizing practice in the past by some Council members to ask for jobs for friends and family members, sometimes at a salary higher than a skilled, experienced employee. How will you address employee morale in this and other aspects?

Rodriguez:

As a former government employee for several local agencies I can tell you firsthand about how the action of policy makers affects the organization as a whole. I know the city has had some tremendous challenges especially in areas of real basic services. I believe we need to honor our employees with the hard work that they do. We also as council members need to remember that the city manager is the person who oversees the operations of the city. We cannot and should not micro manage any aspects of normal city government operations. Our job is simply to hire a competent City Manager, set policy, and approve the budget. We should be advocates for our constituents, however, not at the cost of micro managing our city operations. I know that each and every employee is a hard working proud member of our community, and each of them know how to better our city. We need to foster that pride in our city so they are 100 percent invested.

Rebeles:

As we all know, fixing or dismantling

broken systems takes time. I'd begin by having listening sessions.

In the Navy, I discovered that in order to start understanding the problems, you need to listen to the ones closest to the fracture in the systems to begin to understand where the issues lie. The two major issues impacting our local administration are greed and corruption. Profit is always prioritized over our pueblo for these reasons. As I've previously said, the only way to start healing and fixing the structural failures within City Hall is through transparency, accountability, and courageous action.

Gonzalez:

This is an excellent question! Employee morale is critical to an organization's success. The role of the City Manager is to mediate between politics and administration, and the City Council must respect that distinction. Equally important, no one should be micromanaged or demoralized at work. If we micromanage departments, we are not allowing our directors to succeed on their own. Currently, the city is conducting

a salary study to analyze pay grades and job descriptions for all city positions. When elected, I plan to respect what comes out of the study, trust directors' decisions when hiring individuals for positions within their department, and not interfere with hiring processes for employees. I would also like to work with the human resources department and City Management to see what analysis they have done to gauge employee morale within the organization and work in conjunction with City management to invest in our employees to bring up morale.

Tijerina San Miguel:

Employee morale is important to ensure high quality customer service and a productive working environment. I'd make employee morale an expectation of city management since they are responsible for the operations and management of the city and its employees. Additionally, I believe that guaranteeing the City Manager's Office that no elected or public official should overreach their power into the operations of the city would help in addressing this issue.

The recent instability in City government has been unsettling. The hiring and speedy exits of city attorneys, and the hiring (and exit) of an inexperienced individual as City Manager (over the recommendations of a nine member search committee appointed by the Mayor and Council in 2019) – these are telling indicators of dysfunction and a lack of leadership.

Rodriguez:

The role of the city council is clear as explained in my previous response. However, it is the responsibility of the council to choose a competent individual to operate our city. Remember, it is the men and women who are the boots on the ground that preform the day-to-day operations of our city. They just need strong leadership to inspire them to be 100 percent committed to the city. I would not want to comment

on previous selections because I'm not well versed on the unique circumstances of the qualification or applications. I do believe that the instability that has been created over the last 8 years has undermined our ability to be a destination of choice for quality candidates. Who would take a job here if you will be replaced in a couple of years? There is something to be said about having stability at the head of the organization. We also need someone with

the guts to tell people no when it's called for. The right of the council to select a qualified applicant is a right given to them by their constituency, if they are unhappy with the choice that is made, then the ultimate veto power that people have is the subsequent election timeframe.

(Continued on next page)

District I Candidates

Rebeles:

I believe the first step is to identify the source of the issue. No one will feel safe speaking up if the workplace is unfriendly. Before any improvements can be made, those who are just interested in their own personal gain must be fired from their posts. As long as they are the best candidate for the position, it doesn't matter whether an outside CM needs to be employed. Golden parachutes must be stopped since Laredo won't have any left to save itself.

Gonzalez:

The City is planning on hiring a firm to help scout a new City Manager. If elected, my role in ensuring the new City manager is capable of doing their job would be to hire someone that is both qualified and experienced in

running a municipality of our size, if not larger. The City needs someone who has an education in public administration and managing a multimillion dollar budget. This person must be ethical, dependable, and capable of dealing with nine very different personalities; each with their own ideas about how to move the City or district forward as well as managing the operation and administration of the City. In a recent interview by a former city manager, he said "If everybody could get their oars in the water and decide to row in the same direction. I think that's one of our biggest problems." City Council needs to work together for the betterment of Laredo!

Tijerina San Miguel:

The City is in dire need of an innovative

leader that can take the City to the next level. The instability that has been caused by the current City Council does not transpire well with the constituency and affects the recruitment of a City Manager. First, the City must conduct a "real" nationwide search. Second, I believe the City Council should put together a list of characteristics and goals they expect of the new manager so that the applicants know what the City Council is expecting of them. Lastly, the City Council needs to guarantee the prospect manager that they will support their management style and everyday decision making, without making any threats of termination, so that they work diligently without fear of retaliation or threats.

Do you use cañoneros(as)to harvest votes for you?

Rodriguez:

Recent legislation at the state level has restricted any kind of assistance even to the point of not allowing staff members to give water out. That in my mind is voter suppression!

To be specific to your question about having people harvest votes? I do not have anyone who I associate with that "harvest" of votes.

Rebeles:

No, I never have and never will.

Gonzalez:

No, I do not.

Tijerina San Miguel:

No.



District II Candidates



Ricardo Rangel



Daisy Campos Rodriguez

If elected, what three concerns would you prioritize for District 2?

Ricardo Rangel: Infrastructure, Integrity, and working in partnership with all entities to maximize the tax dollar of our residents.

What sets you apart from the current District 2 Council member?

Rangel: I have never held an office, and I bring sincerity and honesty to serve our community and city. I have no hidden agenda, but do bring the promise to treat our City with much respect and the promise to work on bringing back stability and employee morale.

Please characterize the typical residents of District 1 and what they have told you their needs are. In what part of District 2 do you reside and for how long?

Rangel: I have lived in the original District 2 all my life; now it has been re-vamped to a NEW District 2 while only keeping Lomas del Sur. While block walking I have encountered that citizens want to have trust in city government. In order to accomplish that we must address the real issues within our City to continue to provide these services to our community. While parks are in part, quality of life, we must look at what is pressing and that is much needed infrastructure to service our City.

What about you do you believe invites the electorate's trust in your ability to serve without compromising or violating their trust?

Rangel: By keeping it transparent and for the most part real. Without hiding or misusing the position is how trust is gained. Nothing to us should be given but more so gained by the electorates. First and foremost, I want to keep the promise of not having to continue to campaign (in money contributions) if elected. Re-visit the idea of having many millions of dollars in discretionary monies in a four-year term (\$3.2 million to be exact) and give it back to our departments who are our backbone and for them to utilize these monies for efficiency and services.

It is no secret that there are morale issues among City employees who have witnessed the micromanaging of City staff and department heads, and the demoralizing practice in the past by some Council members to ask for jobs for friends and family members, sometimes at a salary higher than a skilled, experienced employee. How will you address employee morale in this and other aspects?

Rangel: By valuing who currently works for us, promoting from within our own departments and making sure we give j_u_s_t_ raises within the bounds of the budget. City charter does not allow for us (hopefully elected myself) to hire any family members, I know it has occurred now, but I want to help with ending that and hopefully gaining the trust of our current employees to better all departments.

The recent instability in City government has been unsettling. The hiring and speedy exits of city attorneys, and the hiring (and exit) of an inexperienced individual as City Manager (over the recommendations of a nine member search committee appointed by the Mayor and Council in 2019) – these are telling indicators of dysfunction and a lack of leadership.

Rangel: I would welcome the unified diversity of all districts' constituency to be part of a committee that would help us make a decision that impacts the entirety of our city government. Therefore, we must come to a decision that is based on recommendations by who we select to represent us during a very important role. Hopefully if I get the opportunity to represent the district I can promise to be true to the recommendation and NOT micromanage the City Managers' office, but more so work alongside them with the recommendations to place our city into the future.

Do you use cañoneros(as)to harvest votes for you?

Rangel: No, but I do have many family members and friends who are supporting my campaign.

“One of the penalties for refusing to participate in politics is that you end up being governed by your inferiors”
-Plato

District III Candidates



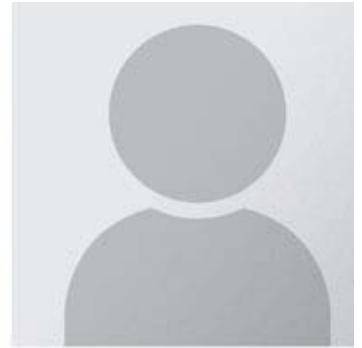
Jerrv Perez



Melissa R. Cigarroa



Abraham "Ahev" Lugo



Eric Wickstrom

If elected, what three concerns would you prioritize for District 3?

Cigarroa:

My priorities for the residents of District 3 are:

Ensuring that the Water Infrastructure Master Plan is executed promptly and well, in the hands of experienced, qualified contractors;

Aligning traffic safety with the needs in District 3 neighborhoods; and

Working with the City and private interests to stimulate development of the Old Hospital in order to remove the burden of a public

safety hazard and encourage economic vitality.

Lugo:

Currently, Clean reliable water, pro-business support, and increased safety and security for District 3 are the major concerns. In order to effectively move forward, we must first deliver these basic functions. Recent shortcomings have derailed the public's trust in our local government. I will tend to restore it and move Laredo in a new direction.

Wickstrom:

Water quality, having the City Manager and Assistants to be on top of their job supplying reports from LaredoWater Utilities and the reports to and from TECQ. 2. I would make it a priority to focus on the replacement of water lines in the Heights due to the return of repairs of line breaks even after they've been repaired. 3. Safety, not only in District 3, but oversee all situations for the safety of the public.

What sets you apart from the current District 3 Council member?

Cigarroa:

As an environmental advocate, I am passionate about introducing Laredoans to the natural wonders that exist in our community, because the health of our environment is absolutely central to the health and sustainability of our City. As a mother of five, I think about decisions that guide the direction of our City's growth in terms of how it will impact future generations. I also believe that maintaining communications with District 3 residents is necessary during the Council tenure so that their needs are prioritized when making decisions that affect them. Therefore, if elected, I plan to hold regular town halls and

meetings at neighborhood centers in the District.

Lugo:

With the new redistricting, District 3 has taken on a new form. This requires a candidate who understands compromise and one who can adapt to the changes that unfold. My journey will be different from the current council member. I can better answer what sets me apart from other candidates. I have a tested leadership background serving overseas in Iraq as a Marine. I've served my Country, I'm serving my State, and now I'm a candidate

ready to serve my city. No man can point to my riches, of all the candidates running for District 3, I'm the only one who has pledged to donate the entire salary. Please characterize the typical residents of District 3 and what they have told you their needs are. In what part of District 3 do you reside and for how long?

Wickstrom:

What makes me stand out from the current Council member, he stepped down from his position and can't answer other than I'll do my job and not approve unnecessary and wasteful spending of the taxpayers money.

*"Not voting is not a protest. It is a surrender."
- Keith Ellison*

Please characterize the typical residents of District 3 and what they have told you their needs are. In what part of District 3 do you reside and for how long?

Cigarroa:

Typical residents of District 3 are family-oriented and hard-working. They are concerned about the lack of sidewalks when they take their children to school and the traffic congestion because of the restricted access to their neighborhoods. They pay high water and electricity bills and then feel neglected when the boil water notices and service cut-offs seem to “target” those that live in the South. They want to see their green spaces well-cared for and connected to a longer greenbelt for their families’ enjoyment. They want access to the City departments that control these things, because when they have made time to take issues to City authorities in the past, at a cost in lost work or arranged childcare, they feel like the responses they have received

are dismissive. They feel that services like traffic lights at intersections, speed bumps on longer streets, and maintenance and lighting in parks are City responsibilities that have not reached their neighborhoods yet, and they believe that is wrong.

I have raised my family in District 3 for 29 years in the same neighborhood, the Heights.

Lugo:

In District 3 you can find residents from all walks of life, but the vast majority have voiced their concerns to improve our water quality and infrastructure. In addition, new and established communities have safety concerns with the lack of speed bumps to control speeding within residential areas.

For the last 4 years, I have resided in the Heights area of District 3. However, as a graduate of United South High School, I am very much familiar with the entire District 3 communities. My childhood friends grew up in these communities. This is where we played together when we were children.

Wickstrom:

What I have gathered from residents in District 3 their concerns are traffic safety, water quality and water distribution, along with reaching out to local law enforcement to patrol for the safety of pedestrians and other drivers. Another subject is the old Mercy Hospital and how is it going to be handled and the assurance that the City of Laredo will not purchase that property, and stopping the unnecessary spending.

What about you do you believe invites the electorate’s trust in your ability to serve without compromising or violating their trust?

Cigarroa:

I have served the community since my family came to Laredo. I was a breastfeeding educator, a Laredo Children’s Museum board member and later director for the Imaginarium of South Texas, a volunteer for Casa Misericordia, a teacher trainer with the Texas Regional Collaborative, and I have been a passionate advocate for the environment and the river with the Rio Grande International Study Center. My work in the No Border Wall Coalition and the Clean Air Laredo Coalition, standing against Federal seizure of City lands and drawing attention to the public health issue created by the emissions of a toxic chemical in our neighborhoods, has driven me to run for this public office. I have never chosen to put profit over people. I sincerely wish to contribute to Laredo’s progress as a community and better the lives for the

families and people who choose to call Laredo their home.

Lugo:

Upholding an oath is not a new commitment for me. I swore an oath as a U.S. Marine to defend my Country and I did so with honor. I swore an oath with DPS as a State Police Officer to serve and protect the public. In the words of Bjorn Ironside: “You know who I am, I grew up with many of you. You were my neighbors, my friends. We played together when we were children.” I hold all of Laredo’s best interest at heart.

Wickstrom:

Other than some of the residents in our City know who I am and where I came from, I ran a successful air conditioning company for 26 years, I brought back Wizard Wicks Pizza after being closed for

over 36 a successful business that created jobs and supports the talent of our local musicians and provides entertainment to our community. Many people approach me for help of a fundraiser for burial of a loved one or fund raising for someone with cancer to generate money for medical expenses. We have helped families by opening our doors by donating the restaurant and our time to help in any way we can. I would like to add that we need to reduce or eliminate the property taxes of the elderly, disabled, retired teachers, and disabled veterans who qualify. I’ve heard from many that some living on a fixed income have lost their homes due to being disabled and limited. We can save money for the taxpayer by not overpaying City officials or paying the salaries of unqualified individuals.

It is no secret that there are morale issues among City employees who have witnessed the micromanaging of City staff and department heads, and the demoralizing practice in the past by some Council members to ask for jobs for friends and family members, sometimes at a salary higher than

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a skilled, experienced employee. How will you address employee morale in this and other aspects?

Cigarroa:

I will respect the City Manager, working with her or him to promote a professional work environment. I pledge to never recommend potential hires for City Departments unless serving on an official search committee, and I will hold to basic ethical standards while conducting City business, which I would expect in all of City government. I will ask interviewees for the position of City Manager (since it appears that this Council will not proceed with this pressing duty) for their plans to enforce our City ordinance against nepotism and favoritism in hiring, and I also will ask the new City Manager to review procedures at the department of human

resources to ensure that a process to receive and investigate City employee complaints maintains anonymity and that these requests are given the respect and attention they deserve.

I believe every City Council member should pledge to refrain from any interference in the hiring or firing of City employees.

Lugo:

Inconsistency is what created the issues we are facing now. I will bring consistency and stability to all our city employees. This is the first step to building morale. Micromanaging has been proven to be ineffective in various

organizations. Moving away from this practice must be implemented entirely. As a council member, it is not my duty to create followers, I will create efficient and effective leaders and provide them with the tools needed to move Laredo forward.

Wickstrom:

Nepotism and favoritism have no place in City government. An individual looking for a job should get there on his own without the help of relatives or favoritism. I'm all for qualified individuals and having professionals in our City's work force instead of contracting out. We should be able to generate good jobs in house.

The recent instability in City government has been unsettling. The hiring and speedy exits of city attorneys, and the hiring (and exit) of an inexperienced individual as City Manager (over the recommendations of a nine member search committee appointed by the Mayor and Council in 2019) – these are telling indicators of dysfunction and a lack of leadership.

Cigarroa:

I will insist that the City Council reviews only qualified candidates who have the necessary background, experience and education to fulfill the duties of the City Manager. I believe in the use of a search committee, one that consists of a variety of respected leaders in our community, to find candidates without bias and who come from outside the city and state, and I pledge to allow this committee to do its work unimpeded by Council interference. I will stand by the recommendation of this committee in my vote.

Lugo:

This is a difficult task. Laredo currently holds an unfavorable perception in the hiring process of city managers. I will work to outline the exact path needed in order to highlight Laredo's full potential. The next city manager must also be able to study our city and formulate a plan of progress. If we are to place them at the head of our city, then they hold our future in their hands. My role would be to test them and ensure that Laredo's best interest is in their hearts and most importantly, do they even possess the abilities

to lead us in a better direction?

Wickstrom:

I think the hiring of a (Qualified) City Attorney and (Qualified) City Manager should be under an agreement between the applicant and the City, the applicant being under a probationary period and evaluated periodically by Council members to ensure the candidates were a right fit for the job and not being over paid for incompetence, having a binding contract, and being covered by a Golden Parachute.

Do you use cañoneros(as) to harvest votes for you?

Cigarroa:

No. The idea of paying for votes is such a slap in the face of what we as Americans believe: elections are not for sale to the highest bidder, and decisions made by those elected should be based not on some

local special interest, but on a judgement of what is best for the City and its residents.

Lugo:

No.

Wickstrom:

No, no need for cañoneros, I am running a grassroots campaign leaving the decision to our constituents and people who know who I am in District 3 and throughout our City.

“Our political leaders will know our priorities only if we tell them, again and again, and if those priorities begin to show up in the polls.”

-Peggy Noonan

District VI Candidates



L. "Vish" Viswanath



Rafael Dueñas



Rick Laurel



Fernando Baldazo



Dr. Tyler King

If elected, what three concerns would you prioritize for District 6?

L. "Vish" Viswanath:

As citizens we need to be concerned over 1. Our water system, 2. taxes, and 3. Review and make recommendations on the hiring processes and talent retention of the city.

First, water is a precious resource and as we move forward into another term, I will ensure that we are meeting best practices for a healthy water supply, I will be involved in reviewing alternate water sources, and making sure the current infrastructure exceeds the necessary codes. Finally, I will ascertain that we have the right talent in place to alleviate and improve the current state of our water supply.

Second, higher taxes take on a new meaning in this uncertain economy. Our citizens are working harder than ever only to see their budgets shrink. Their priority is the well-being of their family. I will review the budgets, eliminate needless

and wasteful spending, and maximize our existing resources without adding an extra tax burden to our citizens.

Finally, what ties all these together is that I will review the hiring processes and talent retention of the City. I will ensure best business practices are situated that will have a long-term impact on the hiring and retention of our talent. We need qualified individuals that are ready to take on the opportunities of our growing trade infrastructure, and that come ready to tackle the innovations occurring daily in our city. We must have effective onboarding in place that provides employees with quality training, and cross-training to provide a culture of teamwork. Together we can make a difference.

Rick Laurel:

Clean water: The city's water issues are severe and extremely important for Laredo's

future growth! How are we to attract new businesses when we can't take care of our water's infrastructure? I will work with Council to ensure that the proper attention is given to this issue. We have kicked the can down the road for too long and it is time for action! Let's get the job done and take care of our city's greatest need.

Quality of life: Working with private and public entities to bring more amenities to our district is a must and is not being addressed by other candidates. Together we can bring things to the district that allow our children to have a better experience in the district. Having places for them to enjoy themselves is very important; I will work to bring a rec-center/e-library or elderly center to the district. We need to involve the whole community in these plans to learn what they want, instead of imposing

What sets you apart from the current District 6 Council member?

Vish:

I plan to strategize and innovate to tackle the issues that are most pressing. I plan on being visible, more vocal and better involved in improving the current water infrastructure. We need to review the reservoir tanks, chemicals used, and make sure we are meeting the demands of the city; and that we are disaster ready. I am ready to work on whether the city is actually implementing best hiring practices and retention. Improvement projects are always welcome, but we must look beyond

the aesthetics to ensure the future of our city.

Laurel:

I'm a Laredoan, I was raised in Laredo; I love Laredo, I am proud to be raising my family here. I understand constituents needs and wants. I attended local public schools and graduated from United High School in the heart of District 6. I am a successful international trade executive and a Licensed Customs Broker. I would be the first Council Member to represent

the transportation/international trade industry. I bring 22 years of professional experience in international trade; I run a multimillion-dollar business and know how to handle a profitable business. I attended the University of Texas at El Paso and earned my Bachelors of Science in Business Administration. I am the most viable and legitimate choice for District 6. I would use my business experience and education to ensure the growth of the

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District VI Candidates

district and the city, ensuring that we are fiscally responsible to ensure success for the future of our city.

Baldazo:

I do not have patients to prioritize my time, therefore my commitment will be 100% to the citizens of Laredo as a full-time City Council member.

Dr. King:

To start, I was the first person to enter the campaign, and I did so when the incumbent was presumed to be running for re-election. I was willing to challenge the status-quo and fight for a better Laredo when it wasn't going to be easy. The other candidates decided to run once it became an open seat. Additionally, I am relatively new to Laredo, and I bring a fresh perspective to how we can solve some of

our city's biggest problems. To the best of my knowledge, I am also the only candidate in this race with any military experience. I am a Captain in the US Army Reserve, serving as a physician officer. I was also a high school history teacher for four years before going to medical school. On top of that, as a physician, I am uniquely qualified to help address our status as a medically underserved area.

Please characterize the typical residents of District 6 and what they have told you their needs are. In what part of District 6 do you reside and for how long?

Vish:

I reside in San Isidro for over 20 years, and for over 15 years my business has been situated on McPherson and Del Mar. The residents are all well-informed, caring, and equally concerned. They are friends, family, neighbors, clients, and strangers who became friends that express mounting anxieties over the water supply, politics, taxes, quality of life, and safety of this great city they call home.

Laurel:

District 6 residents vote. They're educated on the issues at hand and can't be bought. They're centered around family and driven by business. The district is vast and diverse. We have people of all ages and from all industries living in Dist. 6. There are so many different needs to be met, and the needs of

many falls on the shoulders of someone that should be open to information because of the people's education levels.

I reside in Sontera Subdivision off of San Isidro Blvd.

Baldazo:

District 6 is a mix of government employees, trade industry associates, and entrepreneurs. Their concerns are the outrageous water bills and property taxes, as well as all the questionable business and unethical behavior going on in City government.

I have lived in the district for 25 years and currently live in Winfield.

Dr. King:

The residents of District 6 are very diverse. They are working class, middle class, upper middle class, and wealthy. We have the Country Club, but we also have people working multiple jobs so their kids can be zoned for the best schools. We have a lot of Small Business Owners, Border Patrol Agents, Teachers, Police Officers, Nurses, Doctors, Firefighters, and many in the trade community. They want a government that works for them and that cuts the fat and waste. They want to see where their tax dollars are going. They know Laredo has so much potential, but they are frustrated their government seems to get in the way. As for me, my wife and our daughter, we live in the Khaledi Heights area, just north of Del Mar near Loop 20.

What about you do you believe invites the electorate's trust in your ability to serve without compromising or violating their trust?

Vish:

As a citizen, I am consistent, passionate, and I too am concerned. Through "Our Laredo," a non-profit group serving the citizens of Laredo, I have long advocated for change, accountability, and transparency. Over the years, my attitude has not changed. I take an interest, and I make myself available to the citizens. As the selected candidate, I will continue to champion accountability and transparency. We need change that continues to carry us into a more promising and stable future -for all.

Laurel:

I feel all the pains that my constituents feel. I'm a taxpayer, I have children, I want more for my family, I want a better Laredo for all. We deserve it. I grew up in Laredo

Baldazo:

I have been calling out City Council on dubious dealings and illegal ordinances for over 7 years. I do not provide any services to the City, nor do I have a hidden agenda. I want to get elected to be able to get things done for the citizens of Laredo.

Dr. King:

The people are tired of the same recycled names and career politicians. I am someone who is not from Laredo without favors to return and without backs to scratch. I don't have any political baggage or skeletons in my closet. As a former Teach For America Corps Member and currently as a Captain in the US Army Reserve, I come from trusted institutions that select people with character and instill values such as honesty and service. My entire professional career up to this point has been about serving others. It would be an honor to continue that service as the next City Councilmember for District 6.

It is no secret that there are morale issues among City employees who have witnessed the micromanaging of City staff and department heads, and the demoralizing practice in the past by some Council members to ask for jobs for friends and family members, sometimes at a salary higher than a skilled, experienced employee. How will you address employee morale in this and other aspects?

Vish: It is critical that hiring policies, practices and hiring criteria change. The City of Laredo is a main artery –the beginning of the lifeline of goods and services that travel to critical locations all across the northern hemisphere. It is imperative to scour the best talent to move us forward. There is so much talent within the city that –all they need is an opportunity. The local college and University produce top tier talent. The School of Business is certified by the main institution, the highly coveted AACSB. We cannot continue to recycle and curry favor. Laredo needs to be ready for opportunities and must withstand change, turmoil, and uncertainty. We need to be competitive, aggressive, strategically situate our talent to bring the very best of Laredo forward. We must recognize long term employees and foster their talents and knowledge. We must give them a voice and an opportunity. They are the ones that know where we can best improve and change. We must recognize their efforts, and promote with fairness.

Finally, we need to implement a reward system, and we need to bring a breadth of innovation and much needed training.

Laurel: I strongly believe that the City Council’s job is to set policy and not micromanage the City Manager or the department directors. The mingling of both should not be allowed. The hiring of a strong city manager will be a priority of the new council, and I will make sure that who we hire is strong enough to not take part in the micro-managing and the nepotism that we have heard so much of. The hiring process should be the same throughout the city and we should hire the best candidates for the job.

Baldazo: Human resources needs better training. Give HR direct number or email to a state official to report any hiring of employees as political favors. We need to incentivize employees so they can go above and beyond their responsibilities while working as a team. Pay them above competitive salaries and add a yearly bonus as a motivation to stay working for the City.

Dr. King: We must change the toxic culture at City Hall. We all know far too many people who have been passed over for jobs by those who have connections to City Councilmembers or other higher ups in City Management. We need to completely overhaul the Human Resources department to ensure up to date and equitable hiring practices are being implemented. It’s also imperative that City Council members stay out of the day-to-day micromanaging of City Management so we can hire a qualified City Manager to do the job well. No quality City Manager will want to come to Laredo if they know there is a crooked City Council looking over their shoulders. That is why this coming election is so important. We need to elect Council members with honesty and competence to show the world we are ready to move Laredo forward.

The recent instability in City government has been unsettling. The hiring and speedy exits of city attorneys, and the hiring (and exit) of an inexperienced individual as City Manager (over the recommendations of a nine member search committee appointed by the Mayor and Council in 2019) – these are telling indicators of dysfunction and a lack of leadership.

Vish: The change we need comes from within. We must ensure that the city has hiring policies and practices that meet the highest standards. Once reviewed and polished, the policies must reflect the highest forms of scrutiny, integrity, and transparency. Strategically, this City is too important to recycle the same ideas; otherwise, we will continue to see the same mistakes. There is no one true formula, I plan on working hard at this, but we must rely on the best practices to reform our hiring and retention policies. Highly desirable candidates will be easier to vet once these are in place.

Laurel: I consider the hiring of the next city manager the #1 priority for the new council. My role is to ensure that the best candidate for the job is hired. We should make a nation-wide search to ensure that no stone be left unturned. I will ensure that the search be a neutral one where there is no favoritism for one candidate or another. I would go as far as to ask for only the applicants’ experiences rather than know who they are and where they’re from.

Baldazo: I recently attended a workshop on what defines a good City Manager. I would attend another workshop and hire a Human resources company to help present Laredo with 3 possible candidates for the position.

Dr. King: If we say we are going to have a national search for the best possible City Manager, then we better mean it. We cannot let history repeat itself with what happened in 2019. Laredo deserves a City Manager

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with competence, integrity, but no such person will take the job if we have a City Council that won't allow them to do their job well. We also need more checks and

balances in our City Government to ensure a City Manager has the ability to do the job correctly. Also, if a perfect candidate comes along, we must be willing to hire

them quickly without indecision from Council.

Do you use cañoneros(as) to harvest votes for you?

Vish:

No. I am running an ethical campaign. I have supporters who believe in a better community. I run on integrity and grass root word of mouth. My supporters expect me to run on integrity.

Laurel:

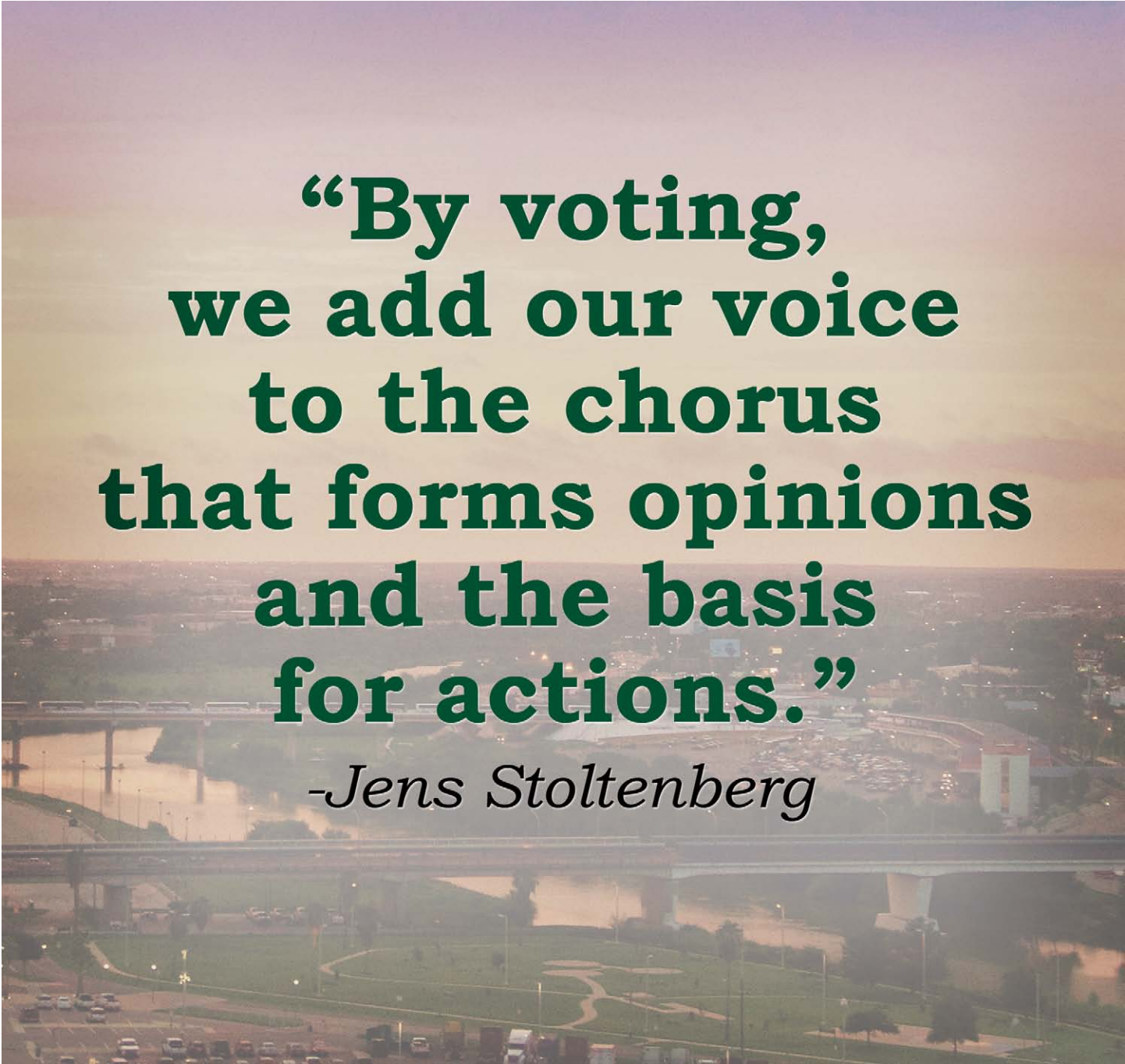
No.

Baldazo:

No, I do not use cañoneros. I use my work ethic, my over 30 years of management experience, and community volunteering to earn support and votes.

Dr. King:

I absolutely do not use cañoneros(as). I find it an unethical practice. We should all be playing by the same rules and fighting for the same votes equally.



**“By voting,
we add our voice
to the chorus
that forms opinions
and the basis
for actions.”**

-Jens Stoltenberg