

## Dane County Democratic Party Candidate Questionnaire

Robert McPherson

Waunakee Board of Trustees

<https://www.facebook.com/McPhersonForWaunakee>

### **Professional Experience:**

I have spent my entire 17 year career in banking, working in compliance and risk management departments. I currently lead as the VP of Risk Management for Peoples State Bank.

### **Political/Service Experience:**

I served on the Waunakee Housing Task Force in 2018-2019. In the community I have worked with Waunakee Neighborhood Connection (which serves ALICE threshold households in the village) and am currently working on starting financial literacy programs through WNC. I have not held elected public office in the past.

### **Why Are You Running In This Election?**

I am running to bring progressive representation to the Village Board in Waunakee. The village has struggled for years to address issues such as affordable housing, policies that directly impact equity (e.g. zoning, transportation needs), and inclusion, until it was in the news for incidents of racism. The board has repeatedly voted to fund corporate welfare through Tax Incremental Financing, but will not vote to use the same mechanism for affordable housing needs, whereas I strongly support using the affordable housing TIF extension. I also have a strong interest in

using the position for reaching out to those underrepresented in the community for inclusion in the various committees and commissions of village government, which has long been dominated by one type of representation.

### **What Are The Three Most Important Issues In Your Race?**

1. Affordable Housing, 2. Accountability/Transparency of tax dollars, 3. DEI (as applied to policies, events, etc.)

### **What Are The Largest Environmental Concerns You Aim To Deal With In Office?**

There is significant concern about water runoff and the lack of porous surfaces as the village continues to develop wetlands areas for new residential development. This is leading to increased annual flooding and damage of existing properties (and the village's more "affordable" housing stock) near Six Mile Creek, and runoff concerns into larger areas such as Lake Mendota. The village also has an ill-defined policy when it comes to rock blasting/quarrying activity, which is directly impacting residents (as it is occurring in their backyards).

### **How Will You Use Your Position To Create More Equitable Opportunities And Help Those Living In Poverty?**

I would utilize my position to advocate for policies and ordinance changes that increase equitable opportunities within the village. Whether this means zoning ordinance changes that would allow for more affordable housing types in existing areas (ADUs, cooperatives, etc.), crafting a policy of utilizing the TIF Affordable Housing extension whenever it is available (similar to Madison's policy), or working with community or larger governmental organizations to identify those most in need to seek out grant programs. Many people in Waunakee do not even know that almost 1 in 5 households are under the ALICE threshold, and I

would use my position to raise that awareness to influence change.

### **How Do We Address Racial Inequality?**

By looking at the policies that have created the inequalities and directly addressing them through meaningful change and listening to the community. We know that policies created decades ago were created to favor the white majority, and so future policies would need to level the playing field. For example, in Waunakee, it took the current board five months to condemn racism after George Floyd was murdered, and they are still no closer to making any actual changes that would address the disparate impact of their current policies and ordinances. Conversely, they took less than one month to effectively ban short-term rentals because one black homeowner had an incident in an affluent neighborhood. These actions speak to a local government willing to make facile efforts to address racial inequity but willing to defend the majority from non-existent threats.

### **How will you promote restorative justice and address abusive and racist practices by the police force?**

Currently the Waunakee Police Committee does not meet regularly (or arguably at all) for oversight of the Waunakee Police Department. Not only would I call for this committee to meet regularly again to give citizens a forum to address policing issues, but I would expect the WPD to provide relevant policing statistics so that issues around the of use of force, demographics of those interacting with the police on service calls, and information around policing activities is understood by the public and other elected officials. It is problematic that I cannot tell you today even

speculatively if Waunakee's police force has abusive or racist practices, because they do not have adequate board or citizen oversight. We simply rely on the WPD Chief's words, rather than verifying them.

**Due to the ongoing economic impact of Coronavirus, many local governments are expecting unprecedented budget shortfalls. What would you prioritize in the budget? Where would you make cuts?**

I would prioritize funding for the village's infrastructure and public safety district funding (Fire/EMS only). As the village is highly desirable for development, I would strongly avoid TIF in greenfield development. Additionally, I would look at the policing budget for cuts.

**How have you elevated diverse voices in government and public discourse? How would you continue to do so if elected to this office?**

I have promoted diverse voices and encouraged them to participate when opportunities arise, and challenge the village staff when obvious issues exist to draw attention to those issues. As an example, in early 2020 when the village had a series of anti-Semitic and racist incidents, I challenged the village administration if they even knew the demographics of village employees (they did not). However now less than a year later they are now collecting that information and are preparing to make it public.

If elected I would end the village's policy of waiting for diversity to come to them and reach out to members of the village to apply for positions, and then advocate for them. The village has very few BIPOC involved in village government, and many of them live in other municipalities.

### **What Are The Largest Transportation Issues You Wish To Work On And How Will You Address Them?**

The largest problem facing Waunakee is that it has no plan for transportation issues. The current administration is very focused on providing more roads for cars, with no desire to speak about mass transit. I would work on this by re-opening the lines of communication with the county (the county has tried and received no responses in the past), along with reaching out to the surrounding major municipalities to work with them on solutions. Knowing we are limited by the state law preventing regional transit authorities, the village needs to take the first step of researching what can be done and then bringing forth actual plans to achieve these goals.

### **Any Other Issues/Topics You Wish To Discuss?**