



Jon Willey

Better Cupertino supporter runs for Cupertino City Council

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For him, it started with his family.

Cupertino City Council candidate Jon Willey had more or less kept to himself when he moved into Cupertino with his wife 21 years ago. He was going to live out his life in his neighborhood of Rancho Rinocada, and he was fine with that.

All of that changed when he had kids and they started going to school.

When Willey's wife Amor went to the local crowded elementary school to apply for their son Ethan, she received package 93 out of 96. Had she arrived 30 minutes later, the family would have had to send their children to a school farther away.

"Wow, that was a wake up call," Willey said. "That's the start."

Following this, Sand Hill Property Company (SHPC) began proposing their Main Street project in 2012. Remembering how crowded the local schools already were, Willey took his experience in engineering to a City Council meeting, where he explained to the Council the impact that 140 new apartments would have on traffic and the school population. After attending more outreach meetings, Willey backed off, having stated his concerns — until SHPC started construction and he looked at the numbers. The health club slated to have three floors was now a four story office building. From there, Willey dug deeper into the original plan, and found inconsistencies between the plan that was approved by the City Council and the plan that ultimately went through.

"To me, that's a violation," Willey said. "The planning department said, 'We've approved it, so there's no violation,' but it does not conform to what was approved. A lot of them don't conform to the general plan."

Later, when SHPC first bought and proposed a new renovation plan for Vallco in 2014, Willey grew concerned about the 2 million square feet of office space that it would add because the added workers would further congest traffic and crowd local schools. This concern only grew after then councilman Orrin Mahoney approved the plan, with a second from then councilman Gilbert Wong. It had then been a few weeks since political action committee Better Cupertino (BC) was founded by fellow candidate Liang Chao, who approached Willey after one of his presentations and asked him to join. Willey, who saw that his own goals aligned with BC's, accepted the invitation and has been attending meetings ever since.

Willey during one of his many presentations at a City Council meeting

As Willey's involvement in local politics continued, he felt increasingly as if the City Council had no interest in hearing out the very citizens it was meant to serve. This sentiment, and his resulting philosophy that a government should uphold democratic values and listen to its citizens, is what prompted him to ultimately run for City Council. In particular, the decision made by Mahoney and Wong regarding Vallco renovation concerned him greatly.

"I don't feel the majority of the City Council, both the previous ones that have left... and then the current ones are listening to the residents," Willey said. "And from their actions, they seem to be heavily biased towards the developers and what the developers want."

If he secures a seat on the Cupertino City Council, Willey intends to be transparent with Cupertino residents. That means, for example, showing them analyses of how many workers are going to be coming in and how much more traffic would be generated with each new development project. Willey says that his first priority is gathering input from residents, something that he feels has been lacking in the past. Such input is something that Willey has deemed essential to democracy itself.

"To me, there is no more important responsibility for our elected officials than to represent the people," Willey said. "If I'm on the City Council, I will be representing the people."