

SANTA CLARA ETHICS PLEDGE

The purpose of an ethical political campaign in the City of Santa Clara in 2024 is to win and at the same time to build public trust by giving the voters the information they need to make their best voting decision. Ethical Campaigns can be hard-fought, passionately argued, and competitive. The fight, however, is about issues; the argument is over the best way to meet public needs; and the competition is between generous and talented neighbors in a race to provide the best public service.

THEREFORE, as a candidate for public office, I promise the people of Santa Clara that my campaign and my future service will adhere to the highest standards of honesty, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Specifically:

1. **GRAND JURY:** I accept the findings of the Grand Jury Reports and agree that the City of Santa Clara has a public trust problem. Moreover, I have a duty to rebuild public trust, beginning with this campaign. I will read the *Code of Ethics & Values* and the *Behavioral Standards*, practice their behaviors and ethical decision-making, and raise ethics issues as part of our regular discussion as Candidates and Council members.
2. **ISSUES:** I will focus my campaign on issues relevant for Santa Clara now and in the future, on character strengths and weaknesses that I believe are relevant for the position my opponent and I are running for – not on issues that are irrelevant and meant to distract voters for the sake of winning a political campaign.
3. **HONESTY:** I will tell the truth about myself and my opponent without overstating, understating, leaving out relevant context, and making up facts. I will present evidence to support positive or negative claims I make in print or online about myself or my opponent's record, character, and positions.
4. **CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATIONS:** My campaign communications will allow my opponent a reasonable amount of time to respond to claims I make about his/her position or qualifications. As a candidate for City Council, Police Chief, or City Clerk, I pledge to uphold the highest ethical standards throughout my campaign and tenure in office.
5. **DISCOURAGING NEGATIVE CAMPAIGNING:** If an independent expenditure attacks my opponent, I will immediately condemn such behavior with a public statement. If elected, I will recuse myself from votes related to the funders of the negative attack. Even though the law allows money to have an outsized influence on politics and local elections, the law is the minimal standard, not the higher ethical standard which strengthens, rather than weakens, public trust. Negative campaigns by independent expenditures are particularly harmful to public trust and, therefore, should be strongly discouraged by candidates with the leverage that they have during the campaign and, if elected, while in

office.

6. **RESPECT:** I will treat other candidates, the public, people who disagree with me, and my critics with respect, as I would treat a respected colleague. I will attack issues, not people, and will never demean or mock. I will respect differing viewpoints and foster a civil and respectful dialogue within the community.
7. **COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS:** I will follow all local, state, federal laws and regulations governing campaign finance, disclosure, ethics, and public service. I will file all forms by their deadlines. I understand that breaking the law damages or destroys public trust. To foster the public's trust my behavior must follow the most demanding ethics standards.
8. **ETHICS EXPERTISE:** I will support the multi-year hiring of an ethics expert at a compensation equivalent to that paid to other consultants who do important City work. The ethics expert will work with candidates, the Council, and staff to rediscover city ethics, reinvent the City's ethics code, rebuild and reposition the Ethics Program, and recommit to practical skills, accountability, and enforcement to build public trust.
9. **ETHICS COMMISSION:** I support an Ethics Commission with subpoena power, professional staff, membership independent of Council members, and a guaranteed source of funding. The Ethics Commission will be responsible for the development of an Ethics Program and will provide advice, training, investigate complaints, enforcement, and hold public officials accountable for ethics promises they make. The Commission will also have the option to recommend action to other law enforcement agencies if they discover wrongdoing.

I pledge to uphold these principles, practices, and pledges to the best of my ability, recognizing that serving the public's needs and earning their trust is paramount in serving our community effectively. I challenge my opponent to do the same.

But if my opponent won't sign the pledge or signs the pledge and violates it, my opponent has chosen to make ethics and public trust a central issue in this campaign and a central difference between us.

Candidate Signature

Date

Dr. Tom Shanks, Santa Clara's former ethics consultant, created this pledge as a public service and will monitor compliance with it at <https://publicethicsnow.com>.

Contact drshanks@publicethicsnow.com