



Mayor Vanessa Quiroz-Carter, District 2  
Mayor Pro Tempore Maria Orozco, District 3  
Council Member Casey Clark, District 5  
Council Member Jimmy Dutra, District 6  
Council Member Eduardo Montesino, District 1  
Council Member Ari Parker, District 7  
Council Member Kristal Salcido, District 4  
City Hall, 275 Main St, Suite 400  
Watsonville, CA 95076

June 17, 2024

RE: City Charter Amendments for Board & Commission Eligibility

Dear Mayor and Councilmembers,

I am writing on behalf of El Pájaro Community Development Corporation (El Pájaro CDC). Since its establishment in 1979, El Pájaro CDC has worked to promote equal access to economic opportunity for the residents of the City of Watsonville. Through small business development, business technical assistance, business incubation, and access to financing, El Pájaro CDC has transformed the lives of our clients who live in the City of Watsonville and they in turn significantly contribute to the economic vitality of the City. For that reason, we are writing to ask the City Council to amend the City of Watsonville's Charter to include an option that allows all Watsonville residents to serve on city boards and commissions.

Watsonville City Council's current proposal, Measure #2, is to amend the City Charter to include qualifications that limit who can serve on certain City boards and commissions and creates a 'separate but equal' approach that results in a second class of commissioner. In our opinion, this establishes a two-tier commissioner system in which one tier has less access and voice. We see this as a dangerous precedent and ask the City Council to instead change the amendment to extend commission eligibility to all Watsonville residents.



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This change creates an equitable approach to civic engagement and allows the voters, who ultimately approve the charter amendments, to decide if an inclusive and equitable model is the one they want.

This request is consistent with current state and local law and trends. California's SB 225, which passed in 2019, allows all residents to serve on commissions, regardless of citizenship. There is no state law or legal barrier to this change and similar efforts have been successful in other charter cities, including San Francisco. The City and County of Santa Cruz and San Francisco do not require voter registration to serve.

El Pájaro CDC believes all City of Watsonville residents should be eligible to serve on commissions because our commissions and boards benefit from the best and most insightful of our community members and taxpayers. City commissions and boards with increased representation and unique perspectives lead to better public policy and decision-making. Many of El Pájaro CDC clients and current City residents have been city residents for decades, contributed to the economic vitality of the city, and are invested and impacted by its direction, decisions and policies, yet have no current access to serve on commissions and boards. The requested amendment would focus on allowing the most experienced and prepared, to be selected to serve for City commissions and boards.

Thank you in advance for your serious consideration of our request.

Respectfully,



Carmen Herrera Mansir  
*Executive Director*

CC: Irwin I. Ortiz, *City Clerk*



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