Ocean Park Association Board Election 2020

The following eight individuals are running for open director seats. All have met the criteria of residency and membership. Candidates submitted these statements about their qualifications to join the board, and while this is **NOT** an official ballot, it will give you an opportunity to “get to know” each one a bit better. Current OPA members will receive a ballot via Survey Monkey during the first week of December.

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| **Sean Besser:** I am passionate about our great Ocean Park community and helping it continue to thrive. Ocean Park is probably the most complex SaMo neighborhood given its proximity to the beach, Venice, freeway, metro and City Hall. We need leaders who are thinking about how to strike a healthy balance between maintaining its beach town feel, keep it safe and welcoming, foster diversity and openness, all while evolving into the 21st Century.  My priorities on the OPA board will be to make Ocean Park more pedestrian/biking friendly, help local Main St businesses thrive, address homelessness, improve safety, and manage our relationship with city officials to make sure Ocean Park's unique needs and concerns are recognized. I grew up the son of a single immigrant mother and know firsthand how hard life can be when you struggle to pay rent. I put myself through UCLA and USC for undergrad and law school before saving up enough to be able to buy a place of my own. I want to foster a community where everyone has the opportunity to similarly succeed. I’ve been a resident of Santa Monica for more than 20 years and a homeowner in Ocean Park for over 10 years. |
| **Ben Bokich:** Ben fell in love with Ocean Park when he first visited many years ago, and feels fortunate to have lived here as a part of the community for over 5 years, regularly biking and walking around the neighborhood and beach. He looks forward to being a committed member of the board. Over the last couple of years he’s regularly attended the OPA monthly board meetings and the COVID-era weekly Zoom calls. He’s a member of the OPA Emergency Preparedness Group committee. Keenly interested in local politics, he was one of only a handful of citizens that attended the working sessions of the Santa Monica Budget Task Force in late 2019/early 2020.  His focus if elected will be 1) supporting OPA’s mission of communicating news & information to residents, 2) the revitalization of Main Street, 3) monitoring the improvements to Lincoln Blvd, and 4) in general being a voice for the specific concerns of our neighborhood. Professionally, he used his skills as a certified public accountant (CPA) in a variety of roles in the U.S. and Europe, including working for one of the world’s largest accounting firms and his own firm. |
| **Kate Kennedy (Incumbent):** Kate, the daughter of a lobsterman, was raised in a small town on the coast of Maine, and knows first-hand how special it is to live by the ocean.  Growing up, she frequently attended town hall meetings with her father and volunteered at various community fundraisers and events with her mother. That sense of community and civic duty is still an integral part of her life here on the West Coast.  Kate has been living in the Ocean Park neighborhood for the past 17 years. She loves helping people through her work as a Realtor with Heyler Realty and her involvement on the council of the Children’s Burn Foundation.  She is passionate about local issues and challenges facing the Ocean Park community.  Kate is excited to be a member of the Board of OPA, serving consecutive terms as the Vice President, and hopes to spread her enthusiasm to many more residents of Ocean Park. |
| **Patty Godon-Tann:**  After terming out from nine years serving on the OPA Board of Directors, Patty would like to return to continue facilitating the positive change that OPA is making on our remarkable neighborhood. Patty has worked as Treasurer and Membership Chair and has been vested in the annual 4th of July Parade.  A longtime resident of Ocean Park, she has lived in the southern “Borderline” Neighborhood for more than 40 years. Patty was the Chair of the Borderline Neighborhood Group, being largely responsible for the dramatic change in Ozone Park over the last decade. Years in the neighborhood have taught Patty how to create change from the grass-roots level. She continues to be very excited about serving on the OPA board and feels that Ocean Park encompasses the best Santa Monica has to offer. Her goal-to help maintain and build upon the unique blend of city sophistication and small town cohesion that is Ocean Park . |
| **Chris Morgan:** Chris has lived in Ocean Park since November 2019 and upon his temporary job assignment during this time fell in love with the neighborhood and moved here permanently in June 2020.  Chris has spent time in a variety of cities throughout the country including New Haven, Baltimore, Indianapolis, New York City, and San Francisco.  Living in each of these very different locales has enabled him to understand the different needs of the communities of diverse areas and appreciate the great things that each individual locale does to support their residents.  Chris is a director for a global hospitality firm and has enjoyed 17 years of success managing large portfolios of clients in the United States through creative thought processes, budget ingenuity, and lasting relationships.  Here in Santa Monica, Chris has enjoyed walking the Ocean Park area, exploring the many gems that our amazing area has to offer, and volunteering over 8 hours per week for the city's farmers markets (maybe you have seen me there!).  He looks forward to serving the members of OPA, being a steward of the neighborhood he is very proud to call home, and continuing his service to the betterment of the community, which he looks to call home for many years to come. |
| **Marc Morgenstern (Incumbent):** Marc has served as OPA's president for the last two years, and previously as its secretary. In this pandemic year, he has focused on keeping the Ocean Park community connected and informed by writing regular email updates and hosting our weekly OPA Connects Zoom calls. He's a former journalist and Emmy-winning news producer, and a longtime consultant to media companies. Marc served as Board Chair of the Santa Monica Public Library, where he also taught a creative writing class for the homeless. More recently, he served on the city's Public Safety Reform Advisory Committee.  Marc is a graduate of Yale College and the Warren Wilson College MFA Program for Writers. He believes that the more we nurture partnerships with other organizations and the city, the stronger our neighborhood will be. He hopes that in times like these, OPA can be a beacon of civility and community. |
| **Ian Novos:** It has been my good fortune to have lived in Santa Monica off and on since 1988, and full time since 2004. No matter where else I’ve lived during these years, it is Santa Monica’s song that has played in my head. Ocean Park, in particular, has been a wonderful neighborhood to live in, and feel a part of, and OPA has not only been key to this, but has also contributed to my feeling of being anchored during the past 9 months.  Ocean Park and OPA are able to do what they do because of the many people who tend both the place and the organization with love and dedication. I would welcome the opportunity to work with them and contribute to the critical work that OPA does to advance the well-being of its constituent community. Specifically, I want to work toward preserving the character of a safe, bike-friendly Ocean Park, a vibrant Main Street and positioning Ocean Park to thrive long term, in part, by dealing with the consequences of global warming, and being careful not to over-develop it.  I recently retired, am an economist who has worked both in academia (teaching at USC for eight years) and the private sector. I also served for about eight years as President of the board of the Disability Rights Legal Center. |
| **John Prindle:**  I have been a Santa Monica resident for nearly 3 decades and in Ocean Park for 13 of those years. We should continue to support the changes that OPA has been focused on since its inception: compassion, mobility and safety. We also need to continue to work closely with organizations like SMRR to provide housing assurance for our most vulnerable residents, including the homeless.  Residents and businesses have also talked about mobility and making our streets safe for cyclists and pedestrians. Proactively working with City Hall is how we will solve this challenge and the recent changes to Main Street show us the path forward.  I also support “cleaning up our streets” as this will improve our quality of life. One area of focus that I would like to see prioritized is reducing the amount of trash we see on our streets and in our parks. Being proactive, working with city departments and being responsive to OP residents will help us meet these goals. |