

Dane Dems Endorsement Questionnaire

Thank you for seeking an endorsement from the Dane County Democratic Party. You do not need to answer all of the questions below, but please answer all of the ones you feel are pertinent to your campaign. We will ask more detailed questions and followups during our interview, if we choose to have one, so feel free to answer these questions as briefly or thoroughly as you desire. These answers will be shared in full with our membership before they vote on your endorsement.

Email *

info@GoforthMonona.com

Candidate name *

Kristie Goforth

Position you are running for (include municipality) *

Mayor for the City of Monona

Campaign website

<https://www.goforthmonona.com/>

Professional Experience *

I am currently the Executive Director of Free Bikes 4 Kidz Madison. We give 2,000 bikes away each year to marginalized communities. Prior to my role at Free Bikes 4 Kidz, I served as Executive Director of the Monona East Side Business Alliance for 5.5 years. I owned a graphic design and video production company for 10 years from 2000-2010 and sold it when I had my first child.

I am the co-founder of the Momentum Urban Arts Fest that brought 89 street artists from widely diverse backgrounds to the east side of Madison and Monona to create public art that is free and accessible to all. In 2022, I co-founded the Vibrant Hydrant project with Madison Public Art Project to paint mini murals on 15 of our fire hydrants lining Monona Drive. This was a collaborative event with our fire department that used art to bring our community together to honor those lost on 9/11.

I served as a City Council member for one term (2020-2022). I was appointed by County Executive Joe Parisi as a Dane County Parks Commissioner in 2019 and still serve in this role today. I previously served on the Dane County Cultural Affairs Grant Review Panel also appointed by Joe Parisi and served on the Wisconsin Bike Fed board of directors until 2021. In Monona, I have served on the following committees: Plan Commission, Chair of the Landmarks Commission, Chair of the Community Media Committee, Transit Commission, Tourism Commission, Ad Hoc Diversity, Inclusion & Equity Committee, Farmers Market Board, and the Monona Grove School District Community Engagement Committee.

Political/Service Experience *

I served as a City Council member for one term (2020-2022). I was appointed by County Executive Joe Parisi as a Dane County Parks Commissioner in 2019 and still serve in this role today. I was also appointed by Joe Parisi to serve on the Dane County Cultural Affairs Grant Review Panel and served on the Wisconsin Bike Fed board of directors until 2021. In addition to my role as a city council member, I have served on the following committees: Plan Commission, Chair of the Landmarks Commission, Chair of the Community Media Committee, Transit Commission, Tourism Commission, Ad Hoc Diversity, Inclusion & Equity Committee, Farmers Market Board, and the Monona Grove School District Community Engagement Committee.

Why are you running for this seat? *

Having served Monona extensively for the past 8 years, I see a need for fresh voices to step up and serve our community. I have served in almost every capacity in the City and I am committed to bringing diverse representation forward so we can move forward as a community where everyone feels they are welcome and belong. My personal experience living in Monona as a bi-racial person has been challenging and my hopes are to help Monona become a place where everyone can publicly live their best authentic lives. As a city of 8,600 people, the Mayor receives \$7,800/year but despite the low compensation, I am committed to this City and helping it be better for all who live here and hope to live here in the future.

I am a member of the Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians and I have a Filipino sister and stepfather. I am the first and only bi-racial candidate to ever serve in public office in Monona. Our diversity numbers are currently at 4.46% and dropping while every community around us is gaining in diversity. We now have less diversity than Maple Bluff.

I am raising two young children in this community and like other young families, we have concerns about our children growing up in a community that is predominantly white. While my family is multicultural, many others are not; yet they embrace diversity and want their children to be able to thrive in diverse communities when they leave Monona. Not surprisingly, our policies, primarily in housing and public transportation, have resulted in a lack of diversity within the community and our workforce, and I look forward to representing our City in a more equitable way and seeing that we progress on these two critical issues.

What are the three most important issues in your race? *

Housing inaffordability and the housing shortage are serious issues in Monona. Currently, we do not have affordable housing other than age restricted (55+) housing and naturally occurring affordable housing (NOAH) which was built in the 60's and 70's; but those are not what we would consider quality housing by today's standards. In the past 10 years, we have built 459 100% market rate apartments. On February 20, City Council will vote on another 91 units of 100% market rate apartments. We must start prioritizing affordable housing to provide housing for people of all income levels. We have conducted multiple housing studies over the past 10 years that stress this need, and we must start making this a priority.

Monona uses an exclusive public transit system called Monona Transit, which only serves those working first shift Monday through Friday in downtown Madison. A lot of people are being left out of our current system. Our service provider has a paratransit service option that serves seniors and those with disabilities but they do not have an option to leave their homes on weekends since the service only runs Monday-Friday. We are currently considering contracting with Madison Metro so we could connect to the greater community and have service 7 days a week from morning to night. As someone who works in transportation justice, this is an issue I am passionate about and I am dedicated to seeing that we make decisions that take ALL people into consideration. The route we are currently considering routes the bus through the wealthiest parts of the community. This concerns me because the marginalized residents that live near me both WANT and NEED public transportation.

Monona had a budget deficit of \$125,000 last fall. While that may sound like a small number for a city, it's a large number for our tight budget. One way the Mayor made up for our budget deficit was by not replacing positions that were vacant and staffing cuts. My professional career has made me adept in managing tight budgets. I will identify untapped revenue sources as a way to help us through a very difficult 2024 budget season without having to cut staff. Our city workers are invaluable and we should not be cutting positions when we are already understaffed.

What are the largest environmental concerns you aim to deal with in office?

Lake health and flood mitigation are direct issues that affect the City of Monona at all times, so we must always be working to protect our most precious natural resource. As a city directly on the lake, we bear great responsibility for this precious resource. We do an excellent job mitigating in the lake through leaf collection, and I will work to promote it more widely. We still allow people to spray and treat their lawns with pesticides and herbicides which wash directly into the lake. This is a practice we must reconsider.

One of the qualities that makes Monona special is our large old growth trees. If elected, I will work toward setting a policy that prohibits the cutting of (healthy) old growth oaks. These large trees are a flood mitigation measure in low lying areas because of the enormous amounts of water they draw up from the ground. We should never cut these trees when they are near or in the floodplain. In addition, oaks harbor some of the largest biodiversity of any trees on our continent and cutting them to widen a street or put up a strip mall—which the city has approved in the past—is a practice that greatly concerns me.

Despite our small size, we have a very robust business community including eight big box stores and numerous fast food restaurants and banks with drive up windows. Unfortunately, drive up windows lead to unnecessary idling. We know that gas powered vehicles are the dominant contributor to carbon emissions. I will lead us in a campaign to reduce unnecessary idling for more than 10 seconds at drive up windows. This small measure multiplied by the hundreds of cars idling at windows every single day in Monona can make a big difference.

How will you use your position to create more equitable opportunities and help those living in poverty?

Besides being mentioned above, affordable housing and access to public transit are imperative, as well as efforts to bring good paying union jobs to Monona. We have a business park located just one exit from John Nolen Drive but its largely unknown. I will work to promote our business park and attract biotech companies that are moving in to the area with a focus on companies that are unionized. More union workplaces would be beneficial because they bring more diversity and equitable pay and having a job close to home reduces challenging transportation barriers and expenses.

My parents both dropped out of high school at the age of 16. I was raised by a single mom after my Ojibwe father went to prison when I was 2. We never rose above the poverty level. I will never forget my humble roots and I have committed the rest of my career to working to help marginalized people.

What will you do to address racial inequality?

The City of Monona as an employer needs to be doing everything we can to see that we are being as inclusive as possible in our hiring and recruitment processes. Our new police chief is our only staff person in a leadership position that is a person of color. Representation is incredibly important and the City can and must do better. This along with the measures stated in the aforementioned questions will help move us towards greater diversity.

How will you promote restorative justice and address racially biased policing?

I have been endorsed by Dane County Sheriff Calvin Barrett and consider Judge Everett Mitchell a friend. I would continue to promote their messages of restorative justice, continue to provide platforms for them to speak in Monona, and seek their advice on complex issues that come our way.

Our new police chief is well trained in restorative justice and racially biased policing and has brought excellent knowledge and experience with him from the City of Madison. I will work to support him and his efforts to train and educate a staff that is new to this work. As Mayor, it will be my duty to make sure we have officers that are properly trained when it comes to racial justice and provide resources like social workers whenever possible. We will regularly sit at a table with each other and prioritize the needs of the community, the needs of the department, and find alternatives to incarceration whenever possible.

We are currently working with Nehemiah to address our lack of diversity and I will see to it that we continue down this path. I served on our Ad Hoc Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee which was formed after Monona Police handcuffed a Black man in his home. Prior to this widely publicized incident, we didn't take our lack of diversity or our lack of adequate police training seriously but I am glad some good has come out of this harmful and humiliating incident.

How will you improve the public health of our community in your position?

While a City Council member at the onset of the pandemic, I reached out to Charles Tubbs, the Director of Dane County Emergency Management. I asked him what one thing municipalities should be doing to improve public health. He asked me to find a location for a vaccine clinic so we could provide much needed access for our elderly community and others who are immunocompromised. Within an hour, I had secured the date and location for our first Covid vaccine clinic. I will continue to work with Charles Tubbs and the public health department as we continue to navigate through the ever changing landscape of Covid-19 and other contagious diseases.

Mental health is a concern for anyone and everyone at any point in time. Since our first responders are on the front lines of emergencies and face traumatizing circumstances and are working one-on-one with those in crises, I will ensure that we promote a culture of destigmatizing counseling, mindfulness, and support groups. The wellbeing of our first responders can have a positive impact on those they are called to serve.

Although we are home to one of the most popular bike routes in Dane County, the Monona Lake Loop does not have adequate bike infrastructure in some areas of our city. The volume of cyclists on a nice summer day can be up to 1,000 cyclists per day and we have numerous bike accidents on those days. Improving signage for wayfinding and hazards, adding bike lanes, and updating our bicycle policies would encourage people to ride more and it's a public health measure that would promote safer cycling.

What are the largest transportation issues you wish to work on and how will you address them?

Our public transit issue that I mentioned above is the primary concern at present. I also plan to address our numerous outdated bicycle policies that discourage people from riding bikes in Monona. We have an ordinance that prohibits people from riding on sidewalks in areas where there are no on-street bike lanes like on Atwood Avenue. Another ordinance makes it illegal to ride a bicycle with a baby carrier on the front of your bike. Some of the best bike carriers are fixed to the front of the bike because the parent can see the child and the child has better visibility and can gain joy from biking with a parent or caregiver at an early age. Bikes are the leanest, greenest vehicles we have besides walking and we should be encouraging bicycle use, not discouraging it. We have some of the narrowest bike lanes in Dane County and I will ensure that our bicycle infrastructure is up front and center, not an afterthought.

If elected, I will work more closely with both Madison and Dane County on Monona Drive for better pedestrian and bike safety because that road is shared jurisdiction with both Madison and Dane County. The Atwood Avenue improvement project starting in March 2023 includes a much needed dedicated bike path on the Lake Loop led by the City of Madison. Unfortunately, the Mayor blocked the bike path from continuing through Monona. Instead of the path continuing along the lake side of the street, the path must cross Atwood Avenue to the Madison (east) side of the street to avoid Monona, then it will cross over back again at Cottage Grove Road creating two dangerous conflict points.

I had worked with Alder Grant Foster and Madison traffic engineers to help make the project the best it could be for Monona. But the Mayor refused to participate stating that putting the path on the lake side of the street would be unsafe. She also stated that there wasn't enough room for the path but Madison was willing to move the road over five feet to the east to provide more space for the path but the conversation never progressed to that point. This is a 40 year improvement project so the negative impacts of this decision will be felt by cyclists for decades.

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

While I was a council member, I implemented these community building firsts for Monona:

- Monona's First Juneteenth Day Celebration
- Monona's First Indigenous Peoples' Day Celebration with a flag raising ceremony with leaders from the Ho-Chunk Nation. I also ensured that the Ho-Chunk flag would fly year-round in Monona.
- Monona's First Pride Ride
- I co-wrote a proclamation with a Chinese American resident and friend for our AAPI sisters and brothers when they were facing egregious amounts of hate when Covid was at its peak.
- I wrote the diversity statement on the City's website when there previously was none.

Sadly, since I left my role on the City Council, these cultural community building events have not been continued.

Being elected as the first Native American Mayor in the history of the State of Wisconsin and the only Native elected official at present in Dane County will be a beautiful way of elevating diverse voices and providing much needed representation in Monona and beyond. I am honored to be in the position of having this incredible opportunity to help so many people. Miigwech!

Any other issues/topics you wish to discuss?

One other initiative I'd like to pursue as Mayor is the issue food stability and increased access to locally grown food. At the onset of Covid-19, we faced food shortages and became aware of how dependent we are upon corporations for food production. In Monona, we have a large network of beautiful parks, many with wide open spaces of mowed grass. I see this as an excellent opportunity to increase our locally grown food access through urban agriculture. Community gardens, fruit trees, and wild food foraging for berries are untapped opportunities for our park system. We can increase access while reducing the need to mow grass and reduce our carbon emissions.

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

Google Forms