



McGee - Spaulding Neighbors in Action

The Power of One Neighborhood Rising:

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An Open Letter to the Berkeley Police Association

On November 6th, 2018, despite a well-funded campaign of opposition, Kate Harrison was re-elected overwhelmingly as District 4 Councilperson, garnering a majority of and 17% more votes than her nearest opponent in a three-way race.

McGee-Spaulding Neighbors in Action is a group of some one hundred politically active residents in District 4. We write to express our extreme displeasure at the intervention of the Berkeley Police Association in an election which should have been - and ultimately was - decided by the residents of the District. This election should not have been influenced by members of an organization who overwhelmingly live outside the District, and, for the most part, are not residents of Berkeley.

If the Berkeley Police wish to obtain the respect of the residents they are sworn to protect and serve, then, as a professional association, we strongly suggest that in the future they disengage from local politics, respecting the wishes of Berkeley's residents as they pertain to police policy (and all other matters). While they should provide their professional opinion as to best practices and policies to the City Council, it is ultimately the choice of Berkeley's residents through their elected officials what policing policies are appropriate for our City.

To put it bluntly the attack flyers opposing Councilperson Harrison mailed out and funded by BPA PAC (with some funding by the Berkeley Rental Housing Coalition) were disgusting. They consisted of little more than outrageous propaganda smears, half-truths, out-of-context takedowns, and emotive pictures and loaded-language appeals to fear and prejudice.

One of the flyers says *"Harrison voted against a policy to unequivocally condemn violence in Berkeley"* while citing an article which made clear that the policy in question addressed by the resolution being voted on was the issue of 'doxing' **non-violent** protesters by police. In fact, the policy voted on had been weakened to the point that Harrison – and two other City Councilors – felt they could no longer support it, regardless of its flowery but legally irrelevant declaration of opposition to violence.

Another flyer tries to paint Harrison as voting against police training, specifically against *"de-escalation training"* when in fact the issue before the Council was Urban Shield – a highly contentious and

politically charged event that even the conservative Alameda County Board of Supervisors had by that time concluded should no longer exist “as currently constituted.”ⁱ In fact, Urban Shield has never emphasized de-escalation training, one of the crucial points that led the Board of Supervisors to reach the decision they did. To vote against training the community considers objectionable and even detrimental, while arguing for training commensurate with Berkeley and the East Bay’s needs, is leadership. To portray Harrison in the manner the flyer did is both disingenuous and rank.

And on it goes. Each and every claim is belied by fact, context and/or common sense. ‘Willie Horton-ing’ may have been successful somewhere and somewhen, but not in Berkeley’s District 4 as clearly evidenced by the vote.

See the three flyers [here](http://tinyurl.com/y53q3m7v) (<http://tinyurl.com/y53q3m7v>), [here](http://tinyurl.com/y3kwewgc) (<http://tinyurl.com/y3kwewgc>) and [here](http://tinyurl.com/y663qeph) (<http://tinyurl.com/y663qeph>). (Copy/paste the url’s if the ‘here’ links fail).

Policy issues are the rightful purview of the Council. Kate Harrison’s positions are in line with those of the vast majority of the public in her district. These kinds of political attacks on those who seek to represent us, by what should be a professional organization above partisan politics, are beyond the pale.

To be clear, we fully support training for disaster preparedness for police, firefighters, and other first responders. As citizens, we are fully aware of the dangers of earthquake, wildfire, flooding, etc. We need and respect the training and professionalism of the city’s first responders in time of disasters.

And yes, we recognize your 1st Amendment right to say and distribute what nonsense you will. Still, we hope and suggest that in the future your organization concentrate on being the best at your profession, at better protecting and serving, not politicking and partisanship.

This Letter Written By

McGee-Spaulling Neighbors in Action.

And Endorsed By

Berkeley Progressive Alliance

Berkeley Citizens Action

ⁱ In a vote taken in March, 2018 in which an Ad Hoc Committee to make implementation recommendations to that end was also created. On February 26th, 2019, the Alameda County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to accept their Ad Hoc Committee’s Recommendations to completely transform Urban Shield.