

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 *

meervereer@gmail.com

Candidate name *

Mike Verveer

Position you are running for (include municipality) *

Madison Alderperson, District 4

Campaign website

mikeverveer.com

Professional Experience *

Attorney; former Chief of Staff to Tammy Baldwin (1993-1999)

Political/Service Experience *

Madison Alderperson since 1995; Elected Council President three times

Why are you running for this seat? *

I am proud of my accomplishments and would like the opportunity to continue the privilege of working on behalf of downtown Madison residents.

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

My main priority is to create more affordable housing in our community, especially downtown. The lack of affordable housing is a significant crisis. The housing cost burden continues to be very difficult for far too many residents. Existing strategies have not produced enough units to meet the extreme need. Another important priority of mine has always been to improve the quality of life for downtown residents. That will not change. Downtown neighborhoods must be clean and safe, have quality housing and receive excellent City services.

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

The 2018 catastrophic flooding was a local demonstration of the devastating effects and real costs of climate change. Combating climate change requires a significant investment. We need to do much more to achieve the goals in the Madison Sustainability Plan. I support every possible effort to reduce CO2 pollution, to increase renewable energy, and to achieve net-zero carbon goals. By implementing Madison's 100% Renewable Energy Zero Net Carbon Plan, expanding existing sustainability programs and developing new sustainability initiatives, we have a clear path forward. Smart stormwater management and erosion control, especially prioritization of green infrastructure, is also a critical component.

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

The provision of affordable housing is the most meaningful way to help those living in poverty. As previously mentioned, the lack of affordable housing is a significant crisis. The housing cost burden continues to be very difficult for far too many residents. Existing strategies have not produced enough units to meet the extreme need. The City budget appropriates significant resources to affordable housing initiatives. Most notably, the Affordable Housing Fund that assists in the creation of new rental housing is no longer limited to Section 42 Low-Income Housing Tax Credit project developments. I was proud to support those initiatives. However, Madison must do much more to help people struggling in our community. Prioritization of affordable housing initiatives must continue in our annual budget process. Tax Increment Financing is another financial source that the City hasn't utilized to its full potential to create affordable housing. We need to develop significant incentives in the zoning code to encourage affordable housing creation. For example, density and height bonuses. We need to foster and support creative strategies that support resident-operated housing like cooperatives, co-housing and tiny homes. We must redouble our efforts using a "Housing First" model to combat homelessness. All possible strategies to prevent evictions and promote housing stability must be pursued.

What will you do to address racial inequality?

Too many in our community face systematic racism. We are now finally experiencing long overdue policy discussions about systematic racism. The legacy and continuing impact of injustice for BIPOC members of our community is visible in areas with which City of Madison government concerns itself daily – access to housing, transportation, health care, protection of civil rights and countless additional services. Justice demands solutions that are equally systemic. I am committed to seeking equitable solutions to these injustices in our community. We must ensure that all of our decisions in City Hall are made through a meaningful equity lens.

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

It is imperative that the Council make it a clear priority to ensure the success of the relatively new Police Civilian Oversight Board and the Independent Police Monitor. Civilian oversight of the Madison Police Department is critical to ensuring that the Police Department responds to the needs and concerns of the community, thereby building and strengthening the community's trust. In my opinion, the creation of each entity represents the most meaningful of the 177 reforms recommended by the 2019 Ad Hoc Committee. The Council must respect and support the role, responsibilities and work of both the Civilian Oversight Board and Independent Police Monitor. I strongly supported the creation of the board and the monitor managerial position, and pledge to continue to support each in the future. The Council must continue to provide the full resources, both financially and otherwise, to each entity. Their role and responsibilities are each codified in Madison General Ordinances. The Council should be receptive to considering any modifications to the enabling ordinances if recommended by the Civilian Oversight Board or Independent Police Monitor. In addition, the Council must avoid any efforts to weaken the role and responsibilities of each and vehemently respect their independence. I will continue to support the robust restorative justice work of the Madison Municipal Court.

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

The work of Public Health Madison & Dane County, our local health department, is critical in protecting the health of the community. COVID brought the normally hidden work of public health into the limelight. I will continue to strongly support their funding, infrastructure, programming and staffing. That framework is essential for making data-driven decisions and engaging in evidence-based services to prevent and combat disease and health inequities. Everyone deserves a fair and just opportunity for health and well-being. Besides the delivery of basic public health services, we should further expand the use of a public health approach to curb violent crimes. The CARES program responds to non-violent, behavioral health emergency calls that do not require law enforcement. It should be expanded to be available 24/7.

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

The hallmark of a thriving city is a robust transit system that provides residents with viable transportation choices and improves the quality of life. Metro Transit needs to continuously improve bus service, especially to customers and neighborhoods that need access to public transit the most. Increased ridership would benefit from expanded routes, increased frequency and longer service hours. The Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and Metro Transit Network Redesign initiatives deserve enthusiastic support overall. They will be transformative if implemented as planned. The wholesale redesign of the Metro system will provide much more direct service and improve reliability when implemented this June. If the redesign fails to meet expectations and does not actually make the service easier to use for all, it is imperative that Metro, their consultants and the Transportation Commission must address shortcomings as soon as possible. Transit-dependent community member's voices must be prioritized. Everyone has a right to a public transit system that is accessible to all. The same can be said when the East-West BRT is operational in late 2024. From an equity perspective, development of a North-South BRT route will provide equal access to high-quality transit service and reduce disparities. The potential of bringing Amtrak passenger rail service to Madison is exciting for many reasons. A study is underway to identify a recommended location for a potential future Amtrak Station. Community engagement needs to be robust to yield a successful outcome.

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 worked to facilitate and amplify the diverse voices in our community, especially downtown stakeholders. It has been extremely exciting and rewarding to work with so many Common Council colleagues that bring the much needed perspectives of BIPOC and other marginalized communities to City Hall. I have worked closely with first-term alders, especially those from these backgrounds. Their experiences, values and voices enriched the Council decision-making process in unprecedented ways, and ensured that our decisions are made through a meaningful equity lens.

Any other issues/topics you wish to discuss?

Balancing the tremendous growth and development downtown without negatively affecting the quality of life remains a major issue facing the community. Growth and quality development is critical for a healthy downtown. I will continue to foster responsible infill development while maintaining neighborhood character. We must continue to successfully balance competing interests in our land use planning and development review process. The City should observe development priorities identified in the Downtown Plan and other plans. We must prioritize pedestrian-friendly and sustainable development, preserve green space and respect historic preservation. I will continue to facilitate meaningful neighborhood input on all development proposals.

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