



Empower Oakland 2024 Candidate Questionnaire

Empower Oakland is a movement fueled by Oakland residents who recognize that “business as usual politics” will only further perpetuate Oakland’s downward spiral. We believe in empowering Oaklanders to amplify their collective voices for greater political impact and influence.

All submissions will be unedited for spelling, grammar, and format and published on empoweroakland.com to educate Oakland voters. Empower Oakland will also use candidate submissions to help inform their Candidate Endorsement process. Candidates may be asked to interview in-person with the Empower Oakland Endorsement Committee. Final endorsement decisions will be made by early September.

Please email the completed questionnaire as a .doc or .pdf document to info@empoweroakland.com. Due by Friday, August 16th by 6PM.

Candidate Name: Taryn Edwards

Email: taryn4parks@gmail.com

Phone Number: 510-542-7289

Office & District Sought: East Bay Regional Parks District Board Member, Ward 4

Campaign Website:

Social Media Handles

- Twitter:
- Facebook:
- Instagram:
- LinkedIn:
- TikTok:

Expected total Fundraising Amount: \$2000

Funds Raised To Date: \$500

General Questions

1. What is your background/experience in Oakland?

I was born in Oakland at the Oak Knoll Naval Hospital. Both of my parents, three of my grandparents, and several great grandparents were raised there as well! I think Oakland is the most naturally beautiful city in the entire Bay Area and I enjoy walking the hills, dining, shopping, and visiting its cultural spaces.

2. What are the top two challenges facing Oakland today? What are the bright spots?



Let's start with the good things - Oakland is a spectacular city with a stunning topography and weather. It is perfectly located to enjoy all that the Bay Area has to offer. It has wonderful restaurants, a vital culture, and a distinct personality. I love living near Oakland.

The challenges that I see everyday include above all else, crime. What I am most worried about however is the litter and large scale dumping and shuttered businesses and lack of foot traffic in the urban centers such as the Broadway corridor and Jack London Square. These issues are stealing Oakland's soul.

3. Why are you running for office and why are you uniquely qualified to fulfill the office you are running for at this time?

I am running for office because I care about the future of the Bay Area! I am a lifelong resident of San Leandro and a daily East Bay Regional Park user. I believe that the open space and recreational facilities that the parks provide are essential to the quality of life that we enjoy in the East Bay. Having beautiful vistas and opens spaces help us cope with the challenges of living in such a crowded and busy metropolitan area.

I am a librarian, historian, and writer and have spent my entire career engaged in public service, community enrichment, and cultural preservation. I have a BA in Anthropology from CSU East Bay and a Master's Degree in Library and Information Science from San José State University. I have served on several non-profit boards that champion the Bay Area's cultural heritage, and I am passionate about working with people on issues they care about.

4. Prior to running for office, how were you involved in local government and/or your community? What were your biggest accomplishments?

I have not been directly involved in local government however I have worked closely with several non-profits on community focused endeavors (primarily in San Francisco where I worked for 16 years). Some of my biggest accomplishments have been merely to help others solve their personal challenges! Personal victories include planning and hosting several large and multi-day festivals and events in partnership with city agencies and other organizations that celebrated Bay Area culture and engaged the public.

5. What are the top needs of East Bay Regional Parks? What is your vision for the agency in 10 years?

The top needs that I see as a daily park user include 1) combating climate change related damage to the parks' infrastructure and 2) improving the aging facilities currently



in place and to make the parks more accessible to those with physical challenges (such as paved trails, bathrooms, and visitors' centers).

What specific and measurable accomplishments will you deliver to address those needs? In 2 years? In 4 years?

As a candidate without experience on this board or systemic knowledge of the constituency's needs, it would be presumptuous of me to outline a plan of attack without first listening to the residents' perspective and the challenges faced and strategies already employed by the staff and current board. I have read the recent annual reports that outline the steps currently being taken to mitigate these problems but I know from prior experience that there is more to be learned while on the job. I am prepared to employ my energy and creative thinking once I fully understand the situation from within and I am eager to be a part of team.

6. What is your perspective of the **fiscal budget** of the East Bay Regional Parks? How will you think about budget priorities?

My impressions of the budget is that the staff and board have been managing it well despite the troubles that the pandemic, storms, and rising operational costs have caused. EBRPD appears to be fiscally in a better place than other organizations that I have been involved in and appears to be creatively tackling the problems as they arise. I appreciate that they prioritize the well being of their staff.

7. Please describe how you plan to address **service quality** if elected (or re-elected). Summarize the problem(s) East Bay Regional Parks faces, how we can address them, and what trade-offs might need to be considered (if applicable).

EBRPD has a great website and annual report that clearly summarise the service ethic and efforts of the agency to serve the needs of the residents. The upgrades to the visitors' centers are great but I wish EBRPD had a more central main office, or mother visitor center. When I was seeking signatures to get on the ballot I spent a lot of time in District 4's parks, speaking with users, and I was surprised to find that many people were unaware of the EBRPD as a whole. Having a more publicly accessible Main Center would improve visibility and service.

8. Please describe how you plan to address **equity and expanding access** to East Bay Regional parklands, recreational and cultural resources if elected (or re-elected).

I love that EBRPD is hosting elementary aged children on park visit/field trips. I would love to see our children get out into the parks more!

9. Please describe how you plan to address **climate change and the threat of wildfires** in your East Bay Regional Park district if elected (or re-elected).



This issue definitely concerns me. I see evidence every day of EBRPD's efforts to address climate change related disasters such as the removal of some of the eucalyptus trees along Fairmont Ridge and I read with fascination about the "Carbonator" that turns trees and shrubs into biochar. As a board member I will educate myself about pioneering remedies such as this and learn more about funding opportunities to pay for them.