

Progressive Dane “PD” Endorsement Questionnaire - 2019 Madison Mayor

Thank you for having a conversation with Progressive Dane about your candidacy for the Madison Common Council. We appreciate the opportunity to learn about your priorities and campaign. To prepare for the interview, we ask that you respond to the following questions in writing. You may email your responses to office@prodane.org. These questions and your responses will serve as the basis of the interview with the Progressive Dane Elections Committee.

Campaign

1) Why are you running for elected office? What are your priority issues?

We are what we do.

I am running for mayor because this challenging political moment asks each of us—even a political outsider like me—to do all we can to make our city work for everyone.

My wife and I want a fair, healthy, and diverse city for our three young daughters. Social justice is far more than just an ideal for us, and it is the foundation for a strong community.

My parents are immigrants who showed me that you can achieve anything through hard work and a supportive community. I am running to become the first Indian American mayor in any of the top-100 US cities. But this campaign is not about making history. It is about all of us creating the future we deserve.

I'm ready to lead a transition to 100% clean energy for our city. I am committed to equity as a moral duty. And like so many of our Madison neighbors, I know safe, vibrant neighborhoods inspire the best in all of us. Three principles define my vision for Madison:

- **Equity is a moral duty.** Madison can't leave anyone behind as it moves ahead. All residents need access to opportunity, and the city must explore new ways to ensure it. I believe that everyone, not just those with the greatest wealth, should drive city policy.
- **Our economy depends on a healthy environment.** Our success is tied to our ability to tackle climate change, and keep our air and water clean. I am ready to lead the community to 100% renewable energy, and our lakes free of dangerous algal blooms.
- **Safe, vibrant neighborhoods inspire the best in all of us.** Our quality of life improves with walkable neighborhoods, affordable housing, and convenient transit. I am determined to find new answers to persistent challenges.

2) What is your campaign's strategy to be successful during the election?

Raise money in order to communicate our message and successfully outreach to the most voters possible. We are proud to say that we have already raised over 90k.

3) Who is on your campaign team? (Treasurer, Campaign Manager, Volunteer Coordinator, etc.)

Our kitchen cabinet comes in at about 30 people who are committed to helping our campaign succeed. We have three paid staff -- Campaign manager, Amanda Brink, Finance Director, Kenneth Atkins and Field Organizer, Chaz Elliott. Our Treasurer is Amanda Berg.

Legislative

4) There will be many new alders on the 2019 Council. As Mayor, what challenges does that present and how will you respond?

I think it is a great opportunity. I'm thankful for the service of the alders who have served our city. They leave with a wealth of historical knowledge that cannot be easily replaced. But I think this is a good way to take a fresh look at many of the problems that have plagued our city for so many years.

5) What key recommendations are you looking for from the Task Force on Structure of City Government?

I'll be honest, I'm not sure if the city should restructure the size of the common council. If we add more alders, it dilutes the influence of individual alders and concentrates the relative power of the mayor's office. If we decrease the number of alders and increase the salary to a family supporting wage, there will be fewer voices to represent the diverse group that are Madisonians.

One thing I am sure of, is that we need to bring more people into the process. City committee meetings often take place during the day, and that limits the participants. But I feel like in order to tackle the large problems that we need to grapple with, we have to have more folks at the table. Therefore, the biggest thing I would like to see from the report is recommendations on how to empower and engage more members of our community to participate in our city government.

We have a world-renowned university in our backyard and a booming private sector across the region. Madison has so much talent, we just need to find more ways for everyone to be involved so we can tackle the challenges that lie ahead.

6) What do you consider to be the key recommendations from the OIR Report?

There are 146 recommendations in the OIR report -- each of which have value. The overall theme that keeps recurring is that the Madison Police Department and the general public would benefit from more transparency, more public participation in decision-making, and more public accountability for internal decisions. It is also vital to continue emphasizing the need to diversity leadership within the MPD--more women and people of color should be in leadership positions.

7) The City's strategy for increasing affordable housing has relied upon Low Income Housing Tax Credit project developments. This approach is not creating enough units to meet the need. What alternative approaches would you pursue to increase low income housing to meet the need? Describe a model housing project, including location, design, unit sizes, rents, shared spaces, and funding sources.

The cost of housing is high in Madison. And not just for new families and young professionals. Seniors on fixed incomes struggle to keep up with increases in taxes as a result of rising assessment.

The City supporting new homes is essential to making housing affordable for many. Madison can make it easier to add housing choices while we maintain the character of the city. Policies that encourage new models like "tiny homes", support first-time homeowners, rehabilitate rental properties, and expand green homes through Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) financing should be a priority. We should also refocus TIF on affordable housing.

To do any of it, we must engage the community in a dialogue around the need to create spaces for more people. Madison is already changing. We don't want to build a wall around our city. Our goal is to ensure Madison changes for the good of all, not the few.

It is important to consider zoning reforms neighbors in nearby Minneapolis, MN and Grand Rapids, MI have already implemented to increase housing choices for everyone. They revolve around limiting or even eliminating single-family zoning. Other cities have implemented minimum density requirements for new development in certain neighborhoods. All options have to be on the table to create a formula that meets our equity and environmental standards.

8) What are the key budget challenges facing the City and what are your plans to address them?

The biggest challenge our city faces continuing to grow equitably sustainably. More people want to live here and call Madison home. That makes it more challenging to find affordable homes for people to live in, it means that we have to think and plan our transit more intentionally. It means that we have new businesses who will want to settle here,

more schools that will need to be built and the looming impacts of climate change to manage along the way.

We have to use our precious tax dollars more effectively and set our priorities so that we can make sure Madison is and equitable, sustainable, vibrant city with a space for everyone.

9) [Attached](#) is the Progressive Dane Platform for the City of Madison. Please review it and explain how you would prioritize and implement our platform positions. Is there any proposal you would not support? Are we missing something?

There are significant commonalities between the principles of my campaign and this platform. I believe in an open and transparent government. I believe in increasing citizen participation at all levels of government. I believe in rank choice voting. I believe that we need to find ways to create affordable housing, while respecting tenant's rights and ensuring that folks who are struggling with homelessness not only have a roof over their heads, but the emotional and social support network that they need in order to be healthy and get on their feet. I believe that every action the city takes should be looked at through an equity lens. I'm excited about the idea of pursuing a public municipal bank to fund investments the commercial lending institutions will not consider financing. I believe in workers' rights, that we need to have a safe and clean environment, and more.

I do have some concerns that PD should consider taking a second look at their position on "the use of voter-marked paper ballots for all voters." According to the American Association of People with Disabilities, "touchscreens are the only system which allows a voter with a disability to cast a secret and independent vote." The use of touchscreens does not necessarily eliminate the paper trail. Many machines still create a paper copy of the voter's actions to ensure election integrity.

As stated above, I'm not sure increasing the size of the common council is the best course of action. I'm interested in seeing what the Task Force on Structure of City Government report recommends.

I think we need to do more than "prepare" for climate change. I think there are a number of steps that we must take right now to halt the damage society is doing with fossil fuels.

Progressive Dane Involvement

10) What interests you in seeking the endorsement of Progressive Dane?

I'm working to build a coalition and bring more people into the political process. Our campaign and Progressive Dane share values that I am eager to promote as mayor.

11) How will you coordinate with other PD elected officials and the Progressive Dane Policy Committee to work on issues?

It begins with being a good communicator and a good collaborator. I want everyone to have a seat and a voice at the table. There is enough credit to go around, everyone can share in our successes.

12) We also do our best to keep members informed of civic issues. How will you help keep our members informed? Will you write an article for the PD newsletter or blog during the year and attend at least one General Membership Meeting (fourth Wednesday) to engage members on your efforts?

Yes -- I want to be able to reach out to a number of groups and bring more people to the table to get involved with city issues. We can only solve these big challenges we face if we work together.

13) If endorsed, will you assign a liaison from your campaign team to the elections committee to help inform our members about how they can support your campaign.

Yes -- Our field organizer, Chaz Elliott will be the designated contact.

14) Are you currently a members of Progressive Dane? If yes, for how long? If no, are you willing to be?

I have been a member in the past, but I am not a current member.

15) If you get the endorsement are you willing to commit to using it in your campaign materials?

We will use it on our website in promoting our campaign.