

CANDIDATE ANSWERS

STEPHANIE MEYER

CANDIDATE FOR MAYOR

BASIC QUESTIONS

Q2 What should be the core functions of city government?

The core and most fundamental function of any government is to provide for the safety and welfare of its citizens. This includes public safety, as well as infrastructure.

Q3 What are the secondary functions that you support?

I support quality of life issues that contribute to the overall well-being of our residents - including a robust parks and recreation program and economic development efforts that expand and diversify our city's tax base, while also providing additional employment, dining, and shopping options for our citizens.

Q4 Are there areas you feel the city government should not be involved with?

I believe that government should play as limited a role as possible in our residents' lives, while providing for their safety, welfare, and the overall stability of our community. Regarding city government, this includes many social issues that are most appropriately dealt with at the state or federal levels.

COMMUNITY CENTER

Q5 Did you endorse the proposed property tax increase to fund a Community Center? If you're on the council, did you champion it? Please be specific and cite examples of either your support or opposition to the project.

In the six years I've represented Ward Three, the number one issue I heard again and again was that folks wanted the community center. As such, I believe it was my responsibility as their representative to give them the opportunity to support it (I fought for a public vote consistently throughout the process, rather than a simple council approval). And I did support the project, because the western side of our city is lacking in the public recreation amenities we have in other parts of the city, and I believed it could have been a catalyst for future growth.

That being said, the voters spoke loudly and clearly, and I respect that vote. I think there are a number of factors that led to the failure of the center, but increased property taxes was certainly near the top of that list. If elected mayor, I would like to see Shawnee focus on and plan for economic development and strategic growth that will broaden our tax base, and spread out the burden of the cost of government beyond those of us who own homes.

Q6 What can be done in the future to more accurately gauge the appetite of voters when it comes to the potential of a tax increase?

While there were numerous city surveys that indicated support of the community center, many of these did not specifically identify the level of increase that would be needed (as that number was not known until later into the process). Clearly, we should do a better job of defining those parameters in our conversations with the residents moving forward.

Q7 Regarding the failing pipes that need to be addressed within the next several years, how would you tackle that and pay for it?

During the last budget cycle, the council supported allocating additional funding - in part from the reserves and in part from limited bonding capacity - to deal with the most severe pipe issues. This is a necessary and positive first step. Additionally, I believe that we need to focus our efforts on growing and diversifying our business tax base, which is the only sustainable means of covering this cost, without doing so on the backs of homeowners.

Q8 What is the proper use of these incentives? When is it improper? Is there a form of incentive you favor over another? Is there any type you find more troublesome? Be as specific as you can.

Public financing should be used only to the extent that it resolves special and/or unique considerations to making a site suitable for development. The rules that govern these financial tools are well defined, and when properly adhered to, are an excellent means of allowing the city to advance its economy, expand the tax base, and in the process, ultimately reduce the tax burden on our residents.

Our topography, for example, is very challenging in some parts of Shawnee, and providing an incentive that helps to level the playing field in terms of site costs could create a competitive advantage, while still serving to decrease our overall reliance on residential property taxes.

Miscellaneous Questions

Q9 Much has been made about new apartments and the proper balance between multi-family housing and single-family homes. What is your position?

There is a role for both types of housing in Shawnee. It is time we take a serious look at our Comprehensive Plan, which has not been significantly updated since 1987 and includes many sites for multi-family housing that don't make sense, particularly in the western part of the city, which has grown out since the plan was put in place. We must come together (with resident input) and identify the most logical areas for denser housing, while also providing certainty to homeowners about the future of neighboring land.

Q10 If elected, how would you keep yourself informed and up to date of the issues and concerns residents of Shawnee and/or your ward believe are important and should be addressed?

Much like my six years on council, I will work hard to listen to residents from all perspectives and all parts of the city, which will always help guide my decision-making process. Diversity of thought is vital to a successful and thriving community.

Q11 For Mayoral candidates: Mayor Distler incorporated regularly scheduled meetings with the public on both monthly, 'Third Thursdays,' and quarterly, 'Quarterly Q&A,' basis. If elected, would you maintain these meetings with the public?

Opportunities to meet with and hear from the public should absolutely be a top priority of any leader, and while the form may look different (I would like to see more opportunities outside of the traditional workday, or online options) I will absolutely continue that commitment.