

Dane County Democratic Party Candidate Questionnaire

Jenna Jacobson
Oregon Village President
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Professional Experience:

Financial Analyst
Financial Services Representative

Political/Service Experience:

Oregon Village Trustee 2017-Present
Governor's Council on Financial Literacy Education 2019-Present

Why Are You Running In This Election?

I'm running for Oregon Village President to bring about progressive change. We need more affordable housing, sustainability built in to our growth, and to implement changes in our systems and processes to allow for more openness, more transparency, and more participation from our community.

What Are The Three Most Important Issues In Your Race?

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Although our community is majority white, we have a large group of community activists working to increase diversity and push us to more anti-racism work and inclusive policies. This most frequently comes up in the sphere of policing, but in reality is something the entire community needs to be working on.

Climate Change: Our community was built on low-lying areas and in larger rain events helps stormwater from Madison and

Fitchburg through the Yahara Watershed. How our community builds and develops, and how it manages the increased stormwater and flooding events are very important to the residents.

Community Growth: Our community continues to grow because of our incredible school system, small town feel, and charming historical downtown area. As we grow we must keep climate change in mind, invite more multi-family developments in, and take time to review and improve our systems and policies that will carry us through the next 20 years.

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

I plan to work on addressing stormwater, biking/walking paths, and sustainable building.

Working with our neighboring municipalities of Fitchburg, Dunn, Rutland and the Town of Oregon to take a holistic approach to stormwater and how it flows through our communities, including the draining of Lake Barney, the currently under-water Oregon Rotary Bike Trail, and the Badfish Creek water system. Our bike trail has been underwater for three years now due to flooding levels in Lake Barney. That water eventually drains into the Badfish Creek water system. In 2019 we dredged part of the Badfish Creek to help water flow and expect to do more in 2021, but we will need to work with our neighbors to ensure we are not causing more problems downstream, and that our systems can handle water flowing through from upstream.

I also want to make including bike lanes into new and redone roads a priority as well as connecting our various walking/biking paths to each other. This will provide more opportunities to travel around our community without a vehicle and help to reduce

Oregon's contributions to carbon emissions.

Finally, Oregon is planning on some major building projects in the near-term including a larger library, senior center, and village hall. Just like our school district recently did, we have the opportunity to build municipal buildings that have a significantly reduced carbon footprint, ideally carbon neutral. The Village can lead on creative, climate first designs that set the bar for developers who want to build in our community.

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

One of my stated platform positions, and something I feel very strongly about, is affordable housing. I believe in a housing first model which requires municipalities to spend significant political capital to build the types of housing we need, not just the housing we want. This includes multi-family housing that is a mixture of market-rate and affordable. This includes multi-family housing that is rental, but also multi-family housing that is owner occupied. And this includes single family housing that is less than \$260k, the floor for homes after a quick search on realtor.com.

We need to also be reviewing our deposit schedule, how municipal tickets are issued, what types of offenses are receiving municipal tickets, and if that continues to be appropriate.

How Do We Address Racial Inequality?

After having difficulties with a past police chief, the village partnered with the Oregon Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group to elevate the voices of traditionally underrepresented community members. The group is still in their early stages, but I am excited that in this group we have people who have traditionally not had a seat at the table coming and sharing their truth for meaningful

change.

After the murder of George Floyd, the village committed to having every employee, board member, and the police department go through bias training by Groundwork, Nehemiah, or an organization that provides a similar level of expertise. We will be doing that later this summer. Neither of these steps are huge, but they are small steps in the right direction.

Moving forward, we must be analyzing ourselves. Our policies, practices and those in power. We are hiring a new administrator and this is an amazing opportunity to not only examine our hiring practices, but hire someone who has experience and ideas on addressing inequality. We can look at our zoning practices, how we develop and with whom. We can review how we take contracts out to bid, and if we are not attracting bids from companies that are minority, women, or veteran owned, where do we need to go to get those partnerships. We can get data on policing in Oregon to target the most critical areas, and then work our way through other policies and procedures to create more equitable policing. The Village Board needs to demonstrate a willingness to learn, a desire to change, and humbleness to know that we won't always get it right, and may not be getting things correct now. That doesn't mean we quit though, it means we do better.

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

We currently participate in the Dane County Restorative Justice program and our municipal judge has been doing restorative justice work in our court since her initial election. But I think the most important first step we can take, is to use our committees to

provide oversight of our government functions. Currently, as the chair of the Personnel and Public Safety Committee, our focus is on alcohol licensing. While that is helpful in promoting a safe community, it is a missed opportunity in providing good governance and oversight on all public safety and personnel issues. This same opportunity is being missed on our Finance committee. The Village Board needs to start providing the oversight and accountability that our community expects and needs.

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?

My first priority would be our people. Oregon has a history of closing the gaps in budget shortfalls by offering little to know salary increases, and then playing catch-up in “good years.” I am a believer in investing in people. It’s an investment that always gives you a great return! All of our non-union staff members are receiving a 1% increase in wages in 2021. That isn’t enough to keep pace with the cost of living and will force us to once again play catch-up in the future and I disagree with that practice. Secondly, I’d think of the major issues detailed above. If we stop investing in our community in an area, will it harm our efforts for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion? Will this investment help or exacerbate our water issues? And what are the impacts of de-prioritizing, or prioritizing these initiatives. While we can’t spend with reckless abandon, we also create further problems down the road.

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

I see the best way to elevate diverse voices in government and public discourse, is to give them power. This is one of many reasons I am passionate about re-activating our committees. Not only can we provide needed oversight, but we can expand our committee appointments, as has been done in other municipalities, to include at-large community members. Often, joining a committee is a great way to get people involved in government who are not sure or not interested in elected positions. The village president has the power to suggest appointments that are then approved by the village board. With expanding the number of people on each committee, even by two, we can offer opportunities for diverse voices to have a seat at the table and impact the decisions of their government. I think this would also make it more comfortable for people to bring issues before a committee for discussion. Going before the full village board on television is not the most comfortable experience and most people do it out of a deep passion. We don't have to wait that long by making government participation more open and approachable!

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

The big hairy goal would be to connect Oregon Rotary Trail to the Badger State Trail. This would give commuters an option to get to work that is non-motorized and safer than biking on Fish Hatchery Road. This has a lot of obstacles including the Rotary Trail being under water, landowners not wanting the bike trail in their land, and the state legislature's removal of eminent domain authority for bike trails. Until then, focusing on making sure the bike trails and walking paths in Oregon are all connected with roads that provide lanes for safe travel by bicycles is a must. This way, we are prepared with a fantastic infrastructure when we are finally able to connect with the Badger State Trail.

Any Other Issues/Topics You Wish To Discuss?