

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

City of Waconia — Mayor

Candidate: Peter Leo

Why are you running for Mayor of Waconia?

I am running for Mayor as I have fallen in love with this city. My wife and I moved to Waconia 7 years ago because we wanted to live in a smaller community to start a family. Over the years I have gotten involved in community activities. I joined the inclusive playground fundraising team and met many amazing people. I couldn't believe how many different businesses donated money for the inclusive playground. I am constantly blown away how people in this community come together for things such as the inclusive playground and the Polar Plunge. It made me understand what living in a smaller community is all about. The community coming together for events like these are what make Waconia a special place to live. I joined City Council because I wanted to make a difference in the community and be someone who people in the community can reach out to when they have an issue or a question. On all the major decisions in the last three years I have reached out to as many people in the community as possible to get their input. In my opinion, being on city council is about listening to the people of this community to try and make our city even better. I am running for mayor because we have four young children and I want to help make sure Waconia stays the special place it is today.

Another reason I am running for mayor is because I love bringing people together. I love building partnerships and meeting new people. Over the next few years, we have some major projects and decisions that need to be made. I want to make sure these important decisions are talked about and make sure the individuals of this community have an opportunity to give their input. The first major decision will be deciding how to handle the downtown project. Another major decision will be trying to figure out what the future is for Safari Island. No matter what we decide for Safari Island we need to work with the school to figure out what's best for our community. Therefore, building a partnership is one of my top priorities. Another major decision is trying to figure out the correct time to add a full-time engineer to our staff. As our city continues to grow, we will eventually need to add a city engineer to our staff. These conversations need to start sooner than later to figure out the correct time to make the change. Even though some of these projects might not take place for another 5-8 years we need to start talking about them and planning for the future.

How do you think things are going, generally, in Waconia right now? What would you hope to improve?

I think for the most part things are going well. One thing I would like to improve is bringing more industrial growth to Waconia. This has been a problem since I have joined the city council three years ago. Unfortunately, there is not much land currently zoned for industrial in the city limits. Currently our plans for our next industrial park are still 7-10 years out. I would like to explore options to reduce this time. We need industrial growth for several reasons, and we need it sooner than later. Industrial growth will provide more employment opportunities and allow people to work closer to home. It will also help lower the tax burden on the individuals of the community.

One of my top priorities is building a strong relationship with ISD 110. When I talk to people in the community, one of the main reasons they moved to Waconia is for our schools. The city and ISD 110 both have a lot to gain from a strong partnership. I have already started building relationships with members of ISD 110 and if elected mayor I am excited to see what the partnership can turn into.

Local road construction projects are set to impact downtown roads for the next several years. How do you think this will affect business downtown and what are some ways you believe we can mitigate those effects?

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I think this will affect the downtown businesses significantly and that's why I have made this project a priority of mine. Over the last year I have met with most of the business owners to listen to their concerns and let them know I will do everything I can to make things go as smooth as possible. One thing I have done over the last year is reach out to other cities who have done major downtown projects. I have talked to a couple of city administrators and the one thing they stressed most was the importance of communication. Both cities I spoke with hired a project manager or consultant to lead the project. The project manager would have weekly meetings with the businesses and give updates on the project. The project manager was also available to answer questions that the businesses might have during construction. If elected, I will be pushing for the city to hire someone to lead this project and to be a point person for the businesses. The businesses in our community give back so much to our community and they are part of the reason Waconia is so special. As I have been talking to the downtown businesses, I have discovered they have a lot of questions. It is important for us at the city to get businesses answers as soon as possible. We also need to work with the chamber and make sure we have enough signage and advertise how to get to these businesses during the construction period.

How has your experience in working with local businesses influenced your view of the business community and economic environment in Waconia? Describe your perceptions and understanding of the business community and economic environment in Waconia?

I have been very blessed to get to know a lot of business owners in Waconia the last few years. I believe the businesses of our community are part of the heart and soul of what make our community special and unique. The reason I say this is because of the way businesses give back to the community. Over the last 4 years I have really come to understand what it means to shop and support local. Being in the business world in the past and working with a lot of small business owners I know it is not an easy task to open a new business. I know being a small business is a lot of hard work and takes a lot of time and effort. Most small business owners are right there working daily and doing whatever they can to make their business successful. During my time volunteering at the food shelf, I have been amazed at how much the businesses of our community give to the food shelf. Not only did they give food and supplies, but they also ran fundraising events to give money to the food shelf. Seeing businesses give back to the community made me want to shop at these local businesses even more. I want to do whatever I can to help businesses succeed and help make Waconia the special place it is.

How do you view economic development in Waconia and what changes (if any) would you like to see in the future?

I think we have had some good economic growth in the last few years. I love seeing more small businesses open in Waconia and being successful. However, it is just as hard to see some businesses not make it. My plan is to reach out to some of the newer businesses to find out what was difficult and if there is anything the city could do differently to help them be successful. To me, it is very important to get to know the business owners and listen to what they have to say. One of the changes the city has made this last year is allowing SAC and WAC fees to be paid over 10 years instead of just 2. Having a new business pay all these fees up front was extremely difficult for these businesses. We need to listen to our business owners and pick their brains. We need to continually work with the chamber to find ways to improve and help our businesses to continue to see economic growth and development.

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

City of Waconia — Mayor

Candidate: Tim Litfin

Why are you running for Mayor of Waconia?

I am running for the position of Mayor of Waconia because I love this city and this area. We have lived here almost 30 years. Our three children were raised and educated here. I worked in this community for eleven plus years. My wife works in Waconia as a first-grade teacher at St. Joseph's Catholic School. We go to church here. We have great healthcare here. We have put down roots here. We both have worked to make positive change happen in this city and in the public and private school systems here since 1993. Bottom line, I am ready to be the next Mayor of Waconia.

Service to the community is in my blood. It is a core belief of mine, and it has been my entire life. My resume speaks clearly to my passion for connecting with the community. Waconia has given my family and I fantastic memories and so much to be thankful and grateful for. I want to keep that dream alive for everyone that lives here now or will in the future.

A leader needs to have many qualities and experiences and check many boxes to be a mayor. I am a great fit for the position of Mayor of Waconia because the diverse set of skills and qualities I already have are what is needed. I encourage you to look at my skills and achievements. I have the experience and the track record that speaks to collaboration and connecting with people, groups, staff, agencies, and boards to make positive things happen. My experiences have allowed me to check many boxes for this key leadership position.

How do you think things are going, generally, in Waconia right now? What would you hope to improve?

The City of Waconia is alive and well today because of many things including a rich history. We all stand on the shoulders of hard working and good intentioned people who made good things happen. That rich history needs to be remembered and honored. We have the obligation to continue that good work and pass this city on to the next generation in better shape than we found it.

Today, things are going well in Waconia. People like living in the established areas of the city, the downtown area as well as in the newer developments. People like doing business here. Businesses like being here. People like coming to Waconia from many surrounding communities for their health care needs.

Waconia has an excellent selection of private and public schools for families to choose. Recreation opportunities are abundant. However, we can do better, and that mindset must be present in our everyday work. No city can rest on their past successes. Work needs to progress in all areas so that we continue to meet the ever-growing needs of our community's residences and businesses.

The comp plan for the city creates a vision to follow which is necessary and great. I encourage all citizens to check out the future of Waconia in the comp plan. The hard work and important work for any city is meeting citizens needs today's, while also visualizing success long term. Funding sources are ever-changing for cities like ours, as are the years in which funding may have been promised. City leadership is well versed in our comp plan, and we should feel very good with leaders like Shane Fineran and Craig Eldred at the helm.

I see the need for a city council meeting environment that is more welcoming. People are already at a disadvantage just by being in a strange place like a city council meeting. We can do better about making people feel like they belong and are welcome to share when they attend a city council meeting.

We need to be ready for the next industrial business opportunity that either comes our way or is recruited into Waconia. We need land and infrastructure to make this happen. These types of opportunities are rich with benefits for a city and Waconia needs to plan for an additional industrial park.

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Lastly, I continue to hear and believe in the need for a trail connection outside of Waconia. This comment continues to bubble up from residents. A connection to the Dakota Rail Trail north on #10 and/or from #92 is needed today and has been needed for years. Waconia is missing out on this quality of life and economic opportunity. This project is in the counties hands, but we need to keep the conversation alive and nudge them early and often.

Local road construction projects are set to impact downtown roads for the next several years. How do you think this will affect business downtown and what are some ways you believe we can mitigate those effects?

Improvements and maintenance are necessary components to supporting a healthy city so that it can survive and thrive into the future. Waconia is a healthy city with a wonderful downtown, thankfully. Therefore, we need investment in the downtown and projects like this to achieve the goal of a healthy downtown area.

We are fortunate to have an excellent staff working for us at city hall. That staff will serve the public well throughout this project with excellent communication and project support. City staff have already done an excellent job of spreading out the project into several construction seasons, pending many variables, to lessen the stress and impact of this major construction project all happening in just one to two years.

There is no doubt that this project will be intrusive and cause concerns for businesses, residents and the thousands of customers who visit downtown Waconia on a regular basis. Patience will be needed. That is easier said than done in Minnesota where we only have a little over half the year to work on physical components of projects like this. We need to keep our eye on the prize on this project, that being the result. At the same time, we cannot abandon the core of Waconia during this project. We all need to continue to support downtown businesses like we did during the recent pandemic.

It is the businesses and our downtown residents who will feel the direct pinch of this project. Communication from city hall and the chamber will be essential throughout. That communication needs to be constant, upbeat, factual, and up to date with its messaging. I have faith in our city staff and in the chamber to meet this need. I believe the city should host regular listening sessions to make sure concerns are heard and addressed.

During the project we need to hold the contractors accountable for their work. We also need to be understanding. It will rain during the term of this project, and we will have temporary muddy streets. Winter may come early or stay too long; this will interrupt the good work of our contractors as they try to stay on schedule and get the job done.

Our downtown business leaders, our downtown residents and our elected officials resolve will be tested during this project. If something is wrong, or perceived to be wrong, we need to listen and correct where necessary. We need to be prepared as a city and ready to support our businesses and residents in need.

I am familiar with construction and the construction process. I was born and raised in a family construction business. I know the terms and am familiar with construction processes. I have also overseen and supported several construction projects in the district where I work.

How has your experience in working with local businesses influenced your view of the business community and economic environment in Waconia? Describe your perceptions and understanding of the business community and economic environment in Waconia?

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City of Waconia — Mayor

Candidate: Tim Litfin

I have years of experience working with business leaders and chambers. Working in both private and public business. I work with business leaders often in my current position as Executive Director of Community Education in Minnetonka. I held a similar position in Waconia from 1993 to 2004 where I was on the Chamber Board of Directors for several years. I am also a member and past president of the Excelsior Rotary Club.

I support business owners and leaders completely. Small business owners take huge risks by following their passions to serve, create and sell. Small businesses are the backbone of any community. Waconia is fortunate to have an expanding base of restaurant, retail, legal services, health services, grocery and industrial.

A need in Waconia is like most cities, to increase the industrial tax base which would lessen the tax impact on small business and area residents. To do that, Waconia needs to plan for a new industrial park.

It can be a tough pill for residents to swallow when an expanding business and commercial footprint builds in their neighborhood. Expansion may be by design and zoning, but it still can be a shock as homes turnover and communication between homeowners and realtors may have been off for whatever reason. This is happening now. The best way for the city to keep and build trust is with constant communication from city hall. If people know what you are doing as a city...and you do it, you are trustworthy. No one wants to feel like they were ill-informed when change happens in their neighborhood.

How do you view economic development in Waconia and what changes (if any) would you like to see in the future?

Economic development is the lifeblood of any community, and it is needed in Waconia as much as it is needed in any other community. Without economic development, jobs are not created, businesses move to the next community, and they take current and future residents along with them.

Waconia is fortunate to be the regional hub for excellent health care, automotive and other legal and retail services. Our health care businesses spur millions of dollars of economic development and that benefits all who live here. As I stated in the section above, one of the biggest needs for Waconia is a new industrial park as we are currently built out. There is no land owned by the city that could make this happen now, however the comp plan does show where opportunities exist. This should be at or near the top of the “need” list for the city.

Our city’s infrastructure of streets, roads, parking, services, a friendly tax climate and more either signal to an inquiring business that this city is either worthy of their investment, or it is not. We must signal that we are worthy of their investment and that they will not regret their decision. We must always champion and support our current small and medium size business partners while others consider coming here. Small businesses are indeed what makes a city a city.

The downtown also needs to stay alive. City directed incentive grants are not always possible but would be nice. A city driven revolving loan fund should also be investigated to see what support that could provide for our willing downtown businesses.

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

City of Waconia — Mayor
Candidate: Nicole Waldron

Why are you running for Mayor of Waconia?

I am running for Mayor of Waconia because of my desire to serve. It has been an honor to be part the City Council this past term. As I work with committees, volunteer throughout the community and simply engage as a resident, my desire to lead continues to grow. Serving as Acting Mayor for the past two years has only increased that passion. I bring experience, hard work, strong organizational skills, and most importantly dedication to this position. I look forward to serving as your mayor.

How do you think things are going, generally, in Waconia right now? What would you hope to improve?

Generally speaking, things are going well in Waconia. We have a beautiful city full of parks, trails, local businesses and great neighborhoods. One improvement that I will continue to work towards will be to shore up timelines on construction projects, holding ourselves and contractors accountable to deadlines.

Local road construction projects are set to impact downtown roads for the next several years. How do you think this will affect business downtown and what are some ways you believe we can mitigate those effects?

The issue that will affect our downtown businesses the most during the reconstruction project will be parking and accessibility. Making sure that each business owner is aware of the schedule, where those access points will be, and updates on when they change will be vital. This will allow information to be sent out and signage to be put in place. In addition, having a project manager or a designated point of contact throughout the project will allow the businesses time to prepare for what will have the most impact on their day-to-day operations.

How has your experience in working with local businesses influenced your view of the business community and economic environment in Waconia? Describe your perceptions and understanding of the business community and economic environment in Waconia?

As the liaison to the Chamber, the past four years I have been able to see first-hand what an amazing business community we have here in Waconia. I have heard and seen the wide spread struggles of staffing shortages, rising costs and supply chain issues. I have also seen thriving businesses change locations, change ownership, and start new adventures. We are blessed to have a strong and active Chamber of Commerce and businesses promoting and supporting each other. As our community grows, it will be important to keep focus on our downtown and to keep small businesses thriving.

How do you view economic development in Waconia and what changes (if any) would you like to see in the future?

As a city and council, we have a variety of tools that can help promote Economic Development such as the Water and Sewer Trunk Fee Reduction Program, The Revolving Loan Fund, and use of CDA Grant programs. This past year we also created a new Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) District and adopted a Small Business Trunk Fee Deferral Policy. I believe that putting in the time and effort to plan for the future, such as the 10th Street Small Area Plan, will only continue to help Waconia prosper. Helping business come to and thrive in Waconia is a priority.

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Waconia City Council — Special Election

Candidate: Myron Karki

Why are you running for Waconia City Council?

I was on the city Council in 2005-2008 followed by 6 years on the Waconia Planning Commission and 5 years on the Carver County Parks Commission. My experience should be valuable to the community and citizens.

How do you think things are going, generally, in Waconia right now? What would you hope to improve?

The planning and periodic updates position Waconia for an expanded geographic size within Carver County and identifies the need for corresponding infrastructure and services to support it.

Local road construction projects are set to impact downtown roads for the next several years. How do you think this will affect business downtown and what are some ways you believe we can mitigate those effects?

It is complicated with impacts from the weather, timing and access to buildings for customers. Hope of dry weather, minimum of a surprises above and below ground and creative management of business services to their customers.

How has your experience in working with local businesses influenced your view of the business community and economic environment in Waconia? Describe your perceptions and understanding of the business community and economic environment in Waconia?

My experience has been not only through my positions within the city and Carver County but with the Chamber of Commerce as an Ambassador and my personal experience as a customer of various businesses. Most are having positive experiences in having a business in Waconia.

Some businesses are doing really well and others not so much. Projects like the street project can negatively affect those hanging on in the margins. Hopefully they can get creative to find ways to provide services on-line, via couriers or direct deliveries from their staff.

How do you view economic development in Waconia and what changes (if any) would you like to see in the future?

Keep doing what we are all collectively doing.

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Waconia City Council — Special Election

Candidate: Steve Yetzer

Why are you running for Waconia City Council?

To give my business experience to the council. I have been a lifelong Waconia person. I was on the old HRA board before I moved out of the city limits. I served a two-year term as a supervisor on Laketown Township. I have since moved back into the city limits. I first managed and then owned Yetzer Furniture & Flooring from 1981 until I sold the business in 2015.

How do you think things are going, generally, in Waconia right now? What would you hope to improve?

I think things are going pretty good currently, but that doesn't mean that things can't be improved. I look at our town's appearance, road maintenance, options for shopping and manufacturing, and think we can do better.

Local road construction projects are set to impact downtown roads for the next several years. How do you think this will affect business downtown and what are some ways you believe we can mitigate those effects?

This is probably my biggest concern! Since I was a business owner in downtown, I know firsthand what this construction could do to downtown business community. We will need to be able to move owners, employees, and customers in and out of these areas and make it as easy as possible! We will also need good communication to the business community and customers. Waconia's downtown is what makes Waconia a special place!

How has your experience in working with local businesses influenced your view of the business community and economic environment in Waconia? Describe your perceptions and understating of the business community and economic environment in Waconia?

Since I have been part of this community for almost 60 years and ran and owned a business in the community for over 30 years, I think I am pretty qualified and know the economic environment! We as a council need to do as much for our business community as possible! It is tough to run a business in a downtown that is off the main corridor of traffic and then in a community this is this close to the metro area and all the different offerings that are within a 30 miles proximity!

How do you view economic development in Waconia and what changes (if any) would you like to see in the future?

I think we are very fortunate in what Waconia offers its residents. With that said, we can always offer better options for our residents. I have never understood not having a dedicated economic development person on the city staff. I sometimes get frustrated with all the planning the city does to make Waconia just like other community. Waconia is a special place and should be developed that way, not have it look like every other town! I see the residential development in Waconia and think it all looks the same in each development and mostly the same price points. I do not see anything like a bigger lot, custom home sites for our local builders. There are a lot of people that can't find this in Waconia and move out of Waconia when they can move up in a home. With the hospital / manufacturing that is in this town and even the people that work outside Waconia, we need a variety of options. We need to push for what is best for Waconia and not just what a developer can make money on.

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Waconia City Council — At Large

Candidate: Nick Gleason

Why are you running for Waconia City Council?

In large, I want to give back to a community that I love being a part of. I am running to be a voice for those community members, new and existing, that have passion around matters such as improving our infrastructure, economic development, and community relations. Elected leaders working with one another and the public for a common goal is what will contribute to our healthy growth. Waconia is a great community and I'd like to keep moving forward for a successful future.

How do you think things are going, generally, in Waconia right now? What would you hope to improve?

Our community, in my opinion, is a wonderful place for families to belong to. With our quaint downtown area to our beautiful surrounding neighborhoods, we offer prospective community members a place they can be proud to call home. With that, I hope to be part of a public office that can help balance the growth with more business & industry for our community members to enjoy.

Local road construction projects are set to impact downtown roads for the next several years. How do you think this will affect business downtown and what are some ways you believe we can mitigate those effects?

Yes, local businesses will be affected, this is inevitable when enhancing infrastructure. To mitigate such negative effects, the governing body needs to look at ways to keep community members informed. Also, scheduling these projects need to be planned and coordinated correctly. Working with awarded Contractors on expedited schedules to lessen the burden on businesses. Another opportunity is looking into value engineering the scope of work that can expedite the schedule. Ultimately, enhancing our infrastructure only helps our community.

How has your experience in working with local businesses influenced your view of the business community and economic environment in Waconia? Describe your perceptions and understanding of the business community and economic environment in Waconia?

Being involved in youth sports for my children has given me the opportunity to meet and develop relationships with local businesses. As an elected official I believe it's important to challenge leaders on how we can grow our business community to meet the need of our immense growth. From my perception, we have an opportunity to lure successful businesses, commercial and industrial, to our community. I believe Waconia is a very desirable place to not only live, but also work.

How do you view economic development in Waconia and what changes (if any) would you like to see in the future?

As we've seen over the last few years our growth within the community has been flourishing. With community member growth there needs to be a balance to accommodate for this growth. Infrastructure, specifically roads, parks/rec, and education need to match our growth. I believe we are starting to fall behind in these areas. Whomever is chosen as our elected leaders need to keep this at the forefront of their agenda. How can we entice more businesses to view Waconia as a place they want to grow their business? As we improve things like infrastructure, we can lure more business into our community as well as help existing businesses to grow and flourish.

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Waconia City Council — At Large

Candidate: Jeff Grengs

Why are you running for Waconia City Council?

I've always felt a sense of service to this community. After serving on the Waconia Fire Dept. for five years, our family dynamics changed and I resigned 17 years ago. In that time I've seen a lot of changes and heard from many people about those changes. Many of their opinions were negative in nature. I want everyone who lives and works here to feel great about this community. I've considered the City Council for many years and timing was finally right for my family, so I feel now is the time to start serving again.

How do you think things are going, generally, in Waconia right now? What would you hope to improve?

Our city has seen amazing changes. But at the same time, I feel that existing businesses and residents have been neglected at times. As a business owner, I understand the difficulties and unexpected costs that can arise, especially after so many businesses were forced to take large losses over the last few years. I would like to see the city focus on having a strong, robust business sector. Great things happen across the board when businesses are successful.

Local road construction projects are set to impact downtown roads for the next several years. How do you think this will affect business downtown and what are some ways you believe we can mitigate those effects?

The rehab projects for downtown are going to be very challenging, not just for the affected businesses but for the adjacent ones as well. Lack of parking is already an issue. But this is an amazing community with caring residents and entrepreneurs alike. Residents near the work zones could be approached and asked not to park on the streets if they have off-street parking available. Employees of affected businesses could then park outside of downtown, leaving the available parking for customers. Access to affected businesses, especially for the disabled, is going to be the biggest challenge. But the people of this town always come together to help their neighbor, and I'm positive that businesses can find common solutions to mitigate these problems. From the city's standpoint, I believe that easing any restrictions or ordinances that could hamper the success of affected businesses should be strongly considered.

How has your experience in working with local businesses influenced your view of the business community and economic environment in Waconia? Describe your perceptions and understanding of the business community and economic environment in Waconia?

I'm a believer in the "trickle down" effect. Without abundant, robust and successful businesses, there are few jobs and a lack of desirable places to shop, eat and spend time with your family. People then choose to work and spend time and money outside of the community. I grew up in a town like that just to the north of Waconia, and after thirty years nothing has changed. I think we should focus on breathing life into our downtown, but we have to do it in a way that doesn't force people out or put large tax burdens on businesses or residents.

How do you view economic development in Waconia and what changes (if any) would you like to see in the future?

I like seeing the highway 5 corridor to the west finally filling in. I know that to the east, there is a plan to rehab highway 5 to match. Funding is a huge issue with that and I know the city is looking to secure portions of that funding. I would like to see more business development by Target. The people of Waconia need more places to work and spend money. Our current businesses do a great job serving our community, but one has to agree that it's hard to get in most restaurants, especially for families. I believe the vast majority of disposable income from residents of Waconia gets spent elsewhere because of this. I also know that competition in business brings more business, because more people will stay in town.

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Waconia City Council — At Large

Candidate: Joseph Polunc

Why are you running for Waconia City Council?

I am motivated by getting results in whatever I do. I have found it important to be a good listener and to consider all options. As a taxpayer, I want to see transparency, communication and successful outcomes. As a council member I want to be held accountable for my actions.

How do you think things are going, generally, in Waconia right now? What would you hope to improve?

Generally I believe things are going very well. Clearly the town is changing with its residential expansion and commercial ventures. My goal is to ensure that we have optimal planning as this growth continues. Communication with the citizens and business owners is important as it clearly defines the way forward. My goal is to improve the overall efficiency of city services through a responsive and forward thinking council.

Local road construction projects are set to impact downtown roads for the next several years. How do you think this will affect business downtown and what are some ways you believe we can mitigate those effects?

A wide variety of retail and professional services are located downtown. Clearly this will be a challenging time as access will be difficult. Bottom lines will certainly be affected. It will be important for access routes to be identified in a variety of ways. Maps showing alternative routes must appear on the City and Chamber sites. Access maps should be available at all retail outlets too. Street signage must clearly show the way to those affected businesses. From these challenges, a new and vibrant downtown area will be created.

How has your experience in working with local businesses influenced your view of the business community and economic environment in Waconia? Describe your perceptions and understanding of the business community and economic environment in Waconia?

I have found the local businesses have a common bond as they look out for each other as issues develop. As a consumer I have found the businesses to be welcoming and willing to accommodate in every way. As a downtown retailer, I appreciate those who “shop locally”. This is an important combination that helps shops thrive and grow their services. A wide variety of retail options compliment the area as a whole.

How do you view economic development in Waconia and what changes (if any) would you like to see in the future?

One of the unique aspects of the American experiment is the ability to pursue your goals. While some efforts fail, there is frequently a second chance. The economic opportunity in Waconia is healthy for small and large retailers. Retail turnover and new development sites allow for new beginnings as well as some unique new ventures. The Council can assist by providing for more opportunities for growth. As the City grows, market forces will dictate the next new retail development, both large and small.

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Carver County Commissioner District 4

Candidate: Tim Lynch

Tell us about yourself and why you want the job of Carver County Commissioner.

I'm married to my wife Deb and we have three daughters, Rachel, Amanda and Victoria. My parents taught my siblings and I that we should serve our communities any way we could. We have all ways embraced that motto, and to this day my siblings and myself volunteer for the community any way possible.

What's going well and what specifically do you seek to change?

Communication in Carver County works extremely well. With very few exceptions, each and every department works well with each other. They all respond to the needs of the public in a quick and honest manner. I receive positive comments about this often.

One thing we need to improve on is communication with other government entities. We seem to communicate well with local governments, cities and townships, but we seem to lose efficiency when working with state and federal governments. I'm very proud to say that State Highway 212 is being updated. But it didn't move forward until Carver County took the lead. The speed in which this project moved forward frustrated me a great deal, it has been slated to be four lanes for a very long time.

Lake Waconia Regional Park is and will continue to be important to our community. Additionally, the Lake Waconia Event Center has been an active part of the region's assets in our community. What is the future of this building?

We had a work session on September 27, attended by representatives of the Chamber and City of Waconia. We discussed the uses and plans for the ballroom. The plan is to make a firm decision in six months or less. We are having a groundbreaking ceremony for the new Waconia Event Center on October 4, and immediately following the groundbreaking we will tour the ballroom. If any community members would like to accompany us, they would be welcome to do so.

What will tourism look like in Carver County in the next year, 3 years, 5 years? And how does this impact Waconia?

Tourism will continue to grow in Carver County. Visitors will continue to find the quality of life that we have in Carver County. I invited a friend to Nickle Dickle Day and they were so impressed with the community that they started investigating a possible move to Waconia. The impact will be that Waconia will be the epicenter of the tourism industry in the county.

Carver County is one of the fastest growing counties in the state. What do you hope to see the landscape of economic development look like in the future?

Carver County is the fastest growing county in Minnesota. My hope is that Carver County will continue to look the way it does. Development will expand from the cities, and keeping the country side. I know I'm biased but I honestly think Carver County is the most beautiful county in Minnesota.

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Carver County Commissioner District 5

Candidate: Aaron Burkhardt

Tell us about yourself and why you want the job of Carver County Commissioner.

I am a business owner and was born and raised in Carver County. I live on a small farm in Cologne with my wife and kids. I love to hunt, fish, camp, and travel with my family. We also enjoy working on projects around the farm. I am running for Carver County Commissioner because I think it is time for someone to hold this position who wants to work FOR the residents of the county. I want there to be an open dialogue between concerned citizens and their commissioners. I truly believe what we do as a county, and the rules we make, affect the daily lives of our residents. I am not a politician so I won't be making any outlandish promises.

What's going well and what specifically do you seek to change?

We should be proud of the growth in Carver County. It truly says a lot about us. We are a highly sought-after place to raise a family. We have high quality schools, hospitals and businesses. I do think we need to take a look at how that growth is going to affect our school districts, small businesses, our farming community and our small-town feel. Carver County is unique in many ways. We still have many working farms and a lot of small businesses that make our county such a unique place to live.

Lake Waconia Regional Park is and will continue to be important to our community. Additionally, the Lake Waconia Event Center has been an active part of the region's assets in our community. What is the future of this building?

The Lake Waconia Event Center has been the site of many weddings, fundraisers and events that I have attended over the years. I think with some work, we could make the Event Center a wedding/fundraiser/event destination that could bring in a lot of revenue and business for Carver County and Waconia businesses alike.

What will tourism look like in Carver County in the next year, 3 years, 5 years? And how does this impact Waconia?

Carver County has a top-notch park system and unbeatable lakes. I think the parks are going to be the foundation of tourism in our county. Lake Waconia and the Dakota Trail are huge assets to Waconia. The development of Coney Island could present some awesome tourism opportunities, such as concerts on the lake, paddle boarding tours, cross country and skate ski races, etc. If we keep our small-town charm, tourism will flourish in Waconia. Nickle Dickle Day continues to prove that year after year.

Carver County is one of the fastest growing counties in the state. What do you hope to see the landscape of economic development look like in the future?

We need more businesses in Carver County. With the 212 Expansion, we have the opportunity to attract more consumers to our county. We need to make doing business in our county easier for large and small businesses alike. I have personally started several businesses across the US from the ground up, including a small business on my farm in Cologne. I know what it takes to run a successful business and think my experience will be beneficial in this commissioner role.

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Carver County Commissioner District 5

Candidate: John P. Fahey

Tell us about yourself and why you want the job of Carver County Commissioner.

I am currently serving as the Carver County Commissioner representing District 5. I am a lifelong resident of CC and was first elected to the County Board in 2020. Being able to represent District 5, which includes the Cities of Carver, Cologne, NYA, Hamburg and New Germany and the following Townships: San Francisco, Dahlgren, Hancock, Benton, Young America, Camden and Laketown (After 12/31/22 – Laketown Township will become part of District 4). It has been very rewarding and challenging.

I am a former School Board Member, former Mayor of NYA and currently serve as the Vice Chair of the Carver County Board of Commissioners. As the fastest growing county in the State, we are faced with increasing challenges to manage this growth. As your current District 5 Commissioner and with the additional experience gained over the last 20 months, I would like to lead and help manage this growth. In addition, I would like to continue to utilize my extensive experience, background in public service and leadership to serve the Citizens of Carver County for another four years.

What's going well and what specially do you seek to change?

Carver County is doing well in many areas and is the fastest growing County in the State and the healthiest! The County also ranks the 5th healthiest nationally. With our Public Safety model, economic development, and transportation infrastructure, we are well poised for Carver County to continue to be a great place to live, build a home, raise a family, start a business and enjoy all of its amenities!

As a County Commissioner I continue to support Sherriff Kamerud and his department in protecting the residents of the county and supporting a strong Public Safety model.

As a previous member of the Carver County Community Development Agency and now serving as a board liaison, I see first-hand the work the CDA is performing to provide affordable housing opportunities and fostering Community and Economic Development in the County.

The county roads and bridges infrastructure are solid. We continue to allocate the necessary funds to maintain a quality transportation system. Highway 212 is an example of this continued investment and excellent working relationship with MnDot. We are excited to have the next section of Highway 212 from Cologne to NYA fully funded with additional funds for a bridge at the County Road 51 and 212 intersection (Bongards intersection).

Seek to change: Further transportation changes are needed. There is an opportunity to upgrade Highway 5. We are working hard to support and influence other local, state and federal representatives in securing additional funding for Highway 5 through our lobbying efforts. With the use of the county's sales tax, as in the Highway 212 Project, the county was able to not only lead the project, but to elevate the project to a higher priority. I feel we can replicate this effort with the Highway 5 project.

I would also like to hear more from Waconia Chamber members, District 5 residents and get their feedback on areas of suggested improvements.

Lake Waconia Regional Park is and will continue to be important to our community. Additionally, the Lake Waconia Event Center has been an active part of the region's assets in our community. What is the future of this building?

As most of you are aware, the County has completed a tremendous amount of work on redesigning the

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Carver County Commissioner District 5

Candidate: John P. Fahey

beach area and installing a new public boat launch. In June of this year, we, the County Board, provided the authorization to award contracts for the new Waterfront Service Center building. I supported this motion. This estimated \$8.7 million dollar project is scheduled for construction starting this fall with a completion date in late summer of 2023. We are excited to move forward with this new complex and with the recent improvements to Coney Island, I feel the Lake Waconia Regional Park will continue to be a valuable asset to the Waconia Community and for all of Carver County's residents to enjoy!

The future of the existing Lake Waconia Event Center building continues to be under discussion for future plans. In the meantime, the county will continue to consider using the building for applicable usage – example, the county utilized the building for multiple county COVID-19 public health initiatives.

What will tourism look like in Carver County in the next year, 3 years, 5 years? And how does this impact Waconia.

I feel the Chambers, Cities and the County will need to continue to work together to promote tourism within the county. The county has a tremendous amount to offer. We continue to support ag related businesses within the townships, for example, the three wineries in Waconia. This partnership has helped the Chambers and these businesses thrive.

The County CDA continues to help and promote tourism, but I feel we can improve this process with additional resources allocated to the CDA budget.

The partnership with the County and the Chambers is key. Chambers, and their membership, in general, have more of a direct influence and impact on tourism initiatives.

Looking forward to the next three to five years, the opening of the Waterfront Service Center next year will have a huge impact on the Waconia area and tourism. This attraction will serve as a hub for the possibility of expanded meeting space, possible concert venues, festivals and/or other events. With the continuing development of Coney Island, the Historic Andrew Peterson Farm, and Waconia chamber membership businesses, the next 3 -5 years are going to be very exciting for all of the Waconia area, the County as a whole, and drawing Statewide tourists.

Carver County is one of the fastest growing counties in the state. What do you hope to see the landscape of economic development look like in the future.

We will constantly be challenged to handle the growth and economic development in the county. As the cities grow with utilizing orderly annexation with the townships, the growth and economic development will remain centered around the cities. This is where I would like to see additional economic development (businesses and housing) take place.

With the one building eligibility per 40 acres land use policy, the majority of the agricultural land should remain in an agricultural status. This land use policy, which I support, helps maintain the rich agriculture history of the county while balancing economic development in the Cities.

With the help of the Waconia Chamber and its membership of business owners, in conjunction with the county, we can work together in a collaborative way for further economic development.

An interesting fact: Carver County's overall tax base is projected to grow from \$16 Billion in 2021 to over an estimated \$20 Billion in 2023. The average home value is now currently \$450,000. We are growing in population and economically – it's an exciting time to be part of Carver County!

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

State Representative District 48A
Candidate: Representative Jim Nash

Tell us about yourself and why you want the job of State Representative for District 48A. Given that the Chamber is a business organization, tell us specifically about your connection to the local business community and/or any business.

I've lived in Waconia for the last 20 years, raised our large family here, served as Council Member, Mayor and have been your State Representative for the last 8 years. In that time I've been shoulder-to-shoulder with business owners as they've struggled through various economic tides and have been there for the last two years fighting to help them stay open. I've been endorsed by the MN Chamber of Commerce in every election for the last 5 elections, as well as NFIB (National Federation of Independent Businesses). I want to return as State Rep because I know that families, business owners, schools, and our children need a champion in St. Paul.

What is your view of Minnesota's economy and business competitiveness?

Minnesota has tremendously high taxes and is the 6th highest in the nation. We have a 4th tier income tax and the DFL has attempted to install a 5th tier which would make MN one of the highest in the nation, we cannot continue that reckless path. If we are to see entrepreneurs invest in MN jobs, and try to make the American dream a reality, we cannot look at their wallets as a temporary holding spot for government spending money.

Minnesota has had a budget surplus for many consecutive years. What are your thoughts on Minnesota's state budget? If surpluses continue, would you support reducing taxes, or do you believe surplus revenue is an opportunity to invest more in government programs?

We do need to realize that surplus funds come from over taxation both at the state and federal level. Families are struggling to buy groceries, school supplies, gasoline, pay their mortgage and save for the future. We should reduce taxes on hard working Minnesotans, and retirees need to not have their social security taxed. Using the surplus is a wise and judicious way to provide relief. The rainy day fund is full, and the surplus should go back to Minnesotans who paid into the surplus.

Attracting and retaining workers in a top priority for businesses in our community. Minnesota employers are increasing wages, investing in training, creating flexible works schedules, supporting housing and child care in efforts to retain a workforce. Do you have any strategies or recommendations to help employers with the workforce challenge?

Business owners are the greatest innovators you'll meet, they can adapt and react quickly as long as government doesn't encumber them with heavy over regulation and red tape. I've spoken to many business owners who need workers who can afford to buy their own home in an affordable market not encumbered by heavy zoning and build out costs. They need employees who can live in a local economy where services are found in the private sector and aren't stifled by the hand of government.

Health care is an important issue to all of us. What is your view on health care reform – are you more likely to favor a single payer system managed by the state or federal government, or should we create a more competitive marketplace allowing individuals and businesses to design plans based on their needs?

Health care becomes more attainable when competition thrives. Government run health care is a disastrous idea and so counter intuitive to our form of government and our history and should be removed from the forum of public discourse. A more competitive market that can be tailored to the buyers needs is the most practical solution.

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

State Senator District 48

Candidate: Senator Julia Coleman

Tell us about yourself and why you want the job of State Senator District 48. Given that the Chamber is a business organization, tell us specifically about your connection to the local business community and/or any business background.

I have been remarkably inspired and humbled while serving as the current Senator for Carver County, and believe I have just gotten started serving this great community during my brief two year term. I am the candidate endorsed by the National Federation of Independent Businesses (NFIB) PAC, and the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce PAC, and take great care to support businesses across the State of Minnesota. One way I tried to accomplish this during my first term was by offering an alternative to the one-size-fits all paid family leave mandate/tax proposal, and offer a free-market solution that won't crush our small business community.

What is your view of Minnesota's economy and business competitiveness?

Minnesota has amazing talent, but our current regulatory and tax environment is a major inhibitor to our business growth and competitiveness. I believe that we need to do more to listen to our business community to reduce burdensome regulations, and improve our tax environment to help our businesses thrive.

Minnesota has had a budget surplus for many consecutive years. What are your thoughts on Minnesota's state budget? If surpluses continue, would you support reducing taxes, or do you believe surplus revenue is an opportunity to invest more in government programs?

I supported returning the surplus to the taxpayers through tax reduction, and will continue to support this initiative once re-elected.

Attracting and retaining workers is a top priority for businesses in our community. Minnesota employers are increasing wages, investing in training, creating flexible works schedules, supporting housing and child care in efforts to retain a workforce. Do you have any strategies or recommendations to help employers with the workforce challenge?

Yes, I fully support harnessing innovative collaboration to help our business community attract and retain workers. Some ways we can collaborate with our business community on these efforts is by supporting flexible paid family leave insurance authorization, tax credits for small businesses struggling to offer paid family leave, and targeted childcare scholarships to help parents afford to be away from home when needed. I also authored legislation to help our high school students enter the skilled workforce with the knowledge and training necessary to get started upon graduation, helping to reduce the skilled workforce shortage.

Health care is an important issue to all of us. What is your view on health care reform – are you more likely to favor a single payer system managed by the state or federal government, or should we create a more competitive marketplace allowing individuals and businesses to design plans based on their needs?

I do not support a single payer system managed by the state or federal government, and support creating a more competitive marketplace to lower costs and improve the quality of care.

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

State Senator District 48

Candidate: Dr. Dan Kessler

Tell us about yourself and why you want the job of State Senator District 48. Given that the Chamber is a business organization, tell us specifically about your connection to the local business community and/or any business background.

I'm a dad and a clinical psychologist. I've spent 30+ years listening to people and helping them resolve their problems, one at a time. With so many systemic problems, and so many of those problems intersecting with healthcare and unaffordable healthcare costs, I want to take my experiences to St. Paul.

I am a former small business owner, having owned and operated a private practice for about 10 years. That meant balancing clinical work, employee payroll, government regulation, and financial stability. My biggest two frustrations were regulations that didn't serve my patients or my business, and the crippling cost of providing healthcare to my family and employees.

What is your view of Minnesota's economy and business competitiveness?

The State of Minnesota recently had its bond rating upgraded to AAA, and we have the lowest unemployment in state history (1.8%). While what amounts to full employment is good for the state's coffers, it also means that businesses are struggling to find the labor force necessary, and often have to pay more or provide more benefits in order to attract and maintain a workforce. This has created an environment that is increasingly tilted toward large, national corporations and against small, local businesses, who may not have the resources to compete.

Minnesota has had a budget surplus for many consecutive years. What are your thoughts on Minnesota's state budget? If surpluses continue, would you support reducing taxes, or do you believe surplus revenue is an opportunity to invest more in government programs?

Long answer: Two years ago, pre-pandemic Minnesota was projected to have a \$2.5B deficit. Minnesota hasn't raised taxes since, but now have a \$9B projected surplus (perhaps more). Back in May, I was really happy to see Republicans and Democrats come together for once, agreeing to a deal that would have provided the biggest tax cut in Minnesota history, while also providing for responsible funding of schools, increased funding of public safety, and repair of crumbling infrastructure. I would have been happy to vote for that bipartisan bill, and was deeply disappointed when, instead of voting on the bill and fulfilling their promises to Minnesotans, the Senate adjourned and walked away.

Short answer: Yes, I would support tax cuts.

Attracting and retaining workers in a top priority for businesses in our community. Minnesota employers are increasing wages, investing in training, creating flexible works schedules, supporting housing and child care in efforts to retain a workforce. Do you have any strategies or recommendations to help employers with the workforce challenge?

State government can streamline licensure requirements to make it easier for people to make mid-career transitions across sectors. We can invest in technical and training programs at our community colleges that produce job-ready workers. We can expand post-secondary enrollment options for high schools students in high demand sectors that allow them to graduate with both a high school diploma and a work credential.

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

State Senator District 48
Candidate: Dr. Dan Kessler

Health care is an important issue to all of us. What is your view on health care reform – are you more likely to favor a single payer system managed by the state or federal government, or should we create a more competitive marketplace allowing individuals and businesses to design plans based on their needs?

I've been in the healthcare field for 30+ years. In Minnesota, we have some of the finest healthcare systems in the country, but for many Minnesotans and many businesses, healthcare is simply unaffordable. We pay premiums and the company we work for pays premiums. Then we pay deductibles. Then we pay copays. This just doesn't work for employees or businesses. That said, I don't think there is value in scrapping the system, and I don't think the answer is an "either/or."

Businesses need flexibility to offer a competitive benefit and design a plan based on their needs, but would also benefit from the option to allow employees to buy into a program like MinnesotaCare if that is their preference. We preserve choices for employers, and at the same time don't hamstring small businesses who can't negotiate the same deals available to large corporations. This approach gives options for employer and employee alike, without taking away options currently available to both.

HOW TO VOTE



How Can I Vote in Waconia?

City of Waconia residents have multiple options for voting:

1. Vote by mail.
2. Vote at City Hall, 201 South Vine Street (City of Waconia Residents Only).
3. Go to the Taxpayer Services Department at Carver County Government Center, 600 E. 4th Street, Chaska, (ALL Carver County Residents).
4. Vote in person on Election Day on November 8, 2022.

Absentee Voting at City Hall (Waconia residents only)

For the General Election, absentee voting is open from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday - Thursday and 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. on Fridays going through November 7. The City will also be open extended hours for voting on the following dates:

Saturday, November 5 - 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Monday, November 6 - 7:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

How Do I Vote by Mail?

You can apply for a ballot any time during the year, except the day of the election. Leave time for election officials to mail your ballot to you and for you to return your ballot. Your ballot must be received by Election Day (November 8, 2022) or it will not be counted. Return your ballot by mail or package delivery service (such as FedEx or UPS). To request a mail ballot, please visit the Secretary of State's Website or www.waconia.org/votebymail.

City of Waconia Polling Locations

The City of Waconia is no longer part of a Ward Boundary System. Your polling place may have changed for 2022. The City of Waconia is now divided into three precincts, please view the polling places listed below. If you are unsure of the precinct in which you reside, please consult the [City of Waconia Precinct map](#) (link). www.waconia.org/DocumentCenter/View/3042/WaconiaPrecincts

Precinct 1

Faith Lutheran Church
800 Waconia Parkway North
Waconia, MN 55387

Precinct 2

Trinity Lutheran Church
601 E. 2nd St.
Waconia, MN 55387

Precinct 3

Waconia Ice Arena
1250 Oak Avenue
Waconia, MN 55387

Questions? Call City Hall at 952-442-2184

Current Elected Officials

For a full listing of current city, county, state, and federal elected officials, visit www.DestinationWaconia.org/live/#government.

