

2023 City Commission Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Mike Dever

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

I have lived in Lawrence for 38 years. I first moved to Lawrence in 1981 from the Chicago area as a college student, then worked in Lawrence after graduating until 1990. My family, including Lawrence native Lee Beth (Suder) and daughters McKenzie and Kylie returned in 1998. I started my own environmental consulting business, GuideWire Consulting in 1999 and have operated it out of Downtown Lawrence since 2006.

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

Having previously served on the city commission for eight years from 2007 until 2015, I believe I would bring experience and institutional knowledge to the position of City Commissioner. I also believe my 30 years of business management experience and work with governmental agencies provide me with the tools to carefully work with others to solve the diverse problems facing the City of Lawrence.

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

The City of Lawrence should use the appropriate economic tools available to compete for high paying, sustainable jobs. We must first create an environment where companies want to expand or relocate by having the appropriate commercial, industrial and residential lots available for expansion. We must also focus simultaneously on utilizing the resources we already have in place (Peaslee Tech, KU Innovation Park, University of Kansas) to attract those businesses to our community. Finally, Lawrence has invested millions of dollars to be ready for new potential business opportunities, and the leaders of the City must be ready to also offer the incentives required to continue to be in consideration for new opportunities.

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?

I think that the majority of citizens believe that the nationwide housing crisis has impacted Lawrence more severely than other communities of similar size in our region. We, as a community need to take a more comprehensive approach to the ongoing hurdles that are involved in serving the homeless community. The City's disjointed approach to public safety concerns created by poor management of the homeless population has impacted all residents. We need to reevaluate the current approach and create a model that the community and leaders can implement effectively. I would dedicate my full time and attention to the task and believe that with the proper level of effort and coordination, Lawrence can move forward with a better plan for everyone. Currently, there are many federal, state and local funds available to help Lawrence implement the programs I think will help fund whatever plan we implement, but the community must be involved in any long-term funding decisions we make if new funds are required. We must thoroughly evaluate how current funds are being allocated before we can discuss what additional funding is required.

5. What is your experience with organizational budgets?

I have been responsible for the management and operation (including budgets) of several private consulting companies for over 30 years. I have been an owner and operator of my own firm for 24 years. During eight years of Lawrence City Commission service, I was involved in many years of budgeting including the 2008 financial crisis. I believe I have a deep understanding of organizational and municipal budgets due to my prior private and public professional responsibilities.

6. (Two part) On a scale of 1-10, how important is creating new residential home ownership opportunities (not rental)?

I believe that there are housing shortages in many desirable communities, but the City of Lawrence has not kept up the supply of buildable lots in the City and Douglas County has restricted the ability to construct residential subdivisions in unincorporated areas. The combination of many other factors has led to a limited supply of residential homes in our area, and a larger than average increase in price due to demand. I believe the creation of residential housing, and a long-term plan to accommodate the needs of a growing community, must be a top priority for the City.

What resources should the City of Lawrence deploy to assist with housing creation?

We must streamline the permitting process and enable those who can bring the needed housing to Lawrence to do so with clear rules and consistent guidelines. Also, the City could facilitate the construction of housing in areas already served by utilities and services by waiving fees and streamlining permitting processes. The Community Plan to End Homelessness, which addresses many of the individual steps required to equitably disperse the local, state and federal dollars

available to proactively reduce some of the existing housing deficits, is another way for the City to assist with housing creation. The recent State of Kansas regulatory changes made in SB 17 would update the designation of and references to the Kansas Rural Housing Incentive District Act to the Kansas Reinvestment Housing Incentive District (RHID). Act. These changes could empower the City of Lawrence to provide tax incentives and construction bonds to help create the housing and infrastructure improvements needed to meet the needs of our Community Plan.

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?

I believe the Community Plan to End Homelessness is a long-term and ambitious document that dives deeply into solving the housing aspect of our homeless crisis in Lawrence. I was not involved in the creation of the document and have only read the 30-page plan. If elected I would dig deeper into the existing plan, assure that it is being followed and that the original principles were sound. However, we need a short-term plan to address the existing crisis. What I want to focus on as a commissioner, is the current and past response to the unhoused in Lawrence and identifying ways to better utilize the existing medical, mental health, drug addiction and short-term housing resources currently available. We need to assure citizens that the City has a specific near-term plan in place to urgently move unhoused individuals to existing shelter and transitional housing services. The current inhumane conditions the City has allowed to persist within our homeless and transient community is unsafe and unsustainable.