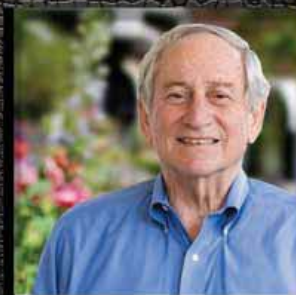
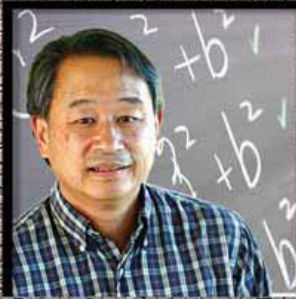


# Weekly


Window of opportunity

## City managers consider unionizing

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14 vie  
for Palo Alto  
City Council  
seats



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★ 25th Anniversary Moonlight Run & Walk tonight ★ [www.PaloAltoOnline.com](http://www.PaloAltoOnline.com) ★

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he thinks of the proposed business-license tax, known as the BLT, he responded, "I prefer it as a sandwich rather than a load I'm being asked to swallow." When asked last week how he would vote on the tax, he said he's "probably" leaning against it.

"I don't think it's very good policy to try to raise revenues on the backs of small business," he said, suggesting a tax on corporations with a million dollars or more in revenue would be a better way to raise the \$3 million needed.

Weiss said he is "open minded" about the high-speed rail project, which many fear could split the Palo Alto neighboring cities down the middle and create a wall along the Caltrain tracks. He acknowledges that he doesn't know too much about the issue yet.

He also said he personally knows Quentin Kopp, a fellow Dartmouth alumnus who sits on the Board of Directors of the California High-Speed Rail Authority. But his position on the project may displease residents along the Caltrain corridor, who fear they could lose parts of their properties to make way for the project.

"If it's good for 30 million Californians and not so good for 60,000 Palo Altans, that's just fate," Weiss told the Weekly. "I'm open-minded about it."

In responding to other questions, Weiss made it clear that he isn't bashful about taking stances far from those of the other candidates, particularly when business interests are at stake.

When asked at the Chamber of Commerce forum about how the city could help small businesses, Weiss said business and real-estate interests are already "overrepresented"

in city governance.

When asked what he thought of the proposed expansion of Stanford Hospital, he wondered aloud ("as a non-alumni," he said) whether Stanford is too big and influential for Palo Alto's good.

Weiss also took issue with some questions on the Chamber's recent candidates' survey, particularly one that asked how he would feel about reducing the number of seats on the nine-member council. He replied: Why not increase it back to 15?

Weiss presents himself as the grassroots candidate, one who prefers citizen-led petitions over developers' proposals. He said he had his grassroots awakening in 1993, when he was working for an advertising agency in San Francisco and writing ads for an oil company.

He left his North Beach home and moved to Palo Alto. He said his first grassroots event was the 1993 Earth Day, where he met current Mayor Peter Dreikmeier.

Weiss said he then began producing concerts at Cubberley Community Center and formed his company, Earthwise Productions, which now primarily represents artists. In August, he helped Human Relations Commissioner Claude Ezran organize Palo Alto's first World Music Day, which brought musicians to downtown Palo Alto for an afternoon of street-corner music.

Weiss said he was inspired to run for office after reading a column by current Councilman Sid Espinosa in the Palo Alto Weekly, in which Espinosa encouraged the public to get engaged in city governance. Weiss said he would stick with his grassroots theme by eschewing campaign committees and financial contributions.

"I'm going 'old school,'" Weiss



Veronica Weber

City Council candidate Leon Leong stands outside the office of El Carmelo Elementary School, which he attended as a child. He said he wants to bring fresh voices to the council.

told the Weekly. "I think money has undermined our democracy."

### Leon Leong

Leon Leong says the City Council needs more diversity.

By that he means fresh voices talking about issues that are currently under the council's radar. Specifically, he wants the council to start focusing on the impacts of new developments on local schools and on neighborhood traffic; on a bloated city budget; and on bringing new businesses to Palo Alto.

"I've seen the City Council focus on a lot of broader regional issues like climate change and not on day-to-day issues like local traffic congestion," Leong said. "It didn't feel like a diversity of views."

Leong has never served on a local commission, but he is well familiar with local issues. He grew up in Palo Alto and earned degrees in computer science from University of California, Berkeley and Stanford University. He has spent 20 years in the high-tech industry, working in management positions at Hewlett-Packard Co. and other high-tech companies.

In 1994, Leong changed careers and became a Realtor. He studies Palo Alto's trends and serves on the Government Action Committee for the Silicon Valley Association of Realtors. He says the council has been too hasty in approving several mixed-use developments, including Alma Plaza and the College Terrace Center.

He says the city should require more measures to ease the impacts of development and have stricter standards for dense housing projects that congest neighborhood streets and overcrowd local schools.

"School-impact fees have not been sufficient to cover the magnitude of the enrollment," Leong said.

Leong also wishes he'd seen a diversity of views from the council before members voted 8-0 to support the high-speed rail project in October 2008. California voters approved a \$9.95 billion bond for the rail line in November 2008.

Earlier this year, council members started voicing concerns about the rail line after learning that its design could feature elevated tracks running along the Caltrain corridor.

But Leong said he voted against the project in November and wished the council wasn't so hasty to get behind the project. He called that vote "quite unfortunate."

"I did my homework and knew there would be grade separation," Leong said. "But it passed on an 8-0 vote, with no opposition. It kind of surprised me."

Building underground tunnels would be a much better option if it were financially feasible, he said. But he added that tunneling through a section of the Peninsula would most likely be cost prohibitive.

Leong also said he opposes the council-backed proposal for a business-license tax, Measure A, which will be on the November ballot. He calls the tax, based on employee count, regressive because it caps payments for the largest companies and forces small companies to pay (by his estimate) 80 percent of the total tax revenue.

Leong said he would prefer an employee-based tax without a cap and with exemptions for workers who live and work in Palo Alto. He would also like the city to give tax credits to companies based on the number of employees who use public transit.

He also said he is worried about the impacts the new tax would have on business owners who want to set up shop in Palo Alto.

"One thing I feel will discourage businesses from coming to town is the business-license tax," Leong said.

Leong supports reducing the city budget and trimming compensation to city employees. He is a proponent of a two-tiered system in which new employees have to make greater contributions to their health care and pensions than existing employees.

In fact, one of the few areas in which he agrees with the council is the need to cut costs and reduce employee benefits.

"I applaud the current council in their negotiations," Leong said at last week's Chamber of Commerce-sponsored candidate forum. "I hope they stick to their guns."

If elected, Leong said he would seek to make the budget more transparent, improve government efficiency and engage city residents. In a Palo Alto Neighborhoods questionnaire, Leong wrote that "civic engagement" should be a two-way street and said he believes "it should be a priority to get 'new faces' and 'new voices' involved."

"I realize I'm a newcomer," Leong told the Weekly. "But new means you can inject new ideas into the council's thinking."

### Larry Klein

Larry Klein has been on the City Council for a long, long time, and he has all the acronyms to prove it.

His current council campaign, his fourth, revolves around six of them: SEIU, BLT, CCC, GHG, HSR and ABAG. (Translation: Service Employees International Union; the business-license tax; the California Constitutional Convention; greenhouse gases, high-speed rail and the Association of Bay Area Governments.)

For Klein, being waist-deep in the alphabet soup of wonkiness is a natural state of affairs. The Miami native is the only councilman who has two photos of himself framed on the wall inside the Council Chambers wall and is the only member of the current council who has a chance to be forced to leave office twice due to term limits.

Of the three candidates who were eligible to run for re-election, Klein is the only one who did so. Now, he has the burden of defending the council's actions and the benefit of taking credit for its recent accomplishments.

Klein feels he is ideally suited for the task. During his current term, Klein has been on the front lines of just about every major initiative,

(continued on next page)



Veronica Weber

City Council candidate Mark Weiss stands in front of the auditorium at Cubberley Community Center, where he has organized many concerts.