

Goleta City Council Q&A: Margaret Connell

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By Noozhawk Staff

[Editor's note: One in a series of four candidate Q&As for the Goleta City Council. [Click here](#) for Jean Blois. [Click here](#) for Ed Easton. [Click here](#) for Don Gilman.]

NOOZHAWK: What do you love most about Goleta?



Margaret Connell

MARGARET CONNELL: I love its openness with views of the mountains everywhere; that from almost anywhere in the city it is possible to walk in natural areas, whether it is the Sperling Preserve, Los Carneros Park or a trail along a creek; that we have businesses ranging from high-tech industries to small trade stores; that traffic, while bad at some intersections is not overwhelming; that we have good schools and residents who volunteer and contribute to the community in many different ways.

NOOZHAWK: What is the most important issue facing Goleta today? Over the next five to 10 years?

MARGARET CONNELL: We need to finish the General Plan with minimal changes so we can get on with writing the zoning ordinance and the coastal land-use plan. Goleta will not be whole as a fully operating city until this is done.

Over the next five to 10 years, I hope we will be in a position to have a city recreation department, put in place the infrastructure improvements needed in Old Town, build the overcrossing in the Ellwood area to provide a safe route for pedestrians and bikes across the freeway, and add to the affordable housing stock.

NOOZHAWK: If you could revise the Revenue Neutrality Agreement with Santa Barbara County, would you do it? If so, what would you change? If not, why?

MARGARET CONNELL: I hope to be able to pursue negotiations with the county to reach more favorable terms for Goleta. All candidates agree on this. There could be many different approaches but negotiations are a matter of give and take and the county undoubtedly has some ideas, too. I would like to see some kind of end date, remembering that the reason that Goleta's contribution is high relative to other new cities is that it has a lot of high revenue generators. The name "revenue neutrality" means that counties are not supposed to be hurt financially by new incorporations.

NOOZHAWK: Goleta, the county and California all face increasing budgetary pressures. What steps will you take to ensure Goleta's financial security?

MARGARET CONNELL: The seven-year state bonus to new cities will expire next year, but from the beginning the council has built a reserve to cover the shortfall in the three years before the total bed tax and 20 percent of the sales tax return to the city. At that point, particularly if it is possible to renegotiate the revenue neutrality agreement, we can plan for a recreation department and other enhancements for our residents.

NOOZHAWK: Is there anything you would do differently with the General Plan?

MARGARET CONNELL: Staff has described it as a good General Plan that just needs a few changes to make it workable. The current council majority has embarked on over 70 amendments, many initiated by developers, which go far beyond being minor. I disagree with rezoning agricultural land for development, with encouraging more regional shopping centers, any changes that tend to privatize the beach at [Bacara](#) and many of the proposed reductions in environmental protections. I do support lowering the 55 percent inclusionary affordable housing requirement on the rezoned sites south of Hollister Avenue in order to encourage the building of needed housing.

NOOZHAWK: How will you work with [UCSB](#) to ensure its [Long-Range Development Plan](#) addresses impacts on Goleta?

MARGARET CONNELL: There should be ongoing discussions by staff and council members with UCSB over the impacts of their plans, particularly of traffic on city streets. A primary concern is to ensure that new housing for students and staff is built concurrently with any increase, to avoid overflow into Goleta. UCSB is not subject to local planning jurisdiction so much will have to be done with persuasion. However, its plans do have to be approved by the [California Coastal Commission](#), which allows some leverage. On the plus side, UCSB is an economic engine and a wonderful cultural resource for Goletans.

NOOZHAWK: Describe Goleta's relationship with [Venoco](#). Is it mutually beneficial?

MARGARET CONNELL: Venoco is an industrial oil operation in close proximity to a resort, golf course, elementary school and residential neighborhoods. Financial benefits go to the state and county, not the city of Goleta. Oil and water don't mix and the sooner this facility can be termed out, the better. The oil barging operation, an accident waiting to happen, must cease. There must either be an onshore pipeline from Ellwood to the Las Flores Canyon consolidated facility or an offshore pipeline to this facility if the proposed slant drilling from Platform Holly is approved by the state.

NOOZHAWK: What do you see as the future of [Bishop Ranch](#)?

MARGARET CONNELL: Bishop Ranch, a 240-acre parcel between Los Carneros and Glen Annie roads, has not been used for agriculture for many years but it is bordered on three sides by productive orchards. Historically, it has supported orchards and other crops. Unfortunately the Bishop Ranch Co. sold its water rights in 1995. A new agricultural water connection is now prohibitively expensive. I hope that some day a new water agreement can be negotiated to make this land viable again. People value the freshness and quality of locally grown produce. This is no time to talk about rezoning agricultural land for development.

NOOZHAWK: Should the city of Goleta grow into the eastern Goleta Valley? Why or why not?

MARGARET CONNELL: Over a series of cityhood elections, each with a different boundary configuration, residents of the eastern Goleta Valley have consistently voted against incorporation. Consisting primarily of residential neighborhoods and agricultural parcels, the city would be taking on additional service needs without commensurate increases in revenues. Expansion of the city of Goleta into the eastern Goleta Valley should only be considered if the citizens who live there petition for annexation.

NOOZHAWK: How would you improve Goleta's traffic circulation?

MARGARET CONNELL: The cost of gasoline is already changing people's driving habits and the foundering economy may change them even more. Subsidizing bus service and helping to make a commuter train a reality may be the most important things we can do to improve traffic circulation. Bicycle and pedestrian pathways are also vital. We need at least one noninterchange overcrossing, and preferably three, to connect the north and south parts of the city. Completing the Ekwill/Fowler connection in Old Town is vital to reduce heavy traffic on Hollister Avenue. A complete east/west connection of Calle Real would relieve Hollister Avenue and Highway 101.

NOOZHAWK: Would you offer a resolution to replace the Goleta logo's monarch butterfly with a Noozhawk?

MARGARET CONNELL: No!!! However, one member of the current council did express a desire to change the image of the city. You might consult with him!

[Click here](#) for more information on Margaret Connell.

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