

2021 Political Candidates' Forum - Submitted Questions

Answers supplied by Jade Scott, Council Candidate

Mayor & Council Questions:

Q1. Do you think our downtown core and tourism corridor are healthy and successful? If yes, why? If no, what would you do to change that?

There has been great work done to beautify and make this the most sought-after community. Julia and Travel Drumheller have done considerable handiwork to gain traction for sustainable tourism and I would love to see this continue to grow.

Q2. If Council received a \$1 million grant to use for town infrastructure any way you wanted, what would you do with it and why?

During the forum, I said invest in technology. I believe it's necessary to invest in our residents and create more jobs. However, with more time to think, \$1 million is honestly not a lot of money. I think this money could be beneficial to fix the holes in the alleys, add garbage cans in areas that need them and even fix up some of the dinosaurs.

Q3. Looking back on Drumheller's response to COVID during the beginning of the pandemic, do you feel that Council spent taxpayer dollars wisely? In other words, do you think it was wise to have spent so much on items like road closure signs, overtime and meals for staff, and spraying sidewalks and fence posts with soap?

Hindsight is 20/20. We know more now than what we knew at the start of the pandemic, plus we are still learning more about covid every day. While I may agree that the town went above and beyond, I can't ignore that they were doing what they thought was best to keep the residents safe. I heard people say that they were happy to be out of the metropolitan areas as they felt safer in rural areas.

Q4. A few years ago there was talk of a youth center in town, and a gala was held to raise funds for it. Are you in favour of bringing a youth centre back to the table, and what is your overall vision for the youth of Drumheller?

Yes! A youth center would be an improvement for things to do for those under 18. I see a place with computers and different types of games, in addition to a comfy hang-out space. All while providing enjoyable classes and mentorship programs. Through life-changing programs, community-based services, and relationships with peers and caring adults, teens can develop the skills they need to succeed. These types of foundations help to fight poverty, support mental health and help protect the community and residents.

Q5. 3 years ago Town Council issued a survey about implementing a curb-side recycling program. Public response was in support of the idea (even with a user fee) yet Council did not implement the program. What are your thoughts on a curb-side recycling program?

I support curbside recycling and I want to look at finding a solution to get this program running. At least 80 percent of the material currently disposed of can be put to some productive use. Studies show that 25 percent of waste can be diverted away from landfills through changes in consumer behaviour. Things like organic materials can produce methane gas. Often called landfill gas, methane is 21 times more potent than CO₂ as a greenhouse gas. The best place for organic materials is in a composting facility, a bio-digester or an energy extraction facility. I would like to be able to learn all I can about our current process and see how we can implement better policies towards conservation.

Q6. What are your thoughts on the COVID-19 Restriction Exemption Program being implemented at the arena, pool, and Badlands Community Facility? Some communities have opted out; is the Restrictions Exemption Program something you support or oppose for town-owned recreation facilities?

The Restrictions Exception Program allows businesses to operate without most public health restrictions as outlined in Order 43-2021. It also increases the trust of provided safety for a majority of the public. A common theme I have heard from council is, "It takes a village" and right now, we need to find unity. Covid has affected so many lives, so negatively and I support us moving forward as a community that comes together for the greater good of our neighbours.

Q7. How will you gain the public's trust in the Town moving forward with flood mitigation?

I have heard residents when they say they have felt unseen, unheard and unappreciated. My top values include communication and trust in all of my relationships, be that is what this job is - a relationship with you, the people. I want to provide compassionate and straightforward communication to residents while also raising their concerns at council meetings. The residents make this community strong and you should know you are an integral part of the valley.

Q8. Air B & B's have become very popular and there is a huge risk regarding the long term impact on the local rental market, available affordable housing, and community safety. What's your plan to manage and oversee development of Air B & B's or other short term rentals?

The 'Airbnb effect' has similarities to gentrification in that it slowly increases the value of an area to the detriment of the local residents, many of whom are pushed out due to financial constraints. I am unclear on any current legislation for short-term rentals and will continue to look into this. Affordable housing is a priority for supporting lone families and low-income persons and if we are seeing an issue, we need to look at better legislation to keep a balance of vacation and permanent residency.

Q9. As Council you will be required to make decisions on complex topics, with lots of info and viewpoints. Someone will always be disappointed. What are the key factors you consider when making decisions that will guide the Town's future?

You can't please everyone however I wish that we could. I think getting feedback from residents is key, listening to the majority. If this feedback is within the conditions of the plan and is what is best for the community, action can be taken.

Q10. What do you see as the role of tourism in the future success of Drumheller and why?

Drumheller is the 3rd largest tourist town in Alberta, I believe tourism will always be a large part of the success of Drumheller. People come from all over to see the dinosaurs and explore the trails and hills. Tourism can be a large percentage of revenue to help us invest in infrastructure. We should look at counter-seasonal strategies to increase year-round activities. Having diverse cultural and outdoor activities will not only attract visitors in the off-season but also improve the quality of life for the residents.

Q11. Our Chamber network's research shows that members of the public have high levels of confidence in the business community to help move our province forward – what is your plan to engage business leaders in growing prosperity in our community?

One crucial aspect for entrepreneurs is to improve the digital experience. Many businesses in the valley direct online traffic to Facebook, if they even have a landing page at all. The federal government has introduced micro-grants to help with the costs associated with adopting new technologies and improving the customers' digital experience. More and more people are leaving Facebook, while constantly changing algorithms may not be getting your page the reach that businesses need.

Q12. Do you have any plans for seniors? From the Sunshine Lodge residents.

Seniors are sometimes left behind and creating support systems is an integral part in mental wellness. Persons without children, or who no longer have a relationship with adult children, can benefit from making connections with others in the community who are also alone. Single parents and lone families should be connected with seniors to help create these systems. Building strong foundations for all ages.

Q13. What is your vision for the Rotary Spray park and surrounding area, including the Aquaplex?

The Rotary Park is one of the main attractions in our community, people spend all summer using the facilities and enjoying the hot days while getting wet. When the town was revitalizing the fountain last year, many hoped we would see a new fountain. Not that I want us to throw more money at it, but if it needs to be repaired again, we may want to look at alternatives. The splash park is colourful and engaging, the pool upgrades have been a hit with users as well. Ensuring this area stays functional and clean is a priority. There was also an issue with sandflies this year which caused the experience to be a bit less enjoyable - those bugs are worse than mosquitoes and can carry a number of diseases.

Q14. If elected, what are your top 3 priorities in your first few months on council?

That is a great question. One priority is to be accountable to all electors and help to bring back some trust into our council. When it comes to projects like Flood Mitigation, those affected should 100% be involved and treated more than fairly. Next, to focus on economic development for creating year-round activities and employment, increasing the way of life for residents and making the tourism season longer. I would also like to review and develop the mental wellness strategies as we struggle with the effects of trauma, lockdowns, and social media.

Q15. If the Province doesn't mandate, are you in favour of mandating vaccines for Municipal Employees? Yes or no.

Yes, I believe that as community leaders, we need to lead by example. We are seeing communities like Calgary and Banff adopting these policies, the purpose to protect employees and the general public they regularly interact with.

Q16. Do you have any plans to expand the existing dog park? The current size is not much larger than a residential back yard.

I am a cat owner so I haven't used the dog park myself but I have heard complaints from those that do. If we plan to listen to residents, we should look at the site and see how we can improve it. At this time, I have not seen the legal land map to see if the size can be increased but I will ensure the issue is investigated.

Q17. Citizens often expect municipal politicians to address issues under the jurisdiction of the others such as the provincial or federal government. How will you focus on municipal issues and determine when to advocate to other levels of government?

Having a plan for advocacy helps identify problems, avoid surprises and increases chances for success. Influencing change to public policy can be difficult for those with limited power and resources. With research and community feedback, having a SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timing) strategy will help us identify if we can advocate other levels of government.

Q18. What type of homework have you done to prepare for being a member of Town Council?

I have been re-watching council meetings and reading various bylaws and legislation. I have also been talking to residents and business owners, asking them questions and finding out how everyone is feeling. There has even been a bit of scouring of social media to see what people are saying. I know the first year on council will be a steep learning curve, yet I love learning and meeting new people, and I believe I am ready for this challenge.

Q19. If elected, what do you think your first 90 days looks like?

The first 90 days will be critical in collecting information. I will be meeting key members of our community by attending the gatherings and events as well as reaching out directly to other community leaders. My main goal is to listen and understand. There will also be strategic planning and meeting of the new council members to assess the current needs and concerns. Even touring facilities to learn about the buildings and services, increasing my knowledge of the valley.

Q20. How have you already been volunteering or serving in the town, and have you had any experience sitting on other boards?

Volunteering brought me to Drumheller for the Loud as Hell music festival in 2014. I fell in love with the valley and the people here, becoming a resident less than a year later. I've continued this position over the years while also participating in multiple fundraising and community events for various organizations. I currently sit as Treasurer for the Big Country Anti-Violence Association and as the Vice President and co-founder for the Badlands Pride Association. I am passionate about being part of the change and love being part of an enthusiastic team.

Q21. Given that our summers are getting hotter and drier, and we live in a semi-arid landscape, what town activities/initiatives will you implement to combat anthropogenic climate change?

The extent of the climate crisis makes it feel overwhelming for where to start. I would need to take a look at our current policies to see where we are at. Some ideas would be to set local emission goals, set climate-smart agricultural practices and even look at transit ideas for small communities to make it easier to live without cars.