

## Dane County Democratic Party Candidate Questionnaire

Larry Palm  
County Board, District 12  
[www.larrypalm.com](http://www.larrypalm.com)

### **Professional Experience:**

Since 1994, I have been an Administrative Assistant for alternative programs in the Madison Metropolitan School District. Currently I am the Registrar for Capital High, Madison's six high school.

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

In 1995, at the age of 22, I was appointed to my first public committee (South Central Library System) by the Dane County Executive. Shortly after, I was appointed by Mayor Soglin to the Madison Public Library Board, which I served on for 19 years.

Over the next several years, I served as Vice President of my neighborhood association, co-founded GLSEN South Central Wisconsin (now known as GSAFE) to support our GLBTQ students, families and staff in our public schools, and became the Vice President of my union (MTI-SEE).

In 2005, I was elected as a City of Madison Alder for 14 years and served on numerous city committees, including the Board of Estimates/Finance Committee and Board of Public Works.

In 2011, I was elected Chair of the Capital Area Regional Planning Commission (CARPC). I'm proud of the work that we've done over the past ten years to refocus our attention on our core mission to

“strengthen the region by engaging communities through planning, collaboration and assistance”.

We launched “A Greater Madison Vision” to survey nearly 10,000 residents to understand how we as a community want to grow. The Steering Committee worked hard to ensure the responses reflected the demographics of the community and especially younger people who will be most affected by the decisions we make today.

We’re using the results of the survey to advance a new regional development framework that “concentrate development in and around existing communities served by a full range of urban services, establish a connected network of protected environmental and open space corridors and establish preservation areas to protect productive agricultural land”.

When I was Chair of the Madison Area MPO, I worked to align these two organizations to strengthen our regional development and transportation planning processes. In addition, we physically co-located at 100 State Street just before the pandemic began.

I co-founded the Madison Public Market board and continue to serve on the board to support the development of a public market. I believe the public market can be a vibrant community asset that supports our local small businesses as a place to learn about entrepreneurship, sell and market their goods, and connect with customers. I’m especially pleased about the MarketReady program that has primarily served people of color, first generation immigrant and women-owned small businesses in promoting the skills and knowledge to thrive locally.

In December 2020, I was appointed as Dane County Supervisor for

District 12 and was assigned to the Health and Human Needs committee. I've already been working on a number of my top issues, including the effects on the community by the potential F-35 placement at the airport, firefighting foam PFAS from the airport contaminating our water, and the Hartmeyer wetlands near North Sherman Avenue.

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

I've always been very interested in serving my community and have been involved in a number of organizations, including my local neighborhood association. At the time I was co-chair, and the District 15 Alder at the time suggested to me that I should run for Alder. When I started talking to residents and neighbors at the door about the issues that truly matter to them, I knew this was going to be my way to make a difference in my community. I served for 14 years as a Madison Alder, then stepped down when I felt it was time for other voices at the table.

I was humbled to be appointed to the Board to replace one of my political mentors, Supervisor Paul Rusk, in December and hope that my experiences can be a value to our community.

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

As you would expect, there are many issues related to the district and/or Dane County. There are some issues, such as flood mitigation, that I've been working on for the past decade as Chair of the regional planning commission, but my top 3 areas related to my district are:

PFAS - For years, firefighting foam containing dangerous PFAS chemicals has been used at the airport and has now seeped into our ground water, lakes, and streams. The City of Madison has even posted "no fishing" signs on the creek not far from my house

due to the toxic potential of these chemicals. Because the source is the airport, the work is complex – it involves the County, city, state, and federal government, and efforts have been slow to fully understand the extent, define safe levels, and determine how to contain and remove the PFAS chemicals. I will continue to push our staff to explore more options to resolve this crisis before the chemicals spread further and affect more community members' health.

COVID-19 Recovery - Even after a vaccine is widely available, there will be serious community impacts: mental health, economic recovery (especially for our black, latinx and LGBTQ+ businesses), housing and food stability, and our local County budget. These effects will linger as federal funding dwindles. COVID-19 will affect our neighbors for years to come, and we need to plan for a long-term recovery.

F-35 - The Department of Defense has determined that our local airport will receive F-35 fighter jets. This will significantly impact many in our communities and efforts must be made to alleviate these impacts to our residents. I live near the airport myself, and I know the disruptions the current F-16s have already inflicted neighborhood.

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

By far, the most important and pressing issue is PFAS contamination issues from the airport fire suppressant that has infiltrated the groundwater. These chemicals have been tested in our wells, Starkweather Creek and in our lakes.

As stated earlier, I will fight to work with the City of Madison, State of Wisconsin, the federal government, the military, and other

elected officials to clean up this contamination sooner. It's the right thing to do.

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

Dane County is growing, so we need to ensure that a proportional amount of new housing continues to be affordable – this can only be done by offsetting the cost of land and/or construction. While the state's WHEDA program has a 25-30 year affordability timeline, Dane County should ensure that our investments maintain affordability throughout the life of a building so that we don't further aggravate this issue in the future.

It is essential that Dane County and our communities continue to substantially invest in developing and maintaining affordable housing. We need to continue to expand Dane County's financial support of programs such as Affordable Housing funds to ensure that people can continue to live and work here.

We also need to continue to support housing for our homeless community. I was on the Homeless Issues committee for seven years and know the significant impact that housing (and other support) can have. Developments like Occupy Madison Village, Rethke Terrace, and Tree Lane permanent supportive housing need to occur and be supported by Dane County throughout the area.

We need to also support "legacy affordable housing" that currently exists, to ensure that it is available for many years to come. This should also include assistance to update mechanical systems, roofing, siding, windows and doors to be energy efficient to further reduce the cost to the tenant.

We also need to support homeowner acquisition to expand generational wealth, increase financial security, and stabilize neighborhoods.

The upcoming Dane County Housing plan should prioritize how to ensure that we can expand affordable housing for our workforce and for our homeless communities.

I am also on the Board of our local Public Market foundation. Working with the City of Madison, we've identified a site but have not yet broken ground. As an Alder, I also supported a "Market Ready" program that provided direct support to potential Market vendors: of the recipients, 83% are people of color, 62% are women, and 33% are first generation immigrants. This program has been tremendously successful, and I will work with the County to emulate this model in order to expand opportunities for more businesses in our region.

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

The impact of racial inequality on our community is profound.

For the past several years as Chair of the Capital Area Regional Planning Commission (CARPC), we have been looking at how historic racism in housing and planning have shaped current disparities and through more inclusive and engaged planning seek to disrupt these historic injustices.

As a county, we need to actively confront racial inequality and place it at the center of all of our decisions. Racism is tragically at the core of many of our systems in Dane County, Wisconsin, and throughout the United States. There can be no progress without rooting out laws, codes, processes and procedures that serve no purpose other than suppressing racial minorities.

For instance, in 2014 I co-sponsored a “Ban the Box” resolution that removed the question “Have you ever been convicted?” from the City of Madison job application form. This question was never necessary and only useful to keep people with convictions from economic advancement.

For more information on historic racism in housing and planning please see: Geography of Opportunity: A Fair Housing Equity Assessment for Wisconsin’s Capital Region.

[https://carpc.sharepoint.com/Document\\_Library/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2FDocument%5FLibrary%2FCRSC%2FHUD%20Sustainable%20Communities%2FHUD%2FFHEA%2FDocument%2FFinal%2FFinal%20Document%20PDFs%2FFHEA%2Epdf&parent=%2FDocument%5FLibrary%2FCRSC%2FHUD%20Sustainable%20Communities%2FHUD%2FFHEA%2FDocument%2FFinal%2FFinal%20Document%20PDFs&p=true&originalPath=aHR0cHM6Ly9jYXJwYy5zaGFyZXBvaW50LmNvbS86YjovZy9FYnUxNmgyel8tOVZsX19QUjFXVHVHMEJ5SUVGNmI5c085T0FOSXpXM0hZczBBP3J0aWlIPTZ6QldCRkh nMkVn](https://carpc.sharepoint.com/Document_Library/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2FDocument%5FLibrary%2FCRSC%2FHUD%20Sustainable%20Communities%2FHUD%2FFHEA%2FDocument%2FFinal%2FFinal%20Document%20PDFs%2FFHEA%2Epdf&parent=%2FDocument%5FLibrary%2FCRSC%2FHUD%20Sustainable%20Communities%2FHUD%2FFHEA%2FDocument%2FFinal%2FFinal%20Document%20PDFs&p=true&originalPath=aHR0cHM6Ly9jYXJwYy5zaGFyZXBvaW50LmNvbS86YjovZy9FYnUxNmgyel8tOVZsX19QUjFXVHVHMEJ5SUVGNmI5c085T0FOSXpXM0hZczBBP3J0aWlIPTZ6QldCRkh nMkVn)

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

Dane County has multiple roles in promoting restorative justice and addressing abusive and racist practices in our law enforcement.

We must collaborate and advocate for change with our criminal justice partners by creating alternatives to incarceration and policing. That includes mental health first responders, funding bail reform, providing resources for our judges and district attorney

that are alternatives to jail including community service options, drug treatment, mental health services, electronic monitoring, and more. All of these programs should have a racial justice lens, ensuring that resources and providers are culturally competent.

COVID-19 has demonstrated that changes in our systems can happen, and we must not step back from changes made in our courts, jail and Sheriff patrol.

We also can impact criminal justice by directly funding essential resources that keep people out of poverty, including providing drug treatment and mental health services outside of the criminal system, affordable housing, employment training, and community-based and community-lead services.

**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 believe COVID-19 has dramatically affected our community with lingering effects. To respond, Dane County needs to be engaged in strengthening mental health services (such as expanding the Behavioral Health Resource Center to be available at all times for those in need), championing our entrepreneurs through growing the MarketReady entrepreneur program to bolster local small businesses in a post-pandemic reality, and expanding affordable and quality childcare programs to support our workers and families who will be returning to places of employment. I know that the Dane County budget will continue to be tight with sales tax revenue down, but I do not believe that unilateral cuts to employee benefits and salary are an effective long-term solution. Over the years working with the city budget, I know that

developing a partnership with our labor is the only effective way to ensure that we get the most out of our employees.

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

As a member of the LGBTQ+ community, in 1996 I co-founded our local chapter of GLSEN (now called GSAFE) to support LGBTQ+ students, staff, families and the larger community in our schools. At the time, even in our supposed liberal community, this was seen as promoting or sexualizing gender and sexual orientation.

Working with our then State Assembly member, Tammy Baldwin, and others, our efforts have significantly improved LGBTQ rights in our public schools and consequently our larger community. My work in the LGBTQ+ community inspired me to seek elected office.

As a City of Madison Alder, I made sure to involve neighbors on projects and issues that were important to our community. For instance, I worked with residents in response to the closure of the Royster-Clark fertilizer factory on Cottage Grove Road to develop a planning process that supports our community.

As a former industrial site, it had significant environmental issues which residents were concerned about. With the County Board Supervisor, I brought these environmental concerns to the attention of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and other state elected officials to resolve before development began on the site.

As an Alder, some of the most contentious meetings were about affordable and supportive housing, such as Rethke Terrace and the

original Occupy Madison Village. By providing an opportunity for residents to engage and connect with each other, these diverse voices can sometimes come together to chart a course that benefits everyone. It was my strong desire not to limit the voices and conversations at these meetings, but to expand them so that we all hear everyone's voices.

I look forward to continuing to connect with residents in District 12 and amplify their voices on the County Board. Dane County is currently working on rolling out Supervisor blogging and I will take full advantage of this opportunity to share what's happening in the District and the County so that more can be part of these discussions.

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

As a former member and Chair of our local MPO, there continues to be need to expand our public transit, bike and walking paths and access to electric vehicle charging. In addition, when it is appropriate, we must reinstate and expand our local ride share options.

Years ago, we were able to form a regional transit authority which was then removed by the state legislature – I believe this authority needs to be reinstated. In addition, Dane County does not participate in our local transit system, which I believe negatively affects the regionalism of the system (depending upon local governments to determine where it goes based upon payment).

I would advocate for Dane County to support and engage with the City of Madison as it prepares its Metro system for bus rapid transit (BRT) to ensure that the system supports all of our urban communities.

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

Thank for the opportunity to discuss these issues with the Dane Dems.