



City of Peoria District 3
City Council Candidate Surveys
Spring 2021 Election

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF GREATER PEORIA

City of Peoria District Council Candidate Survey

Lawrence J. Maushard 3rd District

1. What do you see as the top three issues in District 3? How will you work with the other members of the Council to address these issues?

We first need attention to relatively simple fixes like adequate street lighting, speed bumps on neighborhood streets, and sidewalk repairs. Clear visible improvement in these three areas will display renewed attention by city hall to the East Bluff, neglected for decades. Focus on these topics will build trust in the city by the residents, which has been sorely lacking because of official neglect for decades. I would make common cause with other officeholders from similar underserved districts to bring infrastructure equality throughout the city.

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 would seriously pursue budget cuts to the police department, aka Defund the Police. Does Peoria really need the number of uniformed police in comparison with other similar size cities? I believe the police department receives the most city budget revenues in comparison to other local needs. I would begin by taking those savings and investing in reopened fire department stations. I would also replan the city's commitment to ending homelessness with a new plan to reorganize existing social service organizations based on the national model in Rockford, Illinois, which has seen great success.

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.

The most important qualifications have less to do with councilperson's CV and more to an obvious commitment to improving the district in question. Of course, the candidate's past will

show what kind of efforts and time they have dedicated over the years to their communities. A willingness to listen and act based on the residents concerns are also critical. My career as a writer and journalist internationally and here at home has well prepared me for a term of service to the residents of Peoria's 3rd district.

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?

I will communicate by regular daily updates & interactions on my Facebook page & city web site. I also will hold monthly town hall style public meetings to directly hear & engage with resident concerns. The best communication always is face to face, even in a pandemic. Mask up and social distance required.

Lawrence J. Maushard

1/11/2021

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF GREATER PEORIA

City of Peoria District Council Candidate Survey

Timothy Riggenschach 3rd District

1. What do you see as the top three issues in District 3? How will you work with the other members of the Council to address these issues?

The top three issues for the Third District are:

(1) Neighborhoods. This includes continuing the revitalization efforts in the East Bluff. This includes the East Village TIF (EVGC) which has generated over \$500,000 enabling nearly 100 homeowners to make improvements to their homes and supporting Peoria Opportunities building of 30 new residential units for affordable housing. This includes crime and safety issues by adding to our Residential Police Officer program to aid the neighborhoods.

(2) Jobs and economic growth. We continue to look to the future and Natural Fiber Welding is a prime example of a cutting-edge company setting up shop in Peoria and the Third District. Working with Greater Peoria EDC to encourage supply-chain providers for the medical community, traditional manufacturers as well as our educational institutions. Part of the TIF proceeds from the EVGC will go to support vocational and career training in Peoria Public Schools.

(3) Financial integrity. Now more than ever the city must be diligent as we restructure the organization, have a consent decree with the Federal Government regarding the CSO and the pension deadline is looming.

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?

It is more important than ever to be realistic with our citizens as to what the city does. We are in the midst of a restructuring at City Hall. Early retirements will most likely see multiple department heads leave. The institutional knowledge of running the organization will be challenged. I have suggested a Blue Ribbon Commission made up of representatives from business and labor, Home Owner Associations (HOAs) and Neighborhood Associations (NAs), groups such as the League, as many diverse opinions as we can fit in a socially distanced setting to realistically look at the pension debt, the day to day operations of the city and get buy in from all corners of the community as to our shared priorities.

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 believe that my tenure as the incumbent leaves me uniquely qualified for the challenges of the next four years. I have bridges built with the County, School Board members and the Park District that are critical in being an effective council member. I have a track record of meeting with HOAs and NAs and honestly delivering the news, good, bad or ugly. My financial background (Merrill Lynch) gives me credibility to face the financial challenges in a realistic manner. My wife and I are proud Peorians and all five of our children are graduates of or are attending Peoria Public Schools. I have a deep and vested interest in making our city sustainable for the next generation.

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?

This is a question to which the answer is always evolving. We cannot rely on the newspaper, radio and TV to get the message out. I go to every HOA and NA meeting that I am invited to attend. The city has a social media presence that is growing and maturing. I attempt to reach out in any and every acceptable manner and utilize the leaderships of HOA/NAs to reach their members. My experience has found town hall meetings are not the most effective way to reach out although they can be effective if tied to specific topics. Also, responding to texts, calls and emails is always critical.

Timothy D Rigenbach

January 8, 2021

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF GREATER PEORIA

City of Peoria District Council Candidate Survey

Gale Thetford 3rd District

1. What do you see as the top three issues in District 3? How will you work with the other members of the Council to address these issues?

The top three issues for District 3 are maintaining neighborhood safety, repairing aging infrastructure, and retaining/supporting existing business to maximize jobs and provide for the basic needs of the citizens of District 3. It is imperative that we continue to emphasize the importance of neighborhood policing particularly in the East Bluff, but also in areas of the District that are not yet experiencing issues as a preventative measure. And broken windows do send a message of neglect therefore there must be increased attention paid to programs available to property owners to repair their homes and an emphasis on taking care of our aging infrastructure before we invest in new streets and sidewalks. Finally, we must re-energize those businesses in particular which have been impacted by the Pandemic restrictions. We can't leave these businesses to fend for themselves—they offer jobs and services that are important not just to the 3rd District but also to the City as a whole. One councilperson can't accomplish anything by herself. It would be my job to educate other council members on the importance of these issues to the vitality and growth not just of the 3rd District but to the entire City. I have a track record of gathering consensus. It happens when relationships are developed, trust is secured, and your peers respect that what you are advocating for is truly in the best interests of the District and the City.

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?

Spending priorities in the wake of the Pandemic need to be focused first on shoring up our existing businesses, and getting them back on their feet. This is a sizable portion of our tax base and the jobs they offer are important to the livelihoods of our citizens. With respect to revenue opportunities, Peoria's leadership needs to capitalize on the availability of outside/external funding. Millions of dollars of federal, state, and private funds are available for those municipalities and entities that make efforts to obtain such funds. And Peoria has developed a reputation of not welcoming new business or adequately supporting existing business, an attitude which has benefited the tax base of sister communities such as East Peoria or Peoria Heights. This is a product of unfortunate attitudes and unfortunate policies of Peoria and its current leadership. We need positive, independent change in Peoria. The City of Peoria must reverse that difficult reputation and that reality by being more

accommodating to businesses that are creating jobs and enhancing revenue for our community.

Regarding police and fire pensions, unfortunately the General Assembly establishes parameters of the pensions and local governments are then responsible for paying those pensions. To address those skyrocketing pensions, the Council and its City Manager should attempt to work with the police and fire unions to get the pension responsibilities under control. This must be a collaborative process, not an edict from the Council. The Council should also more actively lobby local legislators to provide relief from ever-higher pensions, as the Council itself has limited power in Springfield. What the Council should not do is continually raise taxes on local residents to pay for higher pensions. Peoria can't tax its way out of this problem. Nor should the Council continue to downsize the police and fire department to cover those costs. Peorians need public safety protection. Resolving these budgetary problems should be a priority for the next Council.

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.

The most important qualifications one needs to serve as a District Councilperson are being able to function as an advocate for the District and its needs with an independent voice. A District councilperson must be an advocate for that District, while understanding the needs and concerns of the entire City. As a District representative, I will communicate to the other council members that serving the needs of each District will not only make the Districts stronger and more viable, but also make the entire City stronger and more viable as well. And that also means you must be open to supporting the attendant needs of other districts when asked. I have had the honor of serving as a District Council member for 8 years previously which is about as good a preparation as one could have. But I have since developed additional expertise as an elected Trustee for Illinois Central College where I have further honed my budgetary and consensus skills and worked on behalf of a different constituency: the students, families, faculty, and staff of the College. I have also served on the Board of Directors for Heartland Health Services the last five years, working for the medical care needs of our most underserved, advocating for the purchase of the former Kroger Plaza by Heartland to not only allow for Heartland's expansion but also to assist the East Bluff by not allowing the Plaza to become vacant and hopefully attracting other businesses and services for the neighborhood. In addition, as a Heartland Board member, I have been pleased to support the repurposing of the former Midtown Plaza as a first class OSF and Heartland medical facility serving not just the East Bluff and the 3rd District, but the City as a whole. All of these efforts have further strengthened my advocacy skills and demonstrated my commitment to the health and well being of the City.

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?

In this age of internet and social media, it seems appropriate to post information regarding important decisions made or contemplated by the Council along with pertinent information helpful to citizens of the 3rd District. I already have a presence on Facebook and plan to expand that outreach on other social media platforms once I'm in office. I think a monthly newsletter would be in order and I would like, when the restrictions of the Pandemic allow, to have a regular coffee hour, at some convenient 3rd District business, to foster the exchange of ideas and get to know some of the neighborhood issues better. Current Council members Cyr and Montelongo have conducted these informal meetings with great success, and I'd like to bring similar sessions to the Third District. When safe from the Pandemic, I'd also like to regularly meet with various neighborhood groups to get to know or get reacquainted with the many neighborhood leaders and the issues of the 3rd District. As to any redistricting efforts, such coffees, neighborhood meetings, and postings could provide information on the process which, in light of the difficulties of the 2020 Census, may not happen quite as quickly as in previous redistricting cycles. I pledge to oppose any gerrymandering when new districts are drawn. I will fight to keep the districts compact, contiguous, and respectful of neighborhood boundaries.

Gale Thetford

January 6, 2021