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Uploaded: Fri, Oct 24, 2014, 11:40 am

Voice endorsement: Schmidt for Santa Clara Valley Water Board

by Mountain View Voice editorial board / Mountain View Voice

It is unusual, if not unprecedented, for a candidate running for a seat on the nine-member board of the Santa Clara Valley Water District to spend several hundred thousand dollars to get elected.

But that is what's happening in entrepreneur Gary Kremen's bid to unseat incumbent Brian Schmidt to represent Mountain View, Los Altos, Palo Alto and Los Gatos in District 7.

Kremen, who is politically connected and himself a major campaign donor to many local elected officials and the Democratic party, has loaned his own campaign \$250,000 through the end of September and already spent more than \$300,000.

This high-powered politics is new territory for incumbent Schmidt, who has raised just \$13,000 and has been blind-sided by Kremen's high-spending bid.

Kremen has come out aggressively against Schmidt and says he will take that same approach if elected in dealing with the operation of the water district. Every meeting of the district board will be a "job interview" for the agency's CEO, Kremen promises, just like the private sector.

He has a litany of criticisms of Schmidt and the district, including not focusing enough attention on the drought, not doing enough to pressure the Regional Water Quality Control Board, a state agency, to approve badly needed flood control measures for San Francisquito Creek, and not undertaking needed seismic upgrades to the county's reservoirs. He also objects to the fact that revenues from a state water tax aren't being fairly distributed throughout the district.

Kremen, who is the founder of Match.com, is currently board president of the 6,400 customer Purissima Hills Water District in Los Altos Hills and founder and chairman of WaterSmart Software, a company that sells consumption monitoring software to retail water suppliers. The software produces reports that tell consumers how their water use compares with similar households and offers conservation suggestions. He has also started a solar energy financing company.



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Schmidt, who ran four years ago as a reform candidate critical of district management, is an environmental lawyer who has spent 15 years working on environmental and water issues, in part as the former legislative advocate for the Committee for Green Foothills. He rejects Kremen's criticisms, and says he's been part of a board majority that hired a new CEO, lowered director pay and established more transparency by moving board meetings to the evenings. He points to the work he has done on flood protection and habitat restoration, and especially to help forge broad support for the San Francisquito Creek flood control work and fighting for its passage in front of the water board.

With Mountain View's water supply coming mostly from Hetch Hetchy through the San Francisco Water Department, the Santa Clara Valley Water District's importance to the city is primarily in the flood control and creek habitat work where Schmidt has been most active.

Mild-mannered and earnest, Schmidt provides a sharp contrast to free-wheeling entrepreneur and political activist Kremen. Both have the smarts and technical knowledge and interest to serve the district well, but with drastically different styles.

Kremen would shake things up and bring politics much more into play, perhaps for the good. But we object to the excessive amount of money he is spending and don't believe Schmidt has done anything to warrant kicking him out of office. He's been a hard-working and committed board member, doing a more than satisfactory job at representing north county's interests. He just happens to be the one in the way of Kremen's political ambitions.

The *Voice* recommends reelecting Brian Schmidt to the Santa Clara Valley Water District board of directors.

Comments

Posted by **Kathy** + 6 people like this
 a resident of Sylvan Park
 on Oct 24, 2014 at 3:37 pm

Why are people so surprised that Gary Kremen, the chairman and founding co-investor of WaterSmart Software, is spending over 300K of his own money in hopes of winning a seat on the Santa Clara Water District? When you consider the potential ROI, 346K is a drop in the bucket (excuse the pun).

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Posted by **Resident** + Like this comment
 a resident of North Whisman
 on Oct 24, 2014 at 5:02 pm

Kremen has my vote. Schmidt has done NOTHING to help us cope with the drought. Plus, he's arrogant. Time for a change!

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Posted by **Pishab Badmaash** + 1 person likes this
 a resident of Whisman Station
 on Oct 24, 2014 at 8:07 pm

Kremen's money scares me but Schmidt was just loafing around as our lawns went brown.

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Posted by **Steven Nelson** + 2 people like this
 a resident of Cuesta Park
 on Oct 25, 2014 at 10:48 am

Let me see, Schmidt was elected as a local reformer? So that means he hasn't done anything about a statewide water bonding problem (over which he has no control?) Kremen obviously doesn't know that much about politics - if he thinks a new elected position (bigger water board) will change this state taxing problem! Let's see - Los Altos Hills business person -wants to play at politics- self-



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funds own race. Have we seen that recently? Meg in 20110? But - that was statewide and \$10 M. I hope Mr. Kerman meets the same fate with the ROI on this "investment." I'm impressed by Mr. Schmid's depth and breath of understanding of water issues. Like a wide deep river! So, I will again vote for Mr. Schmidt! (like Voice's endorsement)

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Posted by **No Conflict Possible**

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a resident of Rengstorff Park
on Oct 28, 2014 at 10:01 am

I don't see how having have company named "WaterSmart Software" will get a candidate for Water Board a "ROI" (return on investment). Under State law, the Water District could not extend any contract to a company owned by a board member and one board member has no authority to even move a district in the direction of a technology from which the member could someday benefit financially.

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Posted by **Uh, Really?**

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a resident of Cuernavaca
on Oct 28, 2014 at 12:35 pm

@No Conflict Possible -- If you actually believe that, I have some oceanfront property in Kansas I'd like to sell you. Because if there is a will, there IS a way to make that happen.

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Posted by **No Conflict Possible**

[+ Like this comment](#)

a resident of Rengstorff Park
on Oct 28, 2014 at 2:55 pm

Read California Government Code Section 1090 and then explain, if you can, how the guy will profit from his service on the Water Board.

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Posted by **Uh, Really?**

[+ Like this comment](#)

a resident of Cuernavaca
on Oct 28, 2014 at 3:01 pm

Read recent news reports about state and local government behavior and tell me how it is NOT possible.

Unless, of course, you happen to be affiliated with the Kremen campaign.

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Posted by **No Conflict Possible**

[+ 1 person likes this](#)

a resident of Rengstorff Park
on Oct 28, 2014 at 3:11 pm

Unlike maybe you, I am not associated with either candidate. If you so distrust politicians, why would you vote to re-elect any of them?

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Posted by **Uh, Really?**

[+ Like this comment](#)

a resident of Cuernavaca
on Oct 28, 2014 at 5:54 pm

Quit lying. And stop with your advocacy of a candidate that's not who he claims to be.



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Posted by **HydroCurious**
a resident of St. Francis Acres
on Oct 29, 2014 at 11:12 pm

 Like this comment

Speaking of conflict of interest, why is there a "Watersmart Mountain View Bill" complete with our City's logo on Gary Kremen's candidate site?

See here: [Web Link](#)

and when and under which terms did Mountain View sign an agreement with Watersmart for this site:

[Web Link](#)

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