



City of Peoria District 2
City Council Candidate Surveys
Spring 2021 Election

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF GREATER PEORIA

City of Peoria District Council Candidate Survey

Charles V. Grayeb 2nd District

- 1. What do you see as the top three issues in District 2? How will you work with the other members of the Council to address these issues?**

Public safety, code enforcement, and rebuilding dilapidated infrastructure are the three priorities. We need to collaboratively produce a budget with a human face.

- 2. What are your recommendations for spending priorities, revenue opportunities and/or spending cuts? For instance, in addition to addressing the revenue shortfalls caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, how would you deal with the pressing issue of spending on police and fire pensions?**

The areas listed above must be our North star for spending priorities. We need to redouble our efforts to insure that our State Lawmakers adopt meaningful reforms in Springfield. We also must let our federal representatives know that a Stimulus Bill (to aid States and Municipalities) is necessary. Automatic colas are unsustainable for pensioners, and adjustments must be made, consistent with the law. The decades long irresponsibility at the State Level, starting with the Edgar Ramp, must be addressed. I asked for a special meeting with our State Lawmakers during the 2020 budget deliberations. This meeting will occur in early 2021.

- 3. Please describe what you believe are the most important qualifications to serve as a District Councilperson and how your previous paid or volunteer experience has prepared you to serve.**

As a 33 year veteran of the Peoria Public Schools—as both a teacher and administrator—I quickly learned the primacy of politics and how it can be an ennobling experience when harnessed for the benefit of people! As the successful owner of a small business since 1986, I learned the need to be nimble and adjust to changing economic environments.

- 4. Please explain how you will provide information to the public regarding City operations and Council decisions? How will you reach out to your constituents for input? For instance, how will you provide for transparency in the upcoming redistricting process?**

Several topics are being commingled here. I always communicate with my constituents on a daily or weekly basis—even during The Pandemic. Various media are used. One

platform that is helpful is my Facebook Page. News releases from our City and reporting by our Fourth Estate instrumentalities are vital as well. Once the vaccines are administered, we will go back to in- person meetings as well, although we have had some Zoom and outdoor meetings this Fall.

Charles V. Grayeb

12/26/20

Date

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF GREATER PEORIA
City of Peoria District Council Candidate Survey
James Kemper 2nd District

1. What do you see as the top three issues in District 2? How will you work with the other members of the Council to address these issues?

1. **A chilling economic climate**, exacerbated by the pandemic, has hurt our City's ability to attract new employers, grow jobs, and build a reliable growing tax base.
2. During the next 4 years, the City will be facing **unprecedented budgetary constraints** as the unfunded pension payments will force reductions in basic services.
3. **We have the opportunity** to leverage the positive aspects of our City to inspire creativity and growth. Peoria offers world-class healthcare services, a thriving arts culture, and park district with numerous programs and landscapes. These are some of the assets that set us aside from comparable sized cities.

The members of the City council should address these issues through taking the steps described in my responses to the questions below. An open dialogue among City leaders, citizens, and civic organizations is critical to leading the City forward.

2. What are your recommendations for spending priorities, revenue opportunities and/or spending cuts? For instance, in addition to addressing the revenue shortfalls caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, how would you deal with the pressing issue of spending on police and fire pensions?

Public Safety - I support and believe we should bring to bear more resources for the Resident Officer Program. Incentivizing City Police Officers to live in our heritage neighborhoods provides stability and investments that pay dividends in community relations.

Pension issues - It is imperative for the City to acknowledge the pension shortfalls that threaten the long-term economic stability of our community. We must liaise with Springfield and union leadership to address the structural impediments to adjusting and resolving the tensions between the promises made by past leaders and the economic realities of today.

Infrastructure - The recent local investments in streets and sidewalks in the Warehouse District have transformed my experience of those spaces, as a consumer. I live near Downtown and work Downtown; the City's investments have opened up parts of the City that many had not explored. I worked directly with Kert Huber many years ago to revive

401 Water, currently work on multiple projects in the Warehouse District and clearly understand the challenges and the opportunities. As a City Councilman, I would seek similar opportunities to expand our citizens' experiences of our community.

I have the background and experience to actively pursue development on Main Street, University Sheridan Triangle and Knoxville. These corridors of commerce were bustling at one time. I propose to restore the luster!

The north-south corridors should connect and unite Downtown, north Peoria, and Dunlap. I propose to make them more appealing by addressing critical transportation infrastructure needs, while also focusing on aesthetics, like adding trees and burying unsightly power lines. Incentivizing developers to build denser store fronts following a form-based code will discourage large parking lots and create beautiful user-friendly environments which will appeal to the neighborhoods and commuters.

Main Street can be revitalized further by providing direction and support in the rehabilitation of the structures that were once stunning. Spaces between these buildings should be promoted to follow the form-based code with parking in the rear allowing a contiguous sidewalk storefronts. Utilizing our city codes to create new opportunities will help our City grow. More businesses mean more jobs.

New developments should look into the future while respecting the past. High speed internet, charging stations, solar and sustainable water management such as permeable pavers and rain gardens are a must to make sure our City's children are set up for future success.

Economic Development - There are many tools at the disposal of developers that are uniquely suited to Peoria's challenges. Historic Preservation Tax Credits, Business Opportunity Zones, and other programs can encourage investment, but we also need local leaders who will doggedly chase growth. I brought my business to Peoria and will be that same cheerleader for other businesses to locate in this community.

3. **Please describe what you believe are the most important qualifications to serve as a District Councilperson and how your previous paid or volunteer experience has prepared you to serve.**

I am the only candidate running for the 2nd District who manages and leads a business and I would be the only Veteran who has served his/her country on the City Council. I recognize that the health of our business community is directly tied to the health of our city and our district. When our businesses are strong, employees can proudly earn a good wage, local governments can provide needed services, and the City and the population are encouraged to invest in long term projects.

Further, we need rational leadership in the 2nd District. There are many emergent challenges ahead for the City of Peoria. We need a steady hand to lead this district and our community rationally through these challenges. Having led large development teams across the country I have often been the ameliorator between opposing interests which includes: City Governments, Federal Institutions, Neighborhoods, Unions and Developers. I am the best candidate to provide that sensible and sensitive leadership.

Finally, my particular experience in urban infrastructure and development provides me with the tools to see the bones of our City, and the skills to craft creative solutions building on that structure.

4. Please explain how you will provide information to the public regarding City operations and Council decisions? How will you reach out to your constituents for input? For instance, how will you provide for transparency in the upcoming redistricting process?

The current leadership of the City is struggling to communicate a clear long-term strategy for the future of our City. That uncertainty frustrates our residents and gives potential new residents cause to look for alternatives. Our City leaders have roles to provide a strong vision that attracts people and business. To this end, a City leader should:

Act as an umpire to recognize and call out our current state of affairs. Our City's financial uncertainty will continue to jeopardize our future. This issue must be met head-on with full transparency.

Publicly recognize and cheerlead the successes in our community. This work builds excitement and gives others the encouragement to invest in our community. In the wake of the pandemic, there are many lessons to be learned - one is working from home. Although overburdened by taxes, our cost of living and quality of life can be marketed to groups of people who no longer go to work and live in expensive cities. Peoria is a great alternative.

Listen to existing businesses and civil servants to understand what the City might do to help them thrive.

Open lines of communication with, and seek counsel from, citizens and community organizations.

All of these objectives will be met through a variety of media and venues including town halls (hopefully, in-person instead of virtual, soon), social media, city council meetings, one on one conversations, and other public forums.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF GREATER PEORIA

City of Peoria District Council Candidate Survey

Peter Kobak 2nd District

1. What do you see as the top three issues in District 2? How will you work with the other members of the Council to address these issues?

#1 Poverty & Economic Opportunity

The poverty rates for 61604 and 61606 are nearly 3x as high as those in the northern ZIP codes of the City of Peoria; and these statistics have only become worse due to the COVID-19 pandemic. If elected, I will ensure that our rebound from the pandemic prioritizes our local businesses over out-of-town corporations and big box stores. I will also push to provide support for those who are most in need. I will advocate for the creation of a Land Bank, which would convert vacant land and properties back into productive use by local owners. While Peoria Public Schools are a separate unit of government, I will use my experience working for the school district to forge better connections between the City and the schools to support the students—so they can become future homeowners, entrepreneurs, and leaders of the 2nd District.

#2 Public Safety

We need to reimagine public safety by addressing the root causes of crime. Doing this helps prevent crime before it happens. I will work to create Public Safety Opportunity Zones, which direct City resources to neighborhoods with the highest crime rates and most police contact. I will work with other elected leaders and our community partners to implement Community Navigators, who are social workers, counselors, and outreach staff that work alongside or instead of police officers to respond to nonviolent crimes and provide support, such as housing resources or harm reduction.

I believe that for our Police Department to be effective, we need to improve Police-Community relations. We can do that by strengthening the Police Community Advisory Commission, which would provide citizens the ability to voice their concerns or complaints about Police interactions.

#3 Strong Neighborhoods

For the 2nd District to see progress, each individual neighborhood must see progress. I will advocate that we should reinvest in existing neighborhoods, instead of building new ones in corn fields. I oppose the annexation of new land and will advocate that City staff prioritize the core historic neighborhoods of Peoria. I will reduce red tape for small-scale developers who are improving the homes and businesses of the neighborhoods that they live in.

I will work with Council members to ensure that, as the State of Illinois provides funding for reconstructing West Main Street in the coming years, the investment encourages visitors and residents to explore other areas of the 2nd District along Sterling Ave, Sheridan Ave, and University St.

2. What are your recommendations for spending priorities, revenue opportunities and/or spending cuts? For instance, in addition to addressing the revenue shortfalls caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, how would you deal with the pressing issue of spending on police and fire pensions?

I will advocate that the City of Peoria transition away from Line Item Budgeting to Performance-Based Budgeting. In our current system of Line Item Budgeting, we cut 10% from this department or add 5% to that department during budget season until we balance the budget. Under a Performance-Based Budgeting system, all City programs are evaluated by how well they accomplish the City's goals. The City Council worries less about the line items and focuses more on setting priorities and ensuring we are measuring the success of our efforts. In the end, we fund more of what works and less of what doesn't.

In addition to improving our budgeting process, I will specifically advocate for the following:

Spending Priorities

I will prioritize spending on programs and services that have been proven to 1) keep Peorians safe, 2) create equity by supporting those who have been left behind, and 3) create economic opportunity for small businesses and local startups.

Revenue Opportunities

We should prioritize raising revenue by growing our population and increasing the income and wealth of our residents. I will champion policies and personally work to recruit residents to live in the 2nd District, with the goal of filling vacant homes, growing locally-owned businesses and stabilizing property values.

As we grow our population, we should also seek ways to increase the efficiency and outcomes of existing city services and programs. When I worked on the City's Innovation Team, I led trainings that empowered staff to build new skills and institute new processes that saved time and money for Peoria taxpayers. I will continue to advocate for these trainings and work with staff to empower them to increase the value of what the City of Peoria can deliver for its taxpayers.

Finally, I will advocate for City Hall to complete due diligence on acquiring the water company, which has the potential of lowering water rates and investing more money back into Peoria's public infrastructure.

Spending Cuts

We should cut programs that do not advance equitable goals of the City's strategic plan. The strategic plan should be informed by our entire community. Because our campaign has built grassroots support, I am not beholden to any one interest group and will not hesitate to cut something that is not delivering results for Peorians.

Sometimes, cuts may cause the end of some positions in City Hall. When that happens, I will advocate that city management seek to find new opportunities for staff, rather than letting them go. Our public servants are City Hall's most valuable asset, and we should ensure they have the skills and opportunities to continue serving Peorians as best as possible.

3. Please describe what you believe are the most important qualifications to serve as a District Councilperson and how your previous paid or volunteer experience has prepared you to serve.

#1 Understanding of government

To make a difference and make good on their promises, City Councilpersons must understand how City Hall runs — what City departments actually do. City Hall has the ability to improve the lives of Peorians, but there are many things it doesn't have the power to change.

I worked in City Hall on Peoria's Innovation Team, where I collaborated with nearly every department in the City to make government more innovative and efficient. From the Police Department to Public Works, I know what the City's employees do on a daily basis and how all of City Hall can do more with what it has. I've also worked at Peoria Public Schools and the Peoria Park District and have learned what other units of local government are doing well and how all of our institutions can work together to bring more progress for all Peorians.

#2 Experience with and understanding of the community

A District Councilperson must be a vocal and unabashed advocate for the residents of their District. They can only do that if they have taken the time to listen and understand the residents who live in the District's neighborhoods.

I really enjoy spending time with the neighborhood and community associations that make up the rich fabric of the 2nd District. I've served on the board of the Moss Bradley Residential Association, have been a representative to the West Bluff Council, and have volunteered and been a member of Renaissance Park Community Association. I helped build a stage in the West Main Street Community Garden that was destroyed in 2020, maintained flowers in public planters, raised money for our neighborhood food pantries, and volunteered to shovel sidewalks in front of local businesses after snowstorms. I've been a renter and am now a proud homeowner. I

have been to every public school and park in our district and have seen their potential as well as their challenges. I get excited to explore our new restaurants and take pride in knowing all the neighbors who live on my street.

My campaign is driven by grassroots organizing. With the help of volunteers, we have already knocked on over 2,000 of our neighbors' doors to have had substantive in-person conversations about the issues that are most important to them.

#3 Vision

From racial inequity to poverty and homelessness, Peoria faces too many great challenges for a Councilperson to maintain the status quo. For our City to see progress, a Councilperson must have a vision for how our shared future can be better.

I strongly believe that Peoria's best days are ahead of us and that we can be a model city in America for addressing institutional racism, reimagining public safety, revitalizing neighborhoods, and combating climate change. That's why my platform isn't just about cutting this program or raising that fee, but about fundamentally improving how City Hall works. I am advocating that we increase transparency by making City data public and accessible, build a budget based on what has been shown by the data to work, and implement new programs (like a Land Bank, Public Safety Opportunity Zones, and Community Navigators) that are based on the greatest needs of our residents.

4. Please explain how you will provide information to the public regarding City operations and Council decisions? How will you reach out to your constituents for input? For instance, how will you provide for transparency in the upcoming redistricting process?

#1 Digitally — Digital tools connect us instantly and have a wide reach. I am already using and will continue to use the most popular social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, NextDoor, and TikTok) to share information and gather feedback. In addition, I will email businesses, neighborhood associations, and constituents (who have opted in) with updates.

#2 In Person - While digital tools are cheap and reach many people, there is no substitute for in-person conversations. I will attend neighborhood and community association gatherings, meet individually with residents, and continue to meet new neighbors and catch up with old ones by attending public events like Taste of Bradley, and the Moss Avenue Sale, and First Fridays at the Sunbeam Building.

Here's how gathering feedback would look using the upcoming redistricting process as an example:

1. First, I would sit down to write an explanation of the redistricting process and what is at stake and formulate questions to help solicit relevant and constructive feedback.

2. Then, I'd post the information and questions on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, NextDoor and TikTok, as well as email neighborhood associations and residents.
3. In upcoming neighborhood association meetings, I would make a point to share the same information and ask for feedback in person.
4. Finally, I'd pursue opportunities to spread the word through news interviews or speaking at local community events.
5. As feedback came in and the redistricting played out, I would repeat these steps to keep constituents informed on the latest updates.
6. When the redistricting process is completed I would send a final message to explain how feedback was incorporated, how it played out, and what it means for the residents of the 2nd District.

Peter Kobak

1/11/2021