

Coastside Democrats Candidate Survey

An email address is required to ensure integrity. Please note this form in its entirety will be posted for Public Review.

Email *

cynthialsherrill@gmail.com

Thank you for your interest in applying for the endorsement of the Coastside Democrats. Please complete this submission by **Friday, September 4, 2026**. All Club members will vote on candidate endorsements.



Coastside Fire Protection District (CFPD)

The CFPD provides *fire protection services* for the City of Half Moon Bay and the Communities of Montara, Moss Beach, Princeton, El Granada and Miramar in addition to the surrounding unincorporated areas with a total District size of 50 square miles and serves a population of 30,000 residents.

The District operates three fire stations to provide the *emergency services*: Fire Station 40 in Half Moon Bay, Fire Station 41 in El Granada and Fire Station 44 in Moss Beach.

CFPD holds district-based elections for its five Board of Directors to staggered four-year terms. There are three districts that are up for election in 2026: Districts C (Hanna), D (Sherrill), and E (Burke).

1. Candidate Name *

Cynthia Sherrill

2. As a Club under the California Democratic Party, we only endorse fellow Democrats. *
Please state how long you have been registered to vote as a Democrat:

- ☒ Always been a registered Democrat
- ☐ Have been a registered Democrat for the last ten years
- ☐ Have been a registered Democrat for the last five years
- ☐ Just registered as a Democrat this election cycle.

3. I certify the information provided on this application and in any subsequent interview or written submission is true and correct. *

☒ Yes

☐ No

Statement Questionnaire

4. Why are you running for this office? *

To continue providing public service leadership to residents of the Coastside as a member of the Coastside Fire Protection District Board of Directors, District D.

5. What will be your top priorities if elected? *

1. Continuing Fiscal Responsibility
2. Continuing Efficient and Effective Fire District Performance
3. Renewal and Ongoing Management of the CalFire Contract
4. Emergency Preparedness and Response Public Education
5. Completion of Coastside Fire Station 44 with no additional cost to local taxpayers.

The CFPD currently has no debt. Our rates have not been raised in 25 years. There are no pending lawsuits against the district. Our personnel turnover is low. We are in the best fiscal shape in our history. The fire department delivers exemplary service around the clock 365 days a year. Our firefighter Paramedics and contracted AMR Paramedics provide the vast majority of urgent and emergency health care to the community. CFPD has incubated the Coastside CERT program in fulfillment of its own public education mission. Coastside CERT has grown to become one of the most successful residential emergency preparation and response public education programs in the State. CFPD is completing its third and final fire station without raising rates to cover construction costs. My top priority is to continue my active leadership role in sustaining the outstanding service record of the Coastside Fire Protection District on behalf of the residents of the Coastside.

6. Please explain how your background and experience have prepared you for this office. *

Successful service on the CFPD Board since May 2021. Familiar with all aspects of CFPD policy and operations. Excellent working relationships with fellow board members, advisory, administrative and operations staff. Community organizer. Skilled leader and administrator of professional and volunteer organizations. Experienced board member. Dedicated volunteer with a heart of service.

I have served as Coastside CERT Program Coordinator since 2019. I am a community organizer who co-authored the presentation to the CFPD Board resulting in their unanimous vote to become Coastside CERT's physical sponsor in time to apply for a State of California capacity building grant that jumpstarted Coastside CERT's growth. Volunteered 10,000 hours over the ensuing 5 years to develop Coastside CERT as it exists today.

Co-developed and implemented a 'hub & spoke' organizational model for Coastside CERT involving a central support core of activities & resources supporting 32 individual, self-organized neighborhoods and an ever-expanding training curriculum to give residents the education they need to protect themselves, their families and, if they choose to, help their neighbors during an emergency or disaster until professional help arrives. To reduce barriers to entry, this inclusive education is offered in three languages (English, Spanish, Chinese) free of charge to everyone 14+ who lives, works, or goes to school on the Coastside.

This common sense approach to how to live successfully in our gorgeous but isolation-prone Coastside environment with its vulnerability to natural and man-made disasters has gathered remarkable momentum since becoming formally affiliated with the Coastside Fire Protection District. Growing from 296 members, 56 CERTs, and 47 Ham radio operators in January 2019 to 2,870 members, 566 CERTs, and 148 Hams today in 32 Coastside neighborhoods, with new folks signing up for training every week. CERT has distributed \$167,000 in grant-funded emergency supplies to our neighborhoods. Coastside CERT, in partnership with Senior Coastsiders, ALAS, the City of Half Moon Bay, & LISTOS, has trained 204 LISTOS graduates in Spanish from our local farmworker community and in Chinese and English for senior adults. 1,200+ people attended CERT classes, events and presentations over this past year.

Professional Experience

- Strategic Organizational Development & Change Management | Architectural Planning |

Advancement

- Former Vice-President/Partner, Director of Strategic Planning Consulting Practice Area at Gensler
- 30 years as a corporate and entrepreneurial consultant advising decision-makers seeking innovative responses to organizational change

Community Advocacy and Board Service

- 15 years in volunteer leadership positions supporting PK-12 education
- Former Board Director, Ex-Officio, The Nueva School
- Former Board Director, International Facility Management Association
- Former Board Director, University of Southern California Architect Guild
- Former Executive Board Director, Commercial Real Estate Women

7. What do you see as the major issues on the Coastside? *

Vehicular isolation during emergencies – One north/south two lane road (Highway 1) and one east/west two lane road (SR 92) are the only two means of egress, limiting evacuation and emergency service access.

Lack of emergency health services.

Infrastructure fragility – power, telecommunications

Vulnerability to natural and manmade disasters, especially earthquakes, wildfire, and rain & wind storms resulting in tree fall, downed powerlines, flooding, landslides, etc.

Accommodating large crowds of visitors stuck on the Coastside in the event of a major disruption.

8. Is there anything in your background which, if you receive the Club's endorsement, could cause embarrassment to the club? If so, please provide the details. *

No.

9. Who is supporting your campaign at this stage (e.g., endorsements, donors), and are there any potential conflicts of interest we should know about? *

I am not a politician; I am a public servant. This is my first contested election. I have not asked anyone to donate to my campaign. There are no conflicts of interest. If I were to ask for endorsements, I am confident that the following leaders would lend their support:

Ray Mueller, SMC Supervisor, District Three

Dr. Belinda Hernandez-Arriaga, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, ALAS

Rabbi Moshe Heyn, Hon. Ph.D., Spiritual Leader, Coastside Jewish Community

Sandra Winter, Executive Director, Senior Coastsiders

Gary Burke, President, Coastside Fire Protection District Board of Directors

Specific Questions for Your Office

10. For which District are you running?

- ☐ District C
- ☒ District D
- ☐ District E

11. California special districts face chronic, critical inequities and other challenges in funding. Describe this challenge for CFPD and how you would work to address it. *

As a California Special District we are in solid financial shape. As a board, we are fiscally conservative, having restored the District from the brink of bankruptcy more than a decade ago to its current state of balanced budgets, up-to-date firefighting equipment and supplies, adequate cash reserves, a positive management and operational relationship with CalFire, low personnel turnover, and sufficient funding to build our third (and final) Coastside fire station with no additional charge to the taxpayer. We focus on maintaining this stability in uncertain times.

12. What would you identify as CFPDs biggest challenges in maintaining or improving its service level? How as a Director would you affect that? *

Our biggest service level challenge is topography and vehicular access. Our ratio of 10 firefighters to 30,000 people is not bad on paper. Comparatively speaking, San Bruno, has 10 firefighters on duty for approximately 44,000 people with many ways in and out of town... in a service territory of approximately 5.5 square miles.

In contrast, Coastside has 10 firefighters on duty for approximately 30,000 people in (officially) 50 square miles along a single, two lane, 22 mile long north/south road with only one east/west 2 lane road in and out of the region.

As a Director, I affect this by helping to lead the Coastside CERT program. Coastside CERT is designed to create a dual network that trains CERTs how to be intelligence gathering force multipliers for CFPD, providing them with accurate, actionable information, and supporting neighborhoods to self-organize in support of each other with common sense communications, cooperation, resource management, and risk mitigation. We believe this effort will create a prepared and resilient community that will have an orderly and calm response to a disaster.

In an emergency, most of us, if we are able, will try to help. However, trained volunteers are far more likely to be able to protect themselves and their families, stay safe while helping others, and work effectively with first responders as an asset rather than a hindrance. With three primary engines, ten firefighters, and one ambulance on the Coastside at any given time, first responders need boots on the ground in every neighborhood to serve as force multipliers -- helping one another and communicating accurate information to guide first responders to those in greatest need, thereby improving their service level.

Graduates of CERT basic training return to their own neighborhoods to develop local grassroots communication and response networks, grounded in community involvement and practice, and designed to provide timely and accurate situational awareness to first responders. When telecommunications are down, Coastside CERT/neighborhood teams communicate with each other within their neighborhoods via walkie-talkie radios and outside the neighborhoods via Ham radios operated by neighborhood members of the HMB Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES). Hams in the neighborhoods relay vital situational information to first responders. This is how CERT and ARES can assist CFPD in providing better emergency services across 50 square miles of limited vehicular access.

13. What are some examples of how the Board could improve its engagement with the community and local government ? *

Members of the public are always invited to attend CFPD monthly board meetings in person at Coastside Fire Station 40, 1191 Main Street, HMB. The meetings can also be accessed via Zoom. Except on special occasions, CFPD board meetings are held on the 4th Wednesday of the month, beginning at 4:00 PM. Agendas are published on the website (coastsidefire.org) and are always available to the public 72 hours in advance at the Coastside Fire Station 40 lobby, as required by law.

Coastside CERT conducts free year-round training in three languages open to everyone who lives, works, or goes to school in our territory from just south of the Tom Lantos Tunnels to Tunitas Creek Road. Our training schedule is on the homepage of our website (coastsidecert.com)

Both CFPD (coastsidefire.org) and Coastside CERT (coastsidecert.com) maintain websites with extensive safety information resources.

Both CFPD and Coastside CERT appear before every governmental body when requested. Coastside CERT has been called to HMB City Council recently to be commended for their Spanish CERT trainings.

Both CFPD and CERT send information through social media and news portals.

Both CFPD and CERT support all local and county public safety civic events. CFPD supports parades.

Coastside CERT has trained neighborhood leaders and support the activities of 32 Coastside neighborhood safety networks.

CFPD sends firefighters to make local school presentations. Coastside CERT has graduated 31 high school students from the CERT Basic Training Academy, qualifying them for 20 hours of community service credit (of the 35 hours needed to graduate from HMBHS).

Inspectors to evaluate vegetation overgrowth at residents' requests.

CERT responds to invitations from neighborhood safety networks and local organizations and agencies to make topical or general Coastside safety presentations.

The leadership and many members of the major Coastside service organizations are CERTs, forming positive relationships, a shared foundation of emergency preparation and response knowledge and ICS, and a common language to expedite aid during emergencies.

All of CERT's Basic Training cycles (a five class, 21 hour course) are oversubscribed. For example we currently have 70 applicants for 35 places in the 2026 Fall CERT Basic Training Academy.

CFPD supports holiday charities with toy drives.

All of the above is provided free of charge. Both CFPD and CERT work seven days a week.

Allow me to turn the question around – what else would you like us to do to improve engagement with the community and local government?

14. How could the Board, working with its community partners, strengthen community resiliency and disaster preparedness? *

The Board could provide financial organizational sustainability to the Coastside CERT program by funding it. While CFPD is Coastside CERT's "fiscal sponsor," it provides no money to operate the program. Currently, Coastside CERT is 100% funded by the community through Coastside Gives and a Measure K grant in its third year that is subject to discontinuation because of insecure County funding, even though we have met or far exceeded every grant deliverable requirement. I lead the Coastside Gives campaign each year, wrote the Measure K grant, manage its fulfillment, and oversee CERT's 501(c)(3).

Coastside CERT is all about working with CFPD's community partners, strengthening community resiliency and disaster preparedness. We prepare Coastsiders for emergencies, disasters or extended periods of isolation. Prepared and resilient individuals make good neighbors. Resilient neighborhoods contribute to a Coastside community ready to overcome natural disasters and other emergencies in a coordinated, inclusive, and proactive way.

Coastside CERT is focused on creating ready and resilient neighborhoods from Montara to Tunitas Creek. We provide free training to prepare residents to save themselves and their families, help neighbors with emergency needs, and quickly and accurately communicate with first responder agencies. This training is offered at no cost to those living on the Coast in English, Spanish and Chinese.

CERT free basic training includes fire safety, light search & rescue, triage, disaster psychology, and first aid. Advanced CERT courses, refresher courses, and topics of local interest include Incident Command System, How to Survive a Fire in the Tom Lantos Tunnel, Stop the Bleed, Radio Communications, FireWise Communities & Hardening Your Home, Gas & Electricity Safety, and more. Coastside CERT teaches organizational structure, disciplined chain of command, specific communication protocols, and other guidelines so multiple agencies, both professional and volunteer, can work together in response to community needs during an emergency or disaster with a focus on our most vulnerable community members. We have trained 27 members of Senior Coastsiders in a Chinese LISTOS course, 25 Senior Coastsiders' staff in fire extinguishing, 30 Spanish-speakers primarily from Moonridge in a full Spanish CERT course, and the full Board of Directors of Coastside Hope in a bilingual LISTOS class.

15. New regulations regarding removing vegetation and hardening homes in Zone 0 are slated to be implemented soon. How will you work with the community to prepare for these changes? *

We are already addressing this issue at every board meeting. The newest regulations were just issued and are considerably less draconian than the original draft regulations. The new regulations and residents' compliance guidance are available on both the CFPD website coastsidefire.org and Coastside CERT website coastsidecert.com. The CFPD website also has interactive fire severity maps enabling residents to identify the status of their property. More information and guidance will follow and both the Fire Marshall's Office (Prevention Office) and Coastside CERT plan to conduct classes and information sessions in person and via Zoom. Senior CFPD CalFire personnel have already met with City Council and the City Planning Commission about the new regulations (in draft form) and plan to meet with them again now that the first phase regulations have been issued.

16. As first responders, how is CFPD impacted by the fact that health care resources are minimal on the Coastsides. What can be done to improve the situation? *

Because the Coastsides has no hospital, urgent care, or trauma facility, CFPD Fire Fighter Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) and Paramedics – along with the medical staff on the contract AMR ambulances - are the primary first contact emergency health care providers. Medical calls constitute approximately 80-90% of the total 911 calls handled by the CFPD. Vehicular accidents frequently turn into medical calls.

There is a chronic shortage of firefighter EMTs. In recognition of this problem and to encourage our volunteer fire fighters to stay on the Coastsides after graduation from the Volunteer Fire Academy, CFPD will pay \$16,000/individual to underwrite the costs of attending EMT school and will give successful graduates an offer of CFPD employment as a professional firefighter. Our community has tried to open clinics operated by health systems 'over the hill' without success. The lack of Emergency/Urgent Care facilities is a gaping hole in our community safety network.

Submit When Finished

Click Back to return to a previous question. Click Submit when you are done.

Feel free to contact demclubcoastside@gmail.com if you have any questions.

Final results will be posted on <https://coastside Dems.org>

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