

## **2023 City Commission Candidate Questionnaire**

**Candidate Name: Brad Finkeldei**

1. How long have you lived in Lawrence and what do you do for a living?

I have lived in Lawrence for 23 years consecutively, 25 years total.

2. What experience do you have that you believe qualifies you to be a strong city commissioner?

I have had the pleasure of serving on multiple boards and committees with residents from all over Lawrence prior to being elected to the City Commission, including serving with Ballard, Family Promise, and the Planning Commission. I learned a great deal about the challenges and strengths of our community through those interactions over 20 plus years. I believe the lessons I learned and the experiences I had prior to joining the commission help me bring our whole community together to create a healthier, vibrant and more just Lawrence. Finally, I believe my experiences as an attorney give me a unique perspective that is beneficial to the commission.

3. What do you believe is the City's role in supporting the development of high paying jobs and economic development in general?

Creating jobs is essential for Lawrence to remain a healthy and vibrant community, so it is essential that the City is a key player in economic development. A growing tax base allows us to hold the line on property taxes and is vital for funding critical governmental services. This is particularly important with Panasonic coming to our region. We need to continue to work to fully utilize the students educated by USD 497, Peaslee Tech, the University of Kansas and Haskell Indian Nations University to create an accessible, well-trained, and plentiful workforce.

4. In your opinion, what are the three most important issues facing the City right now and how would you propose to address them? If your solutions require additional funding, how would you propose to fund them?

We have an urgent and critically important need to expand our housing stock for all price points. We must continue to invest in affordable housing projects but we also must find ways to expand our workforce and market housing. This can be accomplished most readily through increasing density of housing throughout the community, developing projects on recently annexed land, as well as by annexing new land adjacent to our city limits. Completing the important work of re-writing our Development Code to reach our community wide housing goals is a critical step to get

increased density. In the meantime, we have funded through the CIP, utility and street projects that will open new areas to be annexed and housing built. We must continue this multi-prong approach to be successful.

5. What is your experience with organizational budgets?

In addition to serving 4 years on the city commission, I served 18 years on the Ballard Board and 10 years on the Board of Family Promise where I served as president and treasurer of both. I am also the managing partner of the law firm of Stevens & Brand, LLP where I oversee the budget and operation of nearly 60 employees.

6. (Two part) On a scale of 1-10, how important is creating new residential home ownership opportunities (not rental)? What resources should the City of Lawrence deploy to assist with housing creation?

Although home ownership is not for everyone, and nearly 50% of our community are renters, it is an important avenue for creating generational wealth and raising people out of poverty, so I would rank it as a 7. First, we must continue to expand our housing stock at all price points so people have options to purchase. Second, we must continue to support Tenants to Homeowners and Habitat for Humanity who provide lower income individuals a path to homeownership. Finally, we must create a community where all people feel comfortable so they want to buy a home and stay in Lawrence.

7. What are your thoughts on the City's response to the homelessness issue and/or the current version of the *Community Plan to End Homelessness*? Does anything stand out that you would change, add, or delete?k,.

Prior to 2023, the city of Lawrence never provided direct services to the homeless. In response to a growing need and the inability of non-governmental entities to handle the issues of homelessness facing our community, the city commission dedicated dollars and resources and stepped into the emergency sheltering space as their portion of the community's goal to reach functional zero. I like the city's commitment to be part of the solution to this nationwide problem. That being said, tackling this problem was new to the city and its employees and thus there has been significant struggles and growing pains along the way, which I certainly hope, and trust, we will improve upon as we continue this difficult work. Although the Community Plan to End Homelessness is not yet complete, I do support the direction it is heading and understand that it will take the entire community, not just the city to make significant progress on this difficult issue.