

*City of*  
**SACRAMENTO**  
Councilmember Lisa Kaplan

**Transcript**

**3/14/24 P&PE Meeting**

**Interviews: D2 Candidates**

**Q&A of candidates selected to interview at full council on 3/26**

**Question:**

**VM Maple: What is your work style like? How do you plan to work together especially with people you don't agree with?**

- Shoun Thao:
  - During my time working for Council for the past 7 years, a lot of the community members disagreed with my Councilmember, even going to the point saying that he doesn't live here.
  - My job is not to get politically involved; my job is to work for the betterment of our community. Moving the City forward is the top priority. If it benefits the citizens, then I definitely stand behind it.
- Smith:
  - My work style I would describe as inclusive. In policy you never get anything done in a vacuum. You need 5 votes to get anything done – I'm inclusive to the sphere of 4.
  - I believe in looping in as many people as possible. We all win when we share our ideas.
- Raquel Shipp:
  - Workstyle is collaborative leadership. As I currently work in a small group of leaders that are very opinionated who have such heart and perspective for how to best serve our community, sometimes I have to take in perspectives that are not always my perspective or about subjects I'm fully knowledgeable about and trust.

**Question:**

**CM Valenzuela: This is 9 months of your life that you're giving to District 2. If you are willing to do the work, you can get a lot done in 9 months, but you also have other jobs and responsibilities – how do you plan to balance your personal responsibilities with the time that will be necessary to give District 2 the level of service that we all hope to see in this interim position?**

- Tim Smith:
  - I am retired so don't have competing work commitments. I do have family and I volunteer with the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary which works nicely with this position. This position would not take me away from other commitments that I have.
- Raquel Shipp:
  - I had to ask everyone permission, but it was only because everyone else was asking me to do this. I took this request to my mom, my children, and my team at the Sacramento Youth Center. Building out systems in order to make my life easy and relying on my community is something I've done in the past and plan to do moving forward.
- Shoun Thao:
  - I currently run a non-profit but I can guarantee that I am committed to working at City Hall. I have been there from my previous experience and understand the duties that come from watching my former Councilmember as a staff.
  - Even when I'm not on Council I'm still working with the City as an ambassador. I am still getting information from City Hall and sending it to the public and the community as well.

#### **Question:**

**MPT Talamantes: Lately the City of Sacramento has been making a lot of headlines and we are trying to improve accountability and transparency in the community – what do you think the City can do to build public trust?**

- Raquel Shipp:
  - Trust is something that is earned. When I think about the trust that I have that is broken with my perspective of the City, I think of it like a constituent – who did I vote for and did they deliver? Has my trust been broken?
  - I would like to rebuild trust and rebuild this position as something that our youth would be wanting to go for, that our younger constituents can look forward to serving in. Rebuilding trust within the community first, then putting it out there to the rest of the local communities that we are a trustworthy place.
- Shoun Thao:
  - Trust begins with being transparent. It is the role of the City Council to be transparent to their constituents and ensure that they are well informed of current policies and procedures.
  - Sometimes the residents are frustrated but the City's hands are tied due to limitations of code or regulations. Being transparent and making sure the information is clearly communicated is key to earning trust.
- Tim Smith:
  - Implicit in any democracy is the understanding that the government will lead with integrity, credibility, and transparency. There are ways to restore the faith of the voters by living up to the implicit promises of the organization – basic services for example – making sure that when people call 311 there is a response, and someone follows up with them.

- Also by living up to the policy commitments of the City, in the case of the ARPA grants, my argue that funding should have gone out 6 months ago but have not.

**Question:**

**CM Kaplan: Specifically, with D2, there are some things that are unique north of the river. Oftentimes I hear that in D2 their voices are not heard - 9 months is a not a long time but this should be your only job – how are you going to be the voice of D2 to represent the community's needs?**

- Shoun Thao:
  - To be the voice of the community you need to work with the community and bring all parties together – neighborhood associations, CBO's, PBID's, students voice and organizations together to make sure everybody is on one page.
  - I believe a concerned citizen has the best interest of the community in their mind. Not brushing off constituent concerns and bringing together all of their concerns into one voice or goal would allow them to be heard at the City.
- Tim Smith:
  - One of my priorities would be rebuilding the relationships that have been burned over the last few years with various community groups and organizations. Once those are restored and you have a network of groups working with you, you can begin to be the voice of the groups that you are speaking through.
- Raquel Shipp: Response is #1 whether that is a yes, no, or maybe. Going back to my collaborative leadership and understanding that there are a lot of different voices/perspectives and trying to bring together all of them to the table when trying to bring their voice to Council as a group and acknowledging all of the different perspectives in our District.

**Question:**

**VM Maple: What are the first things you will need to do to build your team? What would be your strategy to make sure you build a good team quickly?**

- Shoun Thao:
  - I've worked with the current staff for the past 10 years. My first thing would be to sit down with the current staff because the responsiveness of the staff is the reflection of the Councilmember.
  - My commitment is to not create a long process to interview additional staff but to work with the staff that has worked with me before and we will move from there.
- Tim Smith:
  - I'd like to pick people who disagree with me privately but agree with me publicly and fill gaps that we can't otherwise meet. We need to recognize what D2 is in order to facilitate the communication that others have spoken about.
  - I need someone who can speak Spanish and meet the communities that I can't reach on my own.
- Raquel Shipp:
  - Forming a team is something I've done in the past. I have a very diverse staff and a short list of people I would want to engage if there are open positions for them,

but also understanding that some people may want to stick around and be a part of the next 9 months.

- Understanding that my leadership style is being collaborative and leaning into their perspectives and expertise to ensure the community is being heard. My approach has worked in the past for me, and I would be excited to be a part of a leadership team.

**Question:**

**MPT Talamantes: What is your favorite park in D2 and favorite place to eat?**

- Shoun Thao:
  - Favorite Park in D2 would be the Robertson Park. So many memories there with the CBO's and running the community center there. Myself being a product of that program there.
  - Favorite place to eat would be between Shift Coffee and Southpaw Sushi.
- Tim Smith:
  - Favorite Park is Woodlake Park. It is underutilized but the grass is always green and appeals to a lot of different interests.
  - Favorite place to eat is Southpaw Sushi or Kong.
- Raquel Shipp:
  - Favorite Park is Woodlake Park. It is where our students go and my kids play.
  - Favorite place to eat is our café at our youth center.

**Question:**

**CM Valenzuela: Questions specifically for Tim Smith – considering your oil industry stocks, what is your perspective on climate action in Sacramento and District 2?**

- Tim Smith:
  - All my stocks are managed by a blind trust. I keep them there and listed them on my form 700 because it was required to. I don't actively manage them.
  - My opinion on the oil industry is not great, but to avoid conflicts I have a private manager overseeing my stocks.
  - I supported the recent decision not to open new gas stations. I think we are moving in the direction of electric transportation statewide which is a good decision. In terms of other climate actions, I have also been a member of the Active Transportation Commission so I fully support walking and biking policies.

**Question:**

**VM Maple: Based on the preliminary research done on the budget – where do you see the priorities for yourself in terms of keeping the dollars and where do you see dollars being cut?**

- Shoun Thao:

- I believe in the public process and feel that it is a shame that we don't have a Councilmember to push out the survey. This is something District 2 will lose out on. Looking at public opinion before making cuts is important.
- Tim Smith:
  - I believe that it is part of the budget process to maximize revenues and minimize costs upfront as much as you can. Typically, would begin at taking a look at what the deficit is. You can address some of the structural issues by deferring costs on long-term commitments. Buildings and Parks will have to cut back on the maintenance. A lot of the City resources will have to be cut back.
  - In terms of the revenues, there are a lot of different ways to raise revenue. The City has explored some of them in terms of downtown parking.
- Raquel Shipp:
  - I would definitely lean on understanding the needs of our community and reduce as much harm. Also seeking out any redundancies or assets the City is not utilizing as much as once thought.

**Question:**

**CM Kaplan: Question for Raquel – with the Sacramento Youth Center you have contracts with the City – how would it not be a conflict with the City if you were appointed?**

- Raquel Shipp:
  - We hire an outside firm to manage our books to keep everything nice and properly reported. My husband does work at the youth center – we were able to bring him on this year as part of the Youth Center's staff. It was valuable for us to have two incomes in our household come from the work we put into our community.
  - I have a very qualified staff at the center that could take over the management and operation of two grants from the city that the Youth Center is currently operating. One grant is from the office of violence prevention and the other is from the office of innovation and economic development. One of the grants is for internships, so the majority of the funds from that grant is going towards the payment of youth in the community and to provide services for their workforce development. The other grant is to fund the center's programs. I am not directly funded by either of these grants. If appointed, I would hand over the responsibility for the management of both of the grants and the necessary reporting and receipting for both grants to the staff of the Youth Center. We are in good standing with the city and with the state of California. Our organization also operates \$2 million in budget with the state alone

**Question:**

**CM Kaplan: If Raquel is moved forward in the process, we need to get an opinion from the city attorney taking a look at the potential conflicts that could arise due to the Youth Center's contracts with the city. (Councilmembers have received the requested opinion).**

**Question:**

**CM Kaplan: Question for Shoun – with Hmong Youth United you’ve had 10 contracts with the City – how would it not be a conflict with the City if you were appointed?**

- Shoun Thao:
  - My position with Hmong Youth United is very new. Last year, I was asked by the board to apply for the position. Similar to Raquel, if appointed, I am willing to pass down management responsibilities for the contracts with the City to staff. Many of our contracts with the City are for youth internships and running our youth circles. The majority of grant funds go towards paying students and operations, but not staff costs. The grant funds are used to invest in the youth of the community. I will consult with the City Attorney to determine possible conflicts of interest.

**Question:**

**CM Kaplan: Question for City Attorney – can appointees continue to work for organizations that operate contracts with the City while serving as an appointed Councilmember? Appointees involved with organizations running directly City funded programs can generate perceptions of conflict of interest. We need to make sure candidates for appointment aren’t unintentionally put into positions where they cause a conflict of interest. Do candidates have to resign their positions to serve as the appointed Councilmember?**

**Question:**

**VM Maple: In the last year, we have had close to 20 Council Meetings be shut down, causing us to have to postpone City Business. We sometimes have threats of violence and screaming from the audience – what is your philosophy regarding how the Council should address those challenges?**

- Tim Smith:
  - The council has some latitude in this matter. During the Covid – 19 pandemic, the Council moved to a virtual format. I think the Council could take this course of action again if disruptions don’t improve and it becomes necessary to do so. Residents can call into the meeting to make their voices heard. It is possible for the Council to meet the Brown Act requirements without dealing with the disruptions.
    - **CM Kaplan: California law has changed since the pandemic. The Council can no longer move to a virtual format**
- Raquel Shipp:
  - Frustrations are at an all-time high in America. We need to prioritize safety first for Councilmembers and residents attending Council meetings. We need to create an environment where safety is at the forefront while maintaining an empathetic standing in the room to deescalate the tensions and emotions that are leading to the outbursts in council meetings that make attendees feel unsafe.

- Shoun Thao:
  - This is an issue all over the country. I think Sacramento has done a good job managing the situation and being the leading functional municipality. We've done a great job managing public comments and everything that happens as council. I know what you Councilmembers face every day and I'm willing to do that as long as I serve on the dais as well.

**Question:**

**CM Kaplan: Question for Raquel and Shoun – if the City Attorney's legal opinion determines that you must resign from your position at your organization which operates contracts with the City to serve on the council, will you keep your application in or will you withdraw your application?**

- Raquel:
  - I can take a break from the Sacramento Youth Center if necessary. I can keep my application in. I have a strong team alongside a program staff of 14. I would resign and not take a paycheck from the Youth Center while serving on the council.
- Shoun Thao:
  - I would do the same. I have a team of 11. Even when I wasn't employed at Hmong Youth United, I still did work in the community. I can handle 9 months being away from the organization.