

NOT JUST ANYBODY | Question 7: Pacifica's current city manager is retiring in March. City Council has initiated the recruitment process for the next. What skills or recommendations do you hope will be considered in the process?

Date: February 17, 2026 |

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Bartlett's News Briefs



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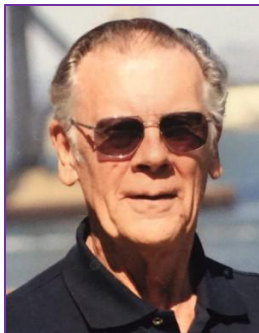
For 12 weeks in the New Year, five Pacificans, who all happen to be veterans (*with guest answers as needed*), answer a Question on the Street

Background: when I wrote features for the printed *Pacifica Tribune*, for many years that also included a question on the street – *Bartlett's Bullets*. It's interesting to hear what our neighbors think. I've asked five well-known community volunteers, all veterans and members of the Pacifica American Legion, to answer a question each week for 12 weeks. (*This week has a guest answerer.*) The purpose is not to stir up annoyed responses from people who are not part of this group, but to just have a listen to what someone else is willing to share. It is also to encourage community dialogue.

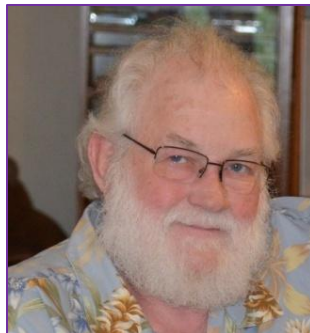
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Question 7: Pacifica's current city manager is retiring in March. City Council has initiated the recruitment process for the next. What skills or recommendations do you hope will be considered in the process?

Answerers:



Robert Biby



Ed Clements



Jay Crawford



Deidra Crow



Greg Stepanenko

Robert Biby. (Served: United States Marine Corps)

Our City Council members go into politics to help our city. This is why I voted for them. My knowledge on what a city manager does is limited, but my hope is our City Council is very educated, or became immediately educated, on what is needed. In a smaller city such as ours, the city manager should be fully capable of running all the day-to-day administration and budget needs. Our city manager is well paid and I believe they should be able to manage a city, this size, without having an expensive assistant city manager.

Ed Clements. (Served: United States Navy)

I would think all applicants have the wherewithal to know how to do the job. We definitely want someone with an accounting background. We also want someone with a background who understands from looking at city planning, where we are heading as a city and where we have been. They should understand how to work through the permitting process. They also need to understand the legal process. In that regard, we seem to have a small group of people in Pacifica, who wait until the last minute to file a lawsuit to stop something that has already been approved and has been started legally. The city manager needs to find a way to get these people to express their concerns earlier, before it is no longer on the agenda of a City Council meeting because it is a done deal. Pacifica's city manager needs to understand our residents are very vocal. The city manager should also understand how much of our budget goes to the security and safety of our city – our police department, our fire department and our public works department. We need an applicant who has the experience of doing that. It's an important job and our city manager should be offered a competitive salary, in line with the size of our city and living in the Bay Area. I hope we can get somebody that will be willing to work with us and stay. The city manager really needs to work with the police department. My son recently retired from the Pacifica Police Department after 28 years of service and he said our city manager, who is retiring, understood the police department and really worked with them. He did not arbitrarily cut people because somebody said, "Pacifica doesn't have the money." For instance, we don't have lieutenants in our police department anymore. You go from a police sergeant to a captain and that is a real big jump. When my son first started with the force, they had three lieutenants and three captains. Now they have two captains and no lieutenants and everyone is doing a lot more work. This is something I think the new city manager needs to be involved with and they should let the public know, we need to have these different people. When you eliminate them, it affects everybody. To manage Pacifica, the new city manager should be aware not just of our city but also of our residents.

Jay Crawford. (Served: United States Army)

The city manager position is the most important position we have in city government. I have worked in cities before where, when they needed to bring in a new city manager, they made a big deal out of how they were looking nationwide for the right person. Sounds good, but it isn't. The city manager needs to know California's laws. They are different from other states. The Bay Area city that I am thinking of, brought in a reputable city manager from out of state who made some mistakes, which cost that city money because he assumed things in California were the same as where he had just worked. I don't want us to do that. We need a city manager who knows the Constitution backwards and forwards, not just the federal, but the state. We have more civil rights under the California Constitution than is delineated under the Federal Constitution. A city manager can make some very bad and very expensive mistakes if they are not aware of that. The city manager must understand The Brown Act, backwards and forwards. This was passed in California in 1953 and a violation of that act can really bite the city in the butt. The city manager has got to know the California Labor Code and the rules of California Civil Service. The city manager must have a professional demeanor. They must be informed about the Municipal Code in Pacifica, San Mateo County and the State. They must be educated on the California Coastal Commission's role in Pacifica. The city manager must be articulate and they must be organized. It is important they

know to put policies in writing. They must revisit those policies on a regular basis and if there is an instance where they need to make a change from the original policy, they should know to document it. The individual should be informed, as much as possible, about Pacifica going back the last 10 years. What's happening with the Pier, what's happening with the Coastal Commission, what are the issues as far as our tax-base goes? They should be able to go into a meeting with a general idea of what the issues are. The city manager should have the skills to not put people down that they disagree with. That polarizes people and leaves the city vulnerable to having issues sidetracked. You don't get anywhere by insulting people. I would caution any city manager to not make promises that can't be kept. The better response is to hear the issue and then take a look at it. The city manager should be aware of Pacifica's history. It can be used to make economic decisions. We are not just a spot on the map. We are made up of all kinds of people and the city manager needs to really learn about the character of Pacifica.

Deidra Crow. (Guest Answerer)

Our city manager is central to the efficient and effective running of Pacifica's day-to-day operations. Intelligence is a requisite, especially emotional intelligence. This makes all city workers and staff, feel appreciated. Temerity is also important because that is key to seeing projects through to a successful conclusion. Having a "yes" outlook is important. By that I mean that special outlook on life that envisions solutions. They should have marketable ideas that will bring much needed funds to our coffers. Perspective is an absolute attribute. That will help enable the keepers of our historical treasures – like the Pacifica Coastside Museum and the last remaining piece of rolling stock of the Ocean Shore Railroad, Passenger Car 1409 – bring the promise of these treasures to fruition, which includes bringing financial gain to Pacifica. Rail fans from all over the place will come here to view these rare and special exhibits. The new city manager should also have an attitude of accomplishment – that special joy that comes from a hard job well done. They must be a nice person. Please, be someone who is easy to do business with. Have a heart for service and gratitude. This little coastal town deserves the best we can do, every day in every way. I would also hope for someone who has empathy. They should work well with all kinds of Pacificans, of all economic levels and all ages – just everybody. I hope for resilience. Please be patient, please be a listener, and please have stamina and strength for you will need it. We, and this fair city, are worth your very best efforts.

Greg Stepanenko. (Served: United States Navy)

They should understand budget management. If something comes in less than originally estimated, the city manager should know how to follow all the proper procedures to put that surplus where more money is needed. They should have excellent leadership and communication skills because they oversee the police, fire and public works departments. Our city manager has to stay on top of our city, behind the scenes making sure everything that needs to get done is getting done. There are areas of our city that are just not up to snuff, in my opinion. We have all this beauty, but it's not taken care of. We have this island in Linda Mar and it has weeds all over the place. The City comes out every month or two, does some weeding and then it is forgotten. Pacifica should look clean; this especially applies to main streets like Palmetto Avenue and Linda Mar Blvd., – clean and beautified. I think the city manager should also get on board with providing teenagers something to do; not every teen skateboards or surfs. The city manager should make it easier for businesses to make money. I understand we are trying to be a big city with a small city budget. But I think the City is doing a half-assed job on the budget they have, to put it bluntly. We have an assistant city manager now. I think that's a good thing provided they go out and look at what our city needs and then get things done – not just sit in the office and call on department heads. I want to see the new city manager, going around to where Pacificans go, such as our shopping centers, and meet with people. Some of our former city managers were more hands on. Not everyone wants to go to a City Council meeting. The city manager should really look at the buildings, the planters, the islands, the streets. What do you see? What areas need better City care? Don't just drive through, walk around, get out

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and meet and greet. Be involved in the city you manage visually, and personally, so you can understand this is what Pacifica residents are talking about. This is where they have concerns. I don't know if the City Council does that. I do know that our former Pacifica Mayor and City Councilmember, the late Mary Ann Nihart, did that and that was wonderful. We need more of that.

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By Jean Bartlett (February 17, 2026)

Writer Jean Bartlett was recognized by the Board of Supervisors, County of San Mateo, for "her writing that connects community and preserves local history." She can be contacted through her website, www.bartlettbiographies.com. This article was anonymously sponsored.