

FINAL
Sierra Club Board of Directors Nominee Questionnaire
by
Aaron Mair

Question 1: The mission of the Sierra Club is “to explore, enjoy and protect the planet. To practice and promote the responsible use of the earth's ecosystems and resources; to educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment; and to use all lawful means to carry out those objectives.” Why do you want to run as a Director for the Sierra Club Board?

I am a life member who has witnessed and believes in the grassroots transformative power of our organization. Our Chapter, Group leaders, & volunteer membership have been core to our success. Supporting me as a Board member is a vote for continued grassroots leadership and guidance of our wonderful organization.

Question 2: The function of boards is to provide high-level oversight to organizations. Describe your leadership skills and type of experience you bring to this role, and how will it help you fulfil your position on the board?

I am a US Navy veteran, retired New York State public health executive level professional who has served several governors, managed staff for over 34 years. My work in large diverse organizations and cultures is quite significant. I am a founder and early Environmental Justice movement pioneer who has mobilized a grassroots effort beginning in 1987 against solid waste management and incineration. With nearly two and a half decades as a Sierra Club life member volunteer, chapter chair, nine years as a national director who rose to become the 57th national Club president, I have substantive experience and understanding in serving the Club's grassroots membership. *Our role as Board is to ensure the strength of our grassroots volunteer leadership and support for the work done in every Chapter. Unlike any other environmental organization and board; the Sierra Club is unique in the power it gives to its volunteer board to ensure high quality campaigns, cultivating the org's resources to compliment and strengthen our volunteers. In short, the Board is critical to volunteer leadership and support.*

Question 3: Sierra Club recently adopted new values (Anti-racism, Balance, Collaboration, Justice and Transformation). Can you give an example of a time when you have lived out these values?

I am an 8th generation African American; a descendant of the enslaved forced nations that, to this day, built this great nation & deals with its institutional attacks upon my segment of America. Think about it; we are still having a national conversation over the most basic points of equity; that is the protection of our democracy and the right to vote. The right to vote and a healthy democracy are ESSENTIAL to electing political leaders who are committed to passing laws, regulations, setting policies that ensure that we all have clean air, clean water, and clean soil. I fight for these values and they are a part of my activist DNA.

Question 4: Sierra Club is committed to equity, inclusion and justice in all aspects of endeavors and at all levels, internally and externally.

a. How do you incorporate active anti-racism into your leadership with volunteers and staff?

I never needed the Sierra Club to find my moral compass and leadership in creating a more tolerant, equitable and inclusive values. I come from a long line of civil & labor rights activist. I was a pioneer and early adopter of these norms LONG before I became a Sierra Club leader.

b. How do you ensure an equitable and just transition to tackling climate change?

Invest in our activist leaders so that we can build the political power to transform the corporate “dirty fuels” controlled game that has fueled climate denial & the power that led America to withdraw from the 2015 Paris Agreements. We must mobilize our power to reclaim our democracy so that we can make the political gains necessary rather than engaging in rhetorical slogans. We must act; and Action begins with you selecting bold leadership on the Board that is responsive to the Sierra Club’s base.

Question 5: One of the significant ways Sierra Club accomplishes its mission is through political engagement. What can Sierra Club do better to develop a more energized and robust grassroots movement that will participate in the political process?

See my response in “Question 4.”

Question 6: Frontline communities are experiencing the adverse effects of climate change, environmental pollution, and limited access to resources. What types of

relationships does Sierra Club need to nurture in order to be effective in advocating for environmental justice?

I was part of & leader in the Club's earliest effort to engage frontline communities. I came to the Club from a frontline community in Albany, New York, battling against solid waste. When I was turned away by the Club, not because of the issue; but because (in my opinion) I did not look like the all White members in the room. I was referred, by them, to the "NAACP." Long story short, A few leaders in that room we upset by the unwelcoming environment & culture and they decided to break with the Chapter and come to my community's aid. In return, I became a Club life member so that I can ensure that no other community or peoples would ever receive less that equal and just protection under our Club's mission to: "...to educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment; and to use all lawful means to carry out those objectives."

Question 7: One of Sierra Club's most unique and powerful assets is its vast grassroots network and its ability to address a wide variety of issues and concerns nationwide. What are your priorities to maximize the impact of our grassroots volunteers?

1 – Restore grassroots centered leadership and power within the Club. There has been a slow but significant shifting away from our grassroots stewardship that is impairing local action and national effectiveness.

2 – Call for a National retreat (like we did under "Project Renewal") to ensure that our chapters and groups are fully engaged in the many ideas and policies that pretty much hitting the Club in a "top down" mode of implementation. Democracy works; and we must truly engage, empower, and enlist our grassroots in this process. That begins with your vote for me.

3 – Invest more in our wilderness & wildlands protection work. For too long revenues have come in for this space from "Wilderness Guardians" donors, & now is the time that we make those investments. Especially given the call by President Biden recognizing that wilderness areas are critical carbon sinks (natural sequestration) resources in our fight against climate change.

Question 8: Good communication strategies are one key to environmental and political success. How can communication and messaging be improved to reach a broader audience, including raising brand awareness?

The SIERRA CLUB IS NOT A PR FIRM. Our grassroots, networks & activist committed to action & driving change have always been the Club's best asset. The Club I fight for is one of action, not mere clever messaging.

Question 9: Volunteer leaders are a critical part of Sierra Club. Traditionally, non-Board of Director volunteers have been closely involved in the national decision-making process for Sierra Club. How would you enhance and grow volunteer participation and ensure that they continue to play a central role in the governance of Sierra Club?

Respect our volunteers, follow our unique California bylaws and as I said earlier "...= Call for a National retreat (like we did under "Project Renewal") to ensure that our chapters and groups are fully engaged in the many ideas and policies that pretty much hitting the Club in a "top down" mode of implementation. Democracy works; and we must truly engage, empower, and enlist our grassroots in this process. That begins with your vote for me."

Question 10: If you were elected, how would you address the Board's accountability for how Directors work together, treat each other, and fulfill their duty to the organization as a whole?

Due diligence begins with informed grassroots Sierra Club voters like you. Check the record and background of those who seek your trust and ask for your vote. The Board is at a tipping point which this question begs and hints at. I ask that you, the voter check the level of experience, service, and engagement of any candidate running for a leadership post in the nation's oldest & most powerful activist organization you help build. This election is about the future direction of the Club.

Respectfully,

-Aaron Mair