

# POWER PLAYERS

The *Weekly* editorial board meets with dozens of candidates so you don't have to. Here are our picks for local office this November.

While “tribalism” is the word of the day in hyper-partisan Washington, D.C., dozens of local candidates and ballot measures transcend party. These candidates, and authors of measures, are your neighbors. The votes you cast in local (nonpartisan) races stand to make a profound and immediate effect on your neighborhood: Will City Hall be a welcoming and transparent place, and will the leadership prioritize spending to fix potholes?

When candidates join the *Weekly* editorial board for endorsement interviews, Publisher Erik Cushman gives a greeting that goes something like this: We believe the intentions of people running for these volunteer positions are good, and that they genuinely want to make

their community a better place. While we don't always agree with their ideas on how to do that, we admire their intentions. Our picks on who we think will lead Monterey County in a better direction are below.

We interviewed 43 candidates and representatives of pro and con arguments for ballot measures, for a total of about 200 people-hours' worth of work in recent weeks. In some races, we asked questions of another two dozen candidates by email. Even still, this list is not comprehensive: There are other measures, school district and council races, among others, not included here. (You can read our continued coverage of some of those—including our endorsements for candidates at the state and federal

level, which were published before the June primary—at [mcweekly.com/elections2018](http://mcweekly.com/elections2018). We'll run our picks in those races in print again in our Oct. 18 issue.)

When voters have choices, they can hold their leaders accountable. In the 2016 presidential election, Monterey County's voter turnout was 73.8 percent, better than the U.S. average of 55.7 percent. This is an engaged community, and better for it.

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**Monterey County Weekly's editorial board** comprises Founder & CEO Bradley Zeve, Publisher Erik Cushman, Editor Sara Rubin and Managing Editor Dave Faries.

## MONTEREY PENINSULA

### YES | Measure J

Measure J is a crafty way to enable the public takeover of the California American Water system. The measure is simple and concise, and reads that the water management district shall take over the water company, if feasible.

It authorizes the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District to conduct the study, but it does not define “feasible”—that will be left to the MPWMD board and, almost inevitably, the courts.

Cal Am is vilified in many circles in the community. Water rates in its service area are, according to nonprofit Food & Water Watch, the most expensive in the nation. Customers complain that the more they conserve water, the more their rates go up. Cal Am's attempts at finding a solution to the state water board's cease-and-desist order have so far yielded only failed projects and lawsuits, with the costs borne by ratepayers—all the while they are guaranteed a 9-percent profit on whatever they spend. And this election season, the company's massive campaign to combat Measure J has overwhelmed

voters with both sheer volume and misleading claims.

Cal Am deserves credit for the good work it does. They deliver safe and reliable water on demand to over 100,000 customers. The company has been insufficiently recognized for dismantling the San Clemente Dam; for the pipeline project undertaken over the last two years; and for their unending pursuit of new water supply. They are a union shop, they have progressive personnel policies and are good corporate citizens.

Then again, that's kinda what they are paid to do. Profit-focused ownership of life's most precious resources seems like an idea worth reconsidering.

Let's conduct the study and find out more. If Cal Am is willing to spend millions of dollars to defeat Measure J, they must think the water system is a good long-term investment. That seems to be persuasive enough.

### GEORGE RILEY AND ALVIN EDWARDS | Monterey Peninsula Water Management District

The future of the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District is hard to predict right now, given that the outcome of Measure J could transform it into a

large water utility. The right leadership for this next chapter is crucial to instilling public trust. In District 1, Brenda Lewis is retiring, and former Seaside City Councilmember (and former MPWMD board member) Alvin Edwards is the best choice to replace her. He is a clear-headed—and passionate—voice in the fray when it comes to public water these days. He is insistent on the urgent need to get a water supply online, and he wants it be owned by the public. He also has more working knowledge of local government than his opponent, Dean Provence.

In District 2, Andy Clarke is up for re-election, and faces a challenge from Public Water Now co-founder and Measure J proponent George Riley. While Clarke has done a fine job as chair of MPWMD, he's neutral on Measure J, while Riley is a passionate public water advocate who has done his homework on local water issues, and then some. We'd hope that if he is elected and Measure J passes, he'd recuse himself when it comes to voting on it; given that he's a primary architect of J, it seems that would be a conflict of interest.

There will be another new face on the MPWMD board with longtime board member Bob Brower retiring due

to health reasons, midway through his current term; the board is expected to appoint his replacement on Nov. 19.

### MATT ZEFFERMAN, JAN SHRINER AND BILL LEE | Marina Coast Water District

There's one important outcome that needs to happen from this election: Incumbent Howard Gustafson must go. Gustafson is a major distraction to the district and an embarrassment to our entire community. His tweets and public demeanor leave us dumbfounded, cringing. He's doing a good job convincing the community that he's racist, misogynist, against education, against millennials, against diversity. An example, from a recent tweet: “You scumbag little queers, go somewhere else, most people in USA DO NOT ACCEPT WHAT YOU DO.”

Meanwhile, MCWD has an important mission and needs smart leadership to serve its 33,000 customers for water and sewer services in the Marina and Fort Ord area, including part of Seaside. This \$40 million public agency is often under the radar, but it plays an important role to both provide clean water and manage wastewater. MCWD greenlighted a study this year to investigate desalination,