



Serving Rental Property Owners and Managers
throughout Alameda and Contra Costa Counties



East Bay Rental Housing Association Questionnaire 2014 November General Election

Background: The East Bay Rental Housing Association (EBRHA) is a full-service nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting fair, safe and well-maintained residential rental housing that is compliant with local ordinances and state/federal laws. We offer our member rental property owners and managers city-specific and timely education, one-on-one property management advice, free rental forms, networking opportunities, and advocacy at the state and local level. EBRHA supports our members, neighbors and local businesses with community improvement and sustainability initiatives.

Our 1400+ members own and manage over 18,500 rental units—including apartments, condominiums, duplexes and single-family homes—in over 25 cities throughout Alameda and Contra Costa counties. They range in size from small investors with just one property to large property management companies that own or manage hundreds of units. In addition, EBRHA has over 100 vendor members to help serve members' needs, including attorneys, plumbers, painters and other service providers.

Governance

The Association is governed by a Board of Directors, consisting of independent rental property owners and executives from property management firms that are elected by the general membership.

Completed questionnaires should be signed and **returned by 5pm Thursday, July 10th to:**

Attn:

EBRHA PAC

360 22nd Street, Suite 240

Oakland, CA 94612

Fax(510)893-2906

Email: esalazar@ebrha.com

In addition to completing this questionnaire, we ask all candidates to:

- **Include as an attachment to your e-mail, a high resolution photo (headshot).**
- **Candidate interviews will comprise of EBRHA PAC members (separate entity from the Board of Directors), Board members, staff and general members. A portion or all of this questionnaire may be published for EBRHA members or for the general population of Oakland voters.**
- **Attach a complete endorsement list.**
- **Bring a signed original of your questionnaire to your interview.**

Thank you for your service and for informing our members.

Name: Courtney Ruby	Office Sought: Mayor
Home Address: 45 Edgemont Way	Home City & Zip: Oakland 94605
Home Phone: (510) 495-4421	Cell Phone: (510) 495-4421
Occupation: Oakland City Auditor	Employer: City of Oakland
Work Address: 1 Frank H. Ogawa Plaza 4th Floor Oakland, CA 94612	Work Phone: (510) 238-3378
Campaign address: 1714 Franklin St. #100-317 Oakland CA 94612-3409	Campaign Phone: (510) 686-3315
Campaign ID Number (FPPC): 1364278	Political Party: This is a nonpartisan race. I am a Democrat.
Consultant and/or Campaign Manager: Consultant: Eric Jaye / Grant Martin, Storefront Political Media Manager: Darin Cline	Committee Name: Courtney Ruby for Oakland Mayor 2014

Background (Mayor)

• Why do you want to be Mayor of Oakland? (Or serve a second term as Mayor)?

I'm running for Mayor because it's time to tell it like it is – the key problem with Oakland is Oakland's city government.

We can be the most vibrant city in the Bay Area. We have the most creative people. We are the true geographic center of the region with the best weather, the best transportation infrastructure and the most vibrant culture. Oakland has what it takes to succeed right now.

But over decades our city government made a series of decisions that did more than squander money – they squandered opportunities. And one lost opportunity after another, year after year, adds up to the challenges we see now – crime is too high, our infrastructure is crumbling and our government isn't up to the challenges ahead.

As elected city auditor, my job is to look beyond the excuses and focus on the realities. And the reality is we need the mayor to lead the fight for safety every day. If we get safety right – the rest will be easier. We don't need excuses on crime, we need inspired and tough-minded leadership.

My job is to “do the math” – and if you run the numbers, our infrastructure is crumbling faster than we are fixing it. We can't create jobs and grow the economy if our city is falling apart. And we can't make progress for those who need government to work the most – people and communities who are left behind. I won't hide behind slogans, labels or ideologies. Failure is failure and success is success and we need to succeed for everyone, particularly low-income and no-income families in Oakland who don't care about labels – they care about results.

People elect me to tell it like it is – and the hard truth is, if we had more inspired and ethical leaders focused on results, we wouldn't be in so much trouble in so many areas. Our government needs to lead by example. And when politicians hire cronies, give contracts to donors, let costs get out of control, that's setting the wrong example.

As auditor, my job was to find problems and fight for solutions. I've gotten under the hood of nearly every part of this city government – and we're helping restore an ethical culture, saving taxpayers millions of dollars and fighting to make sure the people get what they deserve from the people's government.

I know the problems. I've fought for solutions. Now I am asking for the opportunity to lead that fight where it matters the very most – in the mayor's office.

- **Do you have any personal experience working in the private sector or as an entrepreneur?**

Please describe.

Yes. I have worked as a Management Consultant, Senior Accountant and Deputy Marketing Director at Deloitte & Touche and as the CFO for government and a number of non-profit organizations.

- **Briefly describe your educational background.**

I am a Certified Public Accountant and have a B.S.B.A. in accounting from The American University in Washington, D.C.

- **ALL CANDIDATES, except Current Mayor: Please describe where you believe the current administration has failed and how you would you succeed given similar challenges and responsibilities?**

Let's just tell it like it is – Oakland is the best city in the Bay Area but we have the worst city government.

I'm an auditor – a trained CPA. My whole professional life has been about separating fact from fiction – and getting results. That's why I'm running – because if we focus on the facts – we can make this city government as incredible as this city.

For every \$1 spent by the auditor's office we have identified \$6 in future savings, lost revenue or waste. It's amazing what you can find – if you are willing to open your mind to the plain facts before you.

Our police technology audit found \$2 million budgeted for technology that was not being used or was underused. When we ran the numbers on parking tickets, we got refunds for Oaklanders because city overcharged \$2.3 million. We focused on the numbers – not the politics. And we made a difference.

I hope people who say we can't turn Oakland around take a look at what we were able to do at the Auditor's office. I took a troubled agency, and I helped make it a model of accountability, transparency and results. And we have won back-to-back national awards recognizing our work as some of the best in America. From one of the worst to one of the very best – we can do it. I know we can do it, because I've done it already.

I know what we can do if we focus on the realities.

The most important reality is that if we get safety right, the rest will be easier.

- We need to make our whole city budget more efficient so we can hire more police officers and deploy them effectively.
- We need to attract new businesses so we can increase tax revenue – and hire more cops.
- We need to hold the police chief accountable to use smarter technology and old-fashioned community policing to make our neighborhoods safer.
- And we need to prevent crime from growing in the future by keeping kids in school and helping them succeed.

Politicians want to make things complicated. Auditors are trained to make things simple. Here is the simple truth – if we focus on facts we can fix this city government.

- **What is your overall budget for your campaign? How much money does your campaign expect to raise?**

We have accepted the voluntary spending limit of \$400,000. We will raise and spend that amount.

- **How much money do you currently have on hand?**

We are preparing our first campaign finance report since entering the race and will report our numbers July 31.

- **Who do you see as your strongest opponent?**

It's still very early and with ranked-choice voting, it's hard to say. Right now, most Oaklanders are undecided.

- **How will you win?**

I am running a campaign based on my track record of results. I turned around a failed agency and saved taxpayers millions of dollars in the process. I led the fight to protect whistleblowers and require mandatory ethics training for city managers. I am the only candidate with a proven record of making government work and holding City Hall politicians accountable.

I have been elected citywide twice. In my last election I received over 65,000 votes - the most votes any candidate has ever received for Oakland elected office standing for election this year. I have proven that I have the support and know-how to win a citywide election.

- **What will be your next work if you are not successful in this election?**

I am 100 percent focused on doing my current job as City Auditor and running a successful campaign for mayor. I haven't had time to speculate beyond that.

Do you consider yourself a pro-business candidate? Small business? What past actions demonstrate this commitment? Do you view income property owners as part of Oakland's small business community?

Yes, I am pro-business and pro- small business. But most of all, I am pro-Oakland. I am running to be the mayor of all of Oakland, and that will require balancing many different constituencies.

One of the best ways to support our current business community and attract new businesses is to create a safe, well-run city. I've spent my two terms as auditor working to increase transparency and accountability and find savings for taxpayers.

Yes, I view income property owners as part of our business community.

Income property owners are the largest sector of small business in Oakland. They support the local economy through 1) payment of property taxes, 2) payment of Oakland business taxes, 3) funding capital improvements that improve housing quality and put capital into the local economy. Please explain how you understand the impacts of rent control and Measure EE (Eviction Restrictions) on the rental income economy, the whole local economy and Oakland's overall tax revenue.

With gentrification on the increase, rent control should be a tool to address the legitimate concerns of tenants and help people handle the change that is coming to Oakland; but it is not good to tie the hands of property owners who end up having to make tough choices.

There is a difference between political math and real math. The 70 percent limitation on capital improvements cost-sharing is political math.

It doesn't make sense to create a disincentive for landlords to keep their properties in good repair or do necessary retrofits. That doesn't help landlords or tenants.

The 10 percent cap on rental increases is a reasonable way to keep Oaklanders from being priced out of their homes while we work on real solutions to skyrocketing rents (and housing prices) – building more housing.

But the 70 percent overall limitation is a political solution that fails to solve the economic problem.

Oakland recently passed sweeping changes to its rent ordinance limiting rents increases for capital improvements. Specifically, traditional incentives for owners to maintain and improve rental housing have been severely curtailed with more processes and procedures to discourage small owners. This only affects older buildings (built prior to 1983) but not newer buildings. Given that older buildings require greater capital improvements and are now further restricted in recovering any of the costs from the heavily subsidized tenants, do you see any problems for Oakland housing quality from these changes?

Please refer to my answer above on rent control.

Did/do you support these recent changes implemented by Oakland to restrict Capital Improvements by limiting the sharing of costs with long-term tenants? Overall did you feel these changes benefited most tenants? Income property owners? Oakland's overall tax revenue?

Please refer to my answer above on rent control.

**Please explain the benefits and/or failings of 30 years of rent regulations in Oakland for:
Income property owners of rent controlled buildings? Small owners?
For tenants residing in apartments under rent control?
For tenants living in apartments which are not under rent control?
For residents, in search of a new apartment to lease?
For neighbors of rent controlled buildings?**

While rent control has been in Oakland since 1983, rents continue to rise sharply during frequent housing booms. Over time, a small number of rent control tenants pay rent far below market, in essence receiving a private subsidy from the owners. With vacancies thereby discouraged, newly vacated apartments rent at a much higher rent than they would otherwise. Regardless of income, some tenants pay rents far below market while newer tenants, regardless of income, pay rents higher than the surrounding market. Does this appear fair to you? Why?

The key here is to have a balance. Rent control has certainly created burdens for income property owners of rent-controlled buildings. Yet, long-term tenants need some kind of stability during times of rapid change like we are seeing now. We need to make sure we are looking at the economic realities and not passing laws that will have unintended consequences.

Do you believe the Oakland Rent Adjustment Program is currently fairly administered and managed appropriately for tenants and income property owners? Do you have any direct experiences?

I have heard EBRHA concerns regarding these matters and am concerned. I do not have any direct experience – and continue to be willing to learn about your experiences, and as mayor ensure that all

programs are administered properly and fairly. My consistent experience at City Hall is that we have had a real leadership deficit when it comes to management – I'm running for mayor to fix that.

Do you support Measure EE (Eviction Restriction Ordinance)? Are you aware of any negative impacts of Measure EE on income property owners? Tenants? Neighbors? Please describe?

Oakland's just cause for Eviction ordinance clearly places substantial restrictions on the rights of property owners and it could result in substantial liability for property owners.

My understanding is that a major flaw in the law passed by voters was a lack of clarity in its implementation, including timelines for tenants to correct lease violations. I know that progress was made in the settlement that was worked out in the lawsuit challenging the ordinance.

The law has never been a static ordinance – and we need to constantly monitor it to make sure that there is a fair balance between tenant and property owner.

Please describe, in your view, a typical Oakland income property owner.

The average Oakland income property owner handles 4-5 properties and their investment is not necessarily their main source of income. It is critical that government regulation of rental properties - which is more complex here than in other parts of the country - be clear and concise so property owners can manage their properties without government compliance taking time from managing their property.

What are the largest expenses a rental owner in Oakland faces? In your opinion, would this encourage or discourage someone from investing in Oakland rental housing?

The largest expense a rental owner faces in Oakland is property tax. Homeowners have homestead exemptions and other programs that minimize their taxes - and many times people worry that government will look to other sources to make up for lost revenue because of those exemptions. Other large expenses include insurance, government regulations and maintenance of aging units.

In my opinion, Oakland is growing. Home prices are increasing and anyone that decides to invest in Oakland will be a winner. It will be my job as Mayor to make sure that every rental owner that invests in our city will get what they pay for - a competent government that will streamline permitting and rental processes to make it easy to run a business.

Property Owners are concerned with quality of life issues and neighborhood schools for many reasons. What are 2 specific proposals you would support to improve these issues.

There are a thousand things that need to happen to make Oakland great. But I'm going to focus on public safety first. Safety will make everything easier.

As mayor, I'll give the police chief the tools to do his job and I'll hold him accountable to results. I'll ensure we implement community policing successfully this time. I'll hire more officers so that we can increase response times and keep more officers on patrol and in the community.

Safer neighborhoods help create safer schools – and that means more opportunities for our kids. I want all of our kids to feel safe at home, walking to school and in the classroom so they can focus on learning.

Please share your specific ideas in increasing revenue to the city’s budget during your first term of elected office? Share your ideas on reducing the debt liabilities.

Oakland has gotten into trouble by failing to look at the hard numbers. We can get out of trouble by focusing on the facts. That’s why one of the first things I’ll do is hire an independent budget analyst to ensure that leaders have their eyes wide-open when making financial decisions.

We also need to stop the bleeding out of our city budget. Everywhere I looked as City Auditor, I’ve found significant waste. For example, we found \$3 million paid in error from payroll funds and \$2 million in unused or underused police technology funds – and we just scratched the surface. In fact, for every \$1 my office spent we found \$6 in savings.

I will be reviewing every city departments operations for that waste and applying those dollars to public safety and basic city services. In a 1.2 billion budget that can give us the money to hire the police officers we need. Additionally please look at my April 20th pension audit, I will address our long-term liabilities through real financial leadership both locally and at a state leader. We need a mayor who understands the financial complexities and manages responsibly to secure our financial future.

Our budget problems will require many fixes, but stopping waste is huge.

There are many infrastructure problems that the City of Oakland faces. If straddled with the choice of servicing these basic services vs. other services, please explain what you would choose to cut and why? What would you make sure is funded?

When faced with making decisions concerning Oakland’s infrastructure, government does best when it helps create an environment for business and entrepreneurs to create jobs. City government needs to step in and handle the large issues like public safety and a dependable infrastructure. While it is counterproductive to speculate what would be cut, I can assure your members that I will look at the data behind every critical infrastructure decision and choose the path that results in the greatest increase in economic activity for Oakland and you will be included in this decision making process.

I attest that these answers represent my actions and beliefs, are now part of my public record, and may be used by EBRHA to keep their members informed about important issues.

Signature

Date

Print Name

If completed electronically, please provide us with a signed copy via fax or at your interview.