



## Ericka Chiara

I am the wife to a local firefighter/paramedic, mom to three young men, and partner in a local business with manufacturing and retail locations in Oakdale. We moved to Oakdale in 2005 to start our family because we loved the small-town feel and sense of community. It is my goal to maintain the quaintness of Oakdale while continuing to grow our community in smart and responsible ways.

In 2018 I was appointed by Oakdale City Council to finish the term of a councilmember that had moved. Since then we have faced a few challenges as a council, many that still require understanding and the experience that we have used to navigate them to where we are now. I would appreciate the opportunity to continue my service to the people of Oakdale. I bring with me my love of liberty, my appreciation of this wonderful community, my focus on fiscal responsibility and individual rights, and my desire to keep Oakdale on the path of responsible and safe growth as a place for families and businesses to flourish while keeping our small-town character and traditions.

1. In your own words, describe the role & responsibility of the position you seek?

An Oakdale City Council function as a board of directors and have an appointed City Manager that operates as Chief Administrative Officer. The council has a variety of tasks including review and approve the annual budget, help oversee public employees, enter into legal contracts, pass ordinances and resolutions, help to regulate business activity, and public safety. It is the responsibility of the council person to do so with the best interest of the community in mind. We must be responsible stewards of the taxpayer's dollars and work to end regulations that are burdensome to the free market for business function and the general prosperity of the citizens.

2. What is the biggest challenge you see in Oakdale? What is your plan to address this challenge?

The biggest challenge I see in Oakdale is that we are in California. The state is continually creating regulations and mandates that make doing business in California difficult and expensive. Short of succession, I would like to see continued work with developers and entrepreneurs to ease city-imposed regulations and permit fees. I would love to see some business districts organize to help city staff understand each areas' specific needs and help to fill in any shortfalls. I intend to meet more with local business owners to hear and address their concerns and ideas. While the council is limited in what actions we can take to help business, we can help foster a business-friendly environment.

3. If elected what will you do to retain the existing businesses?

I firmly believe in the free market and in as much, that businesses that are unincumbered by unnecessary fees, permits, and regulations must rely on the market to dictate their success. Unfortunately, the last 6 months businesses have had to function (or close) according to the strict regulations and mandates of the Governor. For many, it's been impossible. I would love to see our business open again and see the council revisit regulations that are outdated and overly restrictive. The City Manager has done a great job in working with local businesses to assess the immediate need for help but, we have to work to create a simple and functional system to open and grow businesses.

4. What do you feel is a barrier for Economic Development in Oakdale? What will you do to address this barrier?

The largest barrier I see for economic development in Oakdale is that we are a part of the state that has worked for years now, in what seems like an intentional effort, to discourage and hinder business. As a city we need to work on easing regulations and processes that discourage or make starting or growing a business unattainable. Clear pathways for paperwork and communication between business and the city could help foster relationships vital to success. If we keep in mind that we have the same goal of a successful, safe, and thriving community that we all live and work in, we can work and celebrate success together.

5. If elected what would be your highest priority? Describe the measure you will take to address this priority?

As a City official I feel that my most important job is to spend the taxpayer's dollars wisely and effectively. Having reliable and sound public services like police and fire protection are vitally important. We also have to consider our other vital services like water and sewer. Currently, we have an amazing staff that ensure that these departments run without hiccup. Appreciating and maintaining the work that has already been done is imperative. We also have to protect our budget reserves in preparation for fiscal challenges that are sure to come.

6. What direction would you like the city to take to attract new businesses?

I have a few ideas about attracting new business and industry to Oakdale but, I can't say that I necessarily see them as a function of the city staff or the council. I could see the Chamber of Commerce or a business development board attending trade shows of industries that are desirable. Being able to demonstrate simplified regulations and permit processes or tax breaks could certainly entice those unfamiliar or hesitant to explore Oakdale. We also need to, as residents, do our shopping here, in our neighborhood stores and restaurants rather than taking sales tax revenue to other cities. Being open and business friendly helps make Oakdale the most desirable place to live in Stanislaus County couple that with the limitless tourism opportunities