

Episode 23: Pre-Election Special

Welcome to Gilded Garbage Can, *the* podcast dedicated to defogging the image that is San Francisco.

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Listener shout-out this episode goes to...Matteo – a long time and loyal listener to the show who himself hosts a company podcast at our mutual employer. Thanks, Matteo for being a supporter of this show.

Election Day is hours away...about 48 hours to be exact, and if you haven't already mailed in your ballot or voted early, take the time to put on a mask, and go to your local polling place to cast your votes and make your voice heard. Of course, in San Francisco, voting is that day where we get to pick from a slate of mediocre supervisor candidates, all of whom, once elected, go to City Hall and do nothing for 4 years. We're also presented with a menu of local measures that all read like the ones we already voted on years ago.

"A "yes" vote on measure "whatever," provies money to retrofit schools." Sounds good, right? Wait, didn't I vote "yes" on that a few years ago? What happened to that money? It's like a tv drama where the same thing happens year after year after year. "Hey, so-and-so hasn't been in a bad relationship for a couple of seasons...let's re-run that."

Personally, I'd like to see a measure that bans construction of new roundabouts and bus lanes in the city...we'd probably save enough money to retrofit everything.

In terms of candidates for supervisor, you never really know what you'll get from any of them because they pretty much say nothing in any of their advertising spots, their fliers or on their websites. Let's use District 1, where I live, as our case study.

District 1 has an open seat, as the incumbent decided to not run for re-election, knowing she had no way to win, having done nothing during her term. Four years ago, she threw nice block parties and suckered a lot of voters, me included, that she really cared about the district and had an agenda. Reality is, she served some decent food – the hot dogs were particularly good - and had a cotton candy machine and that was the most we'd ever seen from a District 1 candidate, so we voted for her. Four years and four roundabouts later, she finds herself at the receiving end of a LOT of criticism and cannot in any way run on a platform of proven leadership or accomplishments, so retires from city politics. I don't even think anyone tried to bribe her to do anything because they knew she was so ineffective.

So, now we have 7 or so people all running for the seat and picking one of them is basically an exercise in random selection because they're all so indistinguishable from one another, they may as well be a seven-headed hydra. Their advertising, all reads about the same too:

"Hi, I'm candidate X, and as a long-time resident of this neighborhood, I am appalled at what I see. That's why I'm running."

Or, "Hi, I'm running because the homeless problem is out of control...we need to do something about it."



Or, “If you’re as sick and tired of tents on the sidewalks as I am, vote for me.”

It’s as if there’s an unwritten rule in city politics: Be good at powers of observation...not powers of vision or leadership.

Then there are the attack ads...many of them don’t even say “pick me over that one,” they simply say, “don’t vote for that one.” Clearly this is because the person running the ads doesn’t really have a position or a proposed solution either.

“Candidate Z is in the pockets of real estate developers.” Really? No shit...everyone in City Hall is, it’s practically a prerequisite for running for office in the city.

I’m only talking about District 1, but it’s the same everywhere. None of the candidates come to the table with ideas or proposals, just gripes. They excel at pointing out what’s wrong but put forward nothing else.

Now to those of you who say, “Isn’t that what you do on this very podcast,” my response is simple. Yes. Maybe you should write in my name on the ballot this Tuesday...

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