

Thousand Friends of Martinez Endorses Mike Barbanica for County Supervisor, District 5



Antioch Councilmember Mike Barbanica the best choice for District 5 County Supervisor. He's better on the issues, he loves parks and open space, and he'll defend ridgelines and the urban limit line. He has concrete plans for addressing Martinez' current oil refinery challenges. He's accessible and eager to learn, and he fully engaged with the community. As both a former Pittsburg policeman and current small business owner, Mike will make homeless and safety issues a high priority.

Mike is:

- **Strong on protecting quality-of-life issues, such as local open space and parks, historic features and well-planned housing projects.**

- **Actively working with the refinery to demand better operations and ensure public health.**
- **Solid on public safety and finding solutions to homelessness.**
- **Accessible to the public (as stated on his questionnaire: “I currently have and will continue an open door policy”) and believes in government transparency.**

It was an easy choice, after a robust discussion. Some of us have followed all three of these candidates’ records in their cities for years.

Pittsburg councilmember Shanelle Scales-Preston, the other candidate, is weak on environmental issues and inaccessible to the public. Scales-Preston has disqualified herself in our opinion with her pro-development record in Pittsburg. Despite claiming to be open and accessible, that’s not our experience.

Thousand Friends was organized in 2015 as a political action committee with the number one goal of supporting better candidates to represent the public rather than just big-moneyed interests. This is our 5th election cycle. Thousand Friends of Martinez helps elect conscientious representatives; promotes open government; quality of life, parks, open spaces, and historic elements.

District 5 runs along the Contra Costa northern waterfront from Hercules to Martinez to Pittsburg and a part of Antioch. If any candidate gets more than 50% in the March primary, they’re elected. With four candidates there will almost certainly be a runoff in the November election. Because Martinez voter turnout is generally high **Martinez will play a significant role in who gets elected.**

Federal Glover made the Northern Waterfront an issue, where various industrial uses have declined over the years but there are robust transportation options from water, road and rail. The county and cities have been coordinating on economic development goals although progress has been limited and there’s a constant pressure to turn these partly vacant areas into housing. In our questionnaire and at the forum, **Barbanica made clear that the Northern Waterfront is also affected by sea level rise and climate change, and that economic development must be balanced with park and resource goals.**

Candidates get their message out with campaign funding. In Contra Costa, at the city and county level, there are about five sources of major funding other than the public and the candidates themselves: developers, refineries, garbage companies, public employee unions and building trades unions. Unions also put boots on the ground for grassroots organizing. Craig Lazzaretti does a valuable service in his *Martinez News and Views* by reporting on Martinez issues. You can read about campaign finances there in the

“Candidate Races” section. <https://martineznewsandviews.substack.com/p/a-look-at-what-martinez-voters-will> .

Thousand Friends’ goal is to compete with the usual campaign stakeholders by encouraging good candidates to run, sponsoring public candidate forums, and providing ongoing education on candidates and issues year-round rather than just in the six weeks before elections when your mailbox gets flooded. And by encouraging public discussion on many issues rather than just the two or three hot button issues the campaigns will include.

Martinez residents have worked for decades to protect our surrounding ridges and open space. But the County controls land use in surrounding unincorporated areas in Pacheco, the Mountain View and Vine Hill neighborhoods, the Alhambra Valley south to Briones, and west to Hercules. We’ve been protected by the Urban Limit Line but it expires (or gets renewed) in two years in 2026. The new County Supervisor will have a big role in what happens in those areas. Do developers run the show, or residents? **Mike Barbanica is supported by public safety unions but has been independent of development interests and refineries.**

How have Pittsburg councilmember Shanelle Scales-Preston disqualified herself with her pro-development record? Twice in the past four years she has approved the Seeno companies/Discovery Builders controversial Faria project, 1500 units on 600 acres on the Los Medanos ridgeline overlooking Concord and adjacent to the brand-new Thurgood Marshall Regional Park (formerly part of the Concord Naval Weapons Station). She claims they made the project better but it’s not true. Although elected officials often improve as they rise to higher office, Scales-Preston hasn’t shown much ability to balance competing interests to create compromises.

We’ll write more about the issues in coming months.

Mike Barbanica is pro-open space and loves Contra Costa’s green hills. He’s pledged to protect our ridgelines. He’s publicly supported these positions in Antioch. Thousand Friends of Martinez endorses Mike Barbanica for Contra Costa County Supervisor, District 5 in the March 5 primary. We urge you to support him too.