

ELECTIONS 2022

Encinitas council candidates talk local control, character

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is a shortened version for *The Coast News* print edition. Please scan the QR code at the end of the article to read candidates' full responses.

By Stephen Wyer

ENCINITAS — After collecting more than 17,000 votes as a mayoral candidate in 2020, Julie Thunder has thrown her hat back into the political ring, this time for the District 3 seat on the Encinitas City Council.

Thunder, a retired software developer for the defense industry and nearly 40-year resident of Cardiff, said she's a unique candidate who appreciates the responsibility that comes with holding local elected office.

"What makes a great leader is someone who cares about the people in the community they represent. Period. And I do," Thunder told *The Coast News*. "I care

about every home that I see. I care about them more than I care about any political party policy or state mandate, and I think that's the job of a council person, is to represent the people that voted for you. (Voters) pick you to represent them directly in how our city grows, and I firmly believe that our city should grow in a more thoughtful way rather than slamming three-story apartment buildings all over the place."

Over the decades, Thunder has raised four daughters, spending several years managing competitive soccer teams, serving as a board member of the Cardiff Soccer League and managing La Costa Canyon High School's surf team.

Thunder's campaign is centered around the notion that what residents truly want is for the city to retain its unique character and vi-



JULIE THUNDER

brancy.

"With my personal roots in this community, it's my deep desire to slow down the changes happening," Thunder said. "There are people who have lived here for a long time for a reason because they love many things about it. It's frustrating when new people come to town and have all these ways to change it."

Another key issue to Thunder's campaign will be retaining local control over housing rules and regulations. She vigorously opposes state laws such as Senate Bill 9 and Senate Bill 10, which she argues prioritize housing density goals over the ability of communities to maintain their unique character.

Thunder expressed support for the Brand-Huang-Mendoza Tripartisan Initiative, a grassroots referendum that seeks to amend California's constitution to allow local jurisdictions to override state housing laws.

Thunder also criticized the current council, including sitting District 3 Councilwoman Joy Lyndes, for not resisting the state and standing up for local control, which she said is the biggest issue facing Encinitas and one of the primary reasons she decided to run.

Along with preserving Encinitas, she vows to do a better job of listening to the residents than the city's current leadership, which Thunder described as being out of touch with its constituency.

JOY LYNDES

In 2021, Councilwoman Joy Lyndes was appointed to District 3 replacing former Councilwoman Jody Hubbard, who stepped



JOY LYNDES

down due to health reasons.

While Lyndes believes she's already accomplished much while in office, she said it's actually her career as a landscape architect prior to serving on the council that really informs her approach to the position when it comes to preserving what's unique about Encinitas.

"I think one of the most important issues for me is preserving our culture, history and character," Lyndes said. "I'm not sure that the community has looked closely and critically at how we preserve that culture, character, ecology that we love. It doesn't matter what your political background is, because ultimately we agree that we're a special slice of the world. So we have to ask, 'Why aren't we preserving it?' We just have a lot to do in putting good policy around it as we move forward into the future."

On the council, Lyndes said she's initiated an item of discussion on how the city can best identify and protect its culturally significant spaces for future generations. She pledged to continue that fight if elected to an additional term.

"We need to look at natural history, our cultural history, and articulate that in policy so when we develop in the future we have policies in place to tell us where to develop and not to develop, something tell us what's valuable in our character as a city," Lyndes said.

Lyndes also touted eight years of experience on the city's Environmental Commission, where she played a key role in advancing significant policies promoting environmental stewardship and conservation. Lyndes also helped launch Cyclovia Encinitas, an annual open-streets event aimed at promoting mobility and the city's Climate Action Plan.

On housing, Lyndes said the city needs to balance the need to provide more affordable housing for middle and low-income families with the notion of protecting culturally significant spaces. Lyndes supports the city's current expansion of accessory dwelling units, or ADUs. In December, the council passed an ordinance allowing for one ADU per primary unit on a designated lot.

Overall, Lyndes said she's excited about the prospect of serving a full term



BRUCE EHLERS

as a District 3 representative.

"When you look at what I've already done for the city, I think that it's clear that one of my strengths is that I'm a problem-solver, I actually enjoy this position," Lyndes said. "To be a great leader you have to have a clear vision and get passionate about it, but then you also have to have an ability to think broadly and listen."

BRUCE EHLERS

Bruce Ehlers, chairman of the Encinitas Planning Commission, is currently running unopposed for the council's District 4 seat this year after Deputy Mayor Joe Mosca recently announced he will not be seeking reelection.

Like Thunder, Ehlers said he's running because he's concerned about the city's direction under the current leadership, especially with respect to maintaining local control over land use and development decisions.

"Recent decisions by our own City Council and the State have seriously eroded and overridden local control of land use and development," Ehlers said. "In a matter of a few short years, low-density zoning has been replaced by three, four and even six-story housing proposals with 30 to 45 units per acre."

Specifically, Ehlers condemned the council for what he called its tacit support of SB 9 & 10, and its opposition to the Tripartisan Land Use Initiative.

"What's happening now is that there's a threat to this city coming from our own council and a threat from the state," Ehlers said. "Our council hasn't been defending us from this threat and so they've become a part of it. Their actions [on SB 9 & 10] have been silent for the most part, they were silent on Brand-Huang-Mendoza, with all five of them except Kranz opposing a position in support of that. Given the egregious nature of our state legislature attacking local control, I really did view that initiative as one of the few ways to take control back."

In 2013, Ehlers was the primary author of voter-approved Proposition A, also known as the "Encinitas right to vote" initiative. Prop A was seen as an effort to reclaim local control over housing density require-

ments in Encinitas, requiring a public vote on any increases to zoning density and building height above two stories or 30 feet.

After the proposition passed, the Encinitas City Council under Mayor Catherine Blakespear launched multiple unsuccessful efforts to overturn Prop A, arguing the voter-backed initiative unduly restricted the city's ability to meet state housing density requirements.

Both of those efforts — Measure T and Measure U — were defeated by voters. But again in March 2020, the City of Encinitas filed a lawsuit seeking to override Prop A, but a judge upheld the voter-approved initiative.

"The council was against Prop A and then they were for these Measures T and U," Ehlers said. "In all three cases, the public prevailed but it's just very clear how out of sync the council is with the people of Encinitas, as proven by these majority votes."

Ehlers, who serves as chairman of the city's Planning Commission, also said he's been frustrated by the city's failure to invest in more affordable housing opportunities, despite repeated chances to do so.

In June 2021, the Encinitas City Council approved changes to the city's municipal code to require inclusionary housing at a rate of 15% for very low-income units or 20% for low-income units citywide. However, Ehlers said this action ignored the Planning Commission's original recommendation of requiring a 50% inclusionary housing rate across the board.

Not only did the city miss an opportunity to provide vastly more affordable units to low-income residents, but according to Ehlers, the council's actions have now put Encinitas at risk of failing to meet minimum affordable housing numbers as required by the state's Regional Housing Needs Assessment, which stipulates each city's affordable housing needs over the course of an eight-year cycle.

"We ended up with 15-20% affordable housing instead of 50%, I mean what is that? The council needs to explain," Ehlers said. "They're certainly serving some interest and it's not the people of Encinitas. It's a question the mayor should have to answer."

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Join us for annual LGBTQI 'Pride by the Beach' festival



PRIDE BY THE BEACH festival will be held this year in downtown Oceanside on June 11. *Courtesy photo*

The North County LGBTQII Resource Center, advocates for the diverse LGBTQI community, is proud to present its Pride by the Beach program and festival, held in person this year on June 11, 2022.

Pride by the Beach is a program of the North County LGBTQII Resource Center and actively supports both its mission and vision to making people feel accepted, valued, safe and free from social stigma.

The festival, which is alcohol and tobacco free, celebrates its 15th year in the heart of downtown Oceanside, Civic Center Plaza. It will include a youth and education zone, two stages of entertainment, speakers, pet contests, interactive arts experiences, face painting, culturally diverse food choices included vegan, vegetarian, and gluten free options, as well as a mixed group of resource and retail vendors including LGBTQI community groups and HIV Testing.

Pride by the Beach also hosts an annual Drag Takeover show, which has been hosted at the historic Belly-Up Tavern for the last three years. This fierce benefit show features local

drag legend and Ru Paul Drag Race winner, season 1, Chad Michaels along with a cast of San Diego's top Drag performers. This year's show will take place on March 29, 7:00 pm.

In 2008, the North County Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) Coalition was formed, planting the seed for what would become the North County LGBTQII Resource Center. Their mission is to serve, empower and advocate for North County's diverse LGBTQII community. The Resource Center is 11 years old and has hosted the Pride by the Beach festival in the heart of Oceanside for the last 15 years. The Center has increased mental health and clinical services as a pandemic response and has multiple programs to meet the LGBTQI community needs around housing food insecurity and more.

Visit the North County LGBTQII Resource Center at 3220 Mission Ave. Suite #2, Oceanside, CA 92058, give them a call at 760.573.8241 or visit their official website at <https://www.ncresourcecenter.org/> or <https://www.pridebythebeach.org/>

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