

2023 City Commission Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: **Justine Burton**

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

As a child I lived and attended school in Eudora then was moved to Lawrence at the age of 12. I left in 1973 and returned 1986; I am originally from this area.

Work part-time for Home Instead as a Caregiver. Founder/CEO of StopGap, Inc.

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

I don't know what definition you are looking for, for Strong, however, I respect everyone's opinions but, I don't follow the crowd.

Experience? life! I don't have a lot of initials behind my name. However, I have a bachelor's degree in human services. I worked for the Department of Children and Families, aka SRS, for 10 years, and Bert Nash Mental Health Center for 7 1/2 years.

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

This should be a top priority. Better paying jobs gives families more spending power, a sense of accomplishment and could increase the economy. The city's role should be to bring in more businesses, excluding fast food establishments and restaurants, to Lawrence with job advancement opportunities. There are developers who come wanting incentives to build businesses yet, I don't see much benefit to the community in the way of good paying jobs and job benefits.

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

Infrastructure: Some of our main streets are being repaired, which is good. At the same time, there are several neighborhood streets that have been needing attention for a long time. Also, the city has several empty buildings in the strip malls (this also includes North Lawrence and downtown in need of renovations and brought up to code. Prior to new construction the buildings that sit vacant should be developed.

Equity: This for me means working with each community in all directions to create and maintain wholeness by eliminating the food deserts. I have seen people and given rides to some that walk with bags of groceries one gentlemen lived in North Lawrence and another in East Lawrence close to the fairgrounds. People talk about building another grocery store in the downtown area when you have far East Lawrence and North Lawrence with none and some people do not have transportation to get to the stores. I like to have a conversation with store corporates

and find out the pros and cons of having a grocery store in these areas and doesn't need to be a Hy-Vee or Dillions.

5. What is your experience with organizational budgets? *Other than my own, On a grand scale none.*

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?

10. I know of a young lady who was raised and has lived in Lawrence her whole life, she has worked for an organization she retired from (still working part-time for the same organization) and raised children and grandchildren. But, because she was unable to find a place to live, she had to live in a motel for three years. This should not happen. I don't know all the circumstances, maybe bad credit, I don't know but it shouldn't happen. When housing is created, there are so many restrictions, red tape, that a person probably still wouldn't qualify.

Well, we have HUD and Tenants To Homeowners but what is the qualification processes? I would like to see individual homes not tract housing something that is just thrown together without thought just to appease someone.

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?

The city had a knee-jerk response to this crisis. It seemed more like out of sight out of mind attitude and no thought for the neighborhoods and their safety, nor the security and safety of surrounding businesses.

Some individuals do not want housing, as they have lived on the streets for years so just help them with what they need. Others, if they want help, may not know what resources are available to them. It is difficult as some may have mental health issues. Anyway, they cannot be forced to except housing they are people not a herd of cattle. But, we should have rules that apply to everyone that comes into our house.

Sometimes when these individuals are given bus tickets to Lawrence from surrounding areas, such as Franklin County, Leavenworth County, small counties that feel they don't have the resources. If this is the case, I feel those counties should reimburse Douglas County for services.