

PORT OF TACOMA CANDIDATE FORUM

SEAT 1 RESPONSES



At [Citizens for a Healthy Bay](#) we believe in the urgency of the climate crisis and are constantly looking to how local policy and decision makers can protect our air, waters, critters, and people from decline. This year we have local elections in Pierce County and ballots are out for the August 3rd primary. We hosted candidate forums for Port of Tacoma seats 2 & 4. Seat 1, due to only 2 candidates in the race will not be on the primary election ballot, so they were not a part of our forum nights. However, it is still important to hear their vision for the Tacoma Tideflats so below you will find John McCarthy's and Laura Gilbert's answers to some of the questions held in our forum! We gave them the same set of 4 questions things like climate action, a just transition, working with our indigenous neighbors, and protecting salmon.

Watch our Candidate Forum night 1 here: <https://youtu.be/ubFdJkRYCbA>

Watch our Candidate Forum night 2 here: <https://youtu.be/3BIK8UaCd0Q>

1. In fall of 2019, a landmark report from the United Nations' scientific panel on climate change described a far more dire picture of the near-term consequences of climate change than previously thought and said that avoiding the damage requires us to reduce global climate emissions by nearly 50% by 2030 – just 8.5 years from now. This requires a worldwide economic transition at a speed and scale that has “no documented historic precedent” – the closest model scientists pointed to was the mobilization effort in the US during World War II. What is the Port's role in addressing the climate crisis? And what would you do, if elected, to reduce global greenhouse emissions from Tacoma?

John McCarthy - I am a firm believer in science and, as a society and individually, we must carefully study, evaluate and follow the science of climate change to make changes in direction and conduct to give our planet and its residents the best opportunity to avoid dire consequences. The Port is a relative small player in the world of climate impact but each player must strategize and recognize their impact and ability to address climate change. I am just finishing my first term in returning to the Commission and believe we have accomplished much in the last four years. We adopted and implemented a clean truck program, requiring newer, less polluting trucks in our terminals. This has resulted in substantial reduction of pollution. I served as President of

the POT and co-chair of the NWSA last year and we also completed a comprehensive Clean Air strategy which will impact our region. We have supported the Paris climate accord, lobbied in Olympia for legislation to address carbon impacts, developed a strategic plan with an environmental emphasis to reduce air and climate pollution by Port and tenant activities and have moved forward to implement clean energy at many of our terminals, to name a few.

Laura Gilbert - I don't believe the world or our environment have time to wait on taking action to address greenhouse emissions. This is not a time of half measures and we must embrace a future that is more capable and responsible. We must invest all of our attention and planning on finding a carbon free system of moving the goods of the world. Nothing will be perfect, but the time of action has arrived. With the size of the Port and its relative influence in the world, our primary responsibility is to not invest and enable an infrastructure that does not seek to be carbon neutral. Transitional plans need to be shown very clearly how they are transitional and not a new normal that will be a disincentive to real change.

2. What does a just transition look like to you? For reference, "just transition" refers to the principles, policies and practices that protects frontline workers and fence-line communities while mobilizing the community to transform from an economy based on extracting natural resources and heavily polluting industries, to one that is regenerative and meets environmental and public health goals.

John McCarthy - There are many principles and overlapping policies to achieve a just transition. Much of it flows from labor unions. A key principal is that a healthy economy and a clean environment can co-exist. My focus is on what the Port can do and what it has done. It has cleaned up legacy contamination on over 1100 acres of port-owned land. It has transformed old, industrial sites into usable properties to attract new business and jobs to the community. Over the last decade, Port supporting programs have reduced cancer causing diesel particulate emissions by 80 % and greenhouse gas emissions by 20% . My father was a labor union member who worked on the waterfront for over 40 years and died of cancer . Health impacts in a safe transition is very important to me. The Port is now replacing Port-owned diesel cargo handling equipment with hybrid equipment, moving to zero emission technology and shore-power technology. I am honored to have the endorsement of longshore, teamster and Central labor.

Laura Gilbert - The focus of a just transition should be on the lives and future of those who are most impacted by the change. If a paradigm shift requires positions with different skill sets, then an investment in the existing workforce and community should be the highest priority. We should create highly paid, highly skilled jobs for ourselves and our children. It would only be a lack of creativity that would prevent us from finding everyone a place in a new economy and expanding to include more. Efficiency and ecology does not have to be displacement. What we need are people who can move the world and they can succeed anywhere if given the opportunity and tools to do so.

3. As part of the Port's work, it regularly engages with other governments, like the Puyallup Tribe of Indians who's traditional fishing and gathering grounds have been the Tideflats since time immemorial. Unfortunately, industrial activities in the Port have come in direct conflict with the traditional rights of tribal members to the land and fish of this area. As a Port Commissioner, you can help foster better relationships between the Port and frontline communities, especially the tribe. What skills and experience do you have working with frontline communities? If elected, how will you work to uplift the Port's relationship with the Tribe?

John McCarthy - I was the Port Commission representative to the Puyallup Land Claim Settlement from 1985-1990. I argued against some strong Port leadership efforts to not acknowledge the Puyallup tribe and /or minimize their claims and history. I respect and honor their history. I worked closely with the tribes and many other groups in achieving a substantial agreement which has assisted the tribe in accomplishing many of their goals. I had a very good relationship with tribal leaders, many of whom are still very active. I became a judge and was away from the Port for many years. Upon my return, I was disappointed to learn that the Port-tribal relationship was very poor, particularly after the Port had agreed to lease property for an LNG facility. My fellow Commissioners asked me 3 years ago to serve as a liaison with the tribe . I have worked to improve that relationship, have participated in many consultations and am continuing to work on habitat improvement and joint economic development potential projects with the tribal Chair and leadership. Many of these positive interactions go unreported. I believe many in leadership positions would agree that relations are improving . More work to do, there are many opportunities to help our communities by working together.

Laura Gilbert - My first priority with the Tribe would be to seek ways to enhance and formalize their relationship with the Port. I have grown up surrounded by marginalized communities and my perspective is firmly rooted in the value that all people deserve an equal voice in how we shape our future. The larger community should be able to make informed decisions and not suffer the condescension of the powerful. It's easy to shake hands and smile when there are no differences in priorities. It is easy to enjoy ceremonies and uncontroversial discussions. We have to have the courage to acknowledge a sovereign nation with a unique stake in the health of the Sound. Fortunately, that will benefit us all.

4. The Port of Tacoma like all industrial lands produces the most intensive source of ongoing toxic contamination, not just legacy contamination. Juvenile salmon from the Puyallup river have the second highest concentrations of toxics in the entire Puget sound area. How would you use your role as a port commissioner to reduce ongoing pollution that impacts the fish, the people that eat the fish, and the other animals?

John McCarthy - The impacts on fisheries is important to our entire community. I serve on the University of Washington- Center for urban Waters- advisory Board. It has been active in tracing source pollution and fisheries impact. I have also worked as the POT representative to work on the State Orca task force recommendations to save our Southern Resident Killer Whale population. Storm Water is the #1 source of pollution in Puget Sound. The Port Environmental and planning team has 18 professional passionate employees dedicated to protecting the environment. They have backgrounds in biology, chemistry, ecology, geology, land use and other skillsets. Port environmental projects have restored water quality, employed clean technologies in storm water management , remediated contaminated properties, created wetland opportunities and improved fish habitat. The Port team performs source control inspections to prevent sources of contaminants from leaving Port and tenant sites, installs treatment systems and cleans storm water pipes and catch basins. We must be very vigilant in this work.

Laura Gilbert - I firmly believe that the ideas, concepts and logistics we need to mitigate and remove pollution from our environment already exist in this world. It exists in the minds and talents of many people. The difficulty is finding those voices and giving them the power to make real changes to the world and that takes money. When dealing with a simple profit motive, that is not always the first priority, but it is also not mutually exclusive. We need a solid commitment of resources and money to our values. Environmental stewardship should be promoted as a first value and pressure should be brought to bear on entire industries such that cutting corners and polluting the environment is not a means to outcompete more responsible stakeholders.