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Respondent

14

Anonymous

112:51

Time to complete

1. Name & office you are seeking *

Sandra Vasecka, Missoula City Council Ward 6

2. New development activity has an impact on home cost, access and ultimately affordability. In 2019 the City of Missoula Office of Housing and Community Development presented a city housing policy outlining several private and public sector regulatory reform and development incentives. As a Council Member, what specific policies would you pursue to address the community's housing shortage? *

I will continue what my voting record has established - that I am against over regulation and pro private property rights. I liberally accept zoning change requests as property owners and developers present them, and politely discourage some staff's conditions for approval. I believe that staff within Missoula government is behind schedule because of the large amount of paperwork and fees required to build on your own land.

3. Missoula is currently undergoing zoning "*code reform*"; what three changes would you propose for the update? *

1. Lower application fees, and as much as I dislike more law there should be a finite amount of time that an applicant should expect their request to be approved or denied. The amount of uncertainty is very costly.
2. Minimize setback, parking, and lot size requirements
3. Subdividing property you own and not intending to make a "subdivision" should not have to go through an intricate and timely process through council. Especially family transfers (because that's on my mind from a recent meeting). I don't know specifically how to make that part of the code more lenient; I am very open to suggestions on how to do so even if the MOR decides not to endorse me.

4. A quarter of Missoula's workforce lives outside Missoula County. It is estimated that the lost property tax from commuters is in excess of \$6.6 million per year. As a member of the City Council what would you do to encourage people to live within the City? *

Missoula city government spending is OUT OF CONTROL! I will continue to propose budget amendments that honor our needs and our debts, while taking out the erroneous spending for "wants". As a relatively young councilor, I have noticed many folks my age are discouraged about the future. I do not agree with that and believe there is hope and prosperity for all of us. The city council usually blames the legislature, or the courts, or other entities for lack of action. I believe that we need to have a "what CAN we do" attitude, rather than a "we CANNOT do this because..." attitude. I believe that with that philosophy more folks will try to live in Missoula. Property taxes can be controlled and the "rent" of owning your own property will be slightly relieved.

When my husband and I got married in 2018 we decided that we did not have buy a house right away (which was a huge mistake). We still looked though! The property taxes were/are insane and are the main reason why I ran for the first time in 2019. I think that Missoulians are concerned for their future and are losing hope. I believe I can brighten their outlook with a positive attitude. The past four years have proven that I can compromise with my colleagues and come to agreements.

I would also like to point out to constituents that the city is "land banking", and that increases everyone's property tax dollars, which increases the costs of housing in general. The more property that the city purchases from the private sector means the less amount of dollars that can be collected on the property tax roll.

5. State Law provides for tax increment financing (TIF) and urban renewal districts. TIF is used within urban renewal districts to combat blight and promote economic development. However, critics of TIF say that these urban renewal districts can be in place for many years, and TIF diverts property tax revenue away from schools and local governments. What changes to TIF statutes would you recommend, if any, to respond to citizen concerns? *

SB 523 would have done a great deal to narrowing the definition of "blight". I went to Helena multiple times to testify in favor of that bill. Here are the written notes I have of my testimony - I trust they give a accurate description on my opinion of TIF:

"I am here to support Bill 523 and assertively, yet politely disagree with the majority of my colleagues on the Missoula City Council, the staff of the Missoula Redevelopment Agency, and the Mayor of the City of Missoula in their opposition of this bill.

TIF has been misused and abused in my town. My ward, especially, has worn down streets and limited sidewalks. We have been asking the city for increasing walkability in my ward for years. All the while, across Russell St in the Old Sawmill District, because it is in an Urban Renewal District (aka URD), many funds go to projects to make the Façade look hip.

Unbeknownst to our constituents, the ones who fund these projects with their property tax dollars, funds are being diverted to banks, chain restaurants, and other corporate benefits.

This bill will put an end to over embellished ideals of "blight".

We need more dollars going to schools. We need more dollars going to roads. We need more dollars going to the overall improvement of everyday Montanans.

For example, my neighbor Westside Lanes and Fun Center owed \$64,714.62 in property taxes last year. \$41,686.93 was diverted to Urban Renewal District 2. That means that 64% of their tax dollars are going to projects that are determined by an unelected board of officials. That is almost \$42,000 from one establishment in my ward taken away from our schools, streets, sidewalks, police, fire, etc..

I am here because I am outraged by the very broad criteria to be "blighted" and to use property tax dollars for whatever that person on the board wants"

6. Do you support the City's anti-discrimination ordinance? How would you support Fair Housing for all in Missoula? *

Absolutely. I would go further to point out that I tried (unfortunately failed) to ensure equal opportunity and anti-discrimination when the county proposed and implemented a 5% bid preference for women and minority owned businesses. I believe that neither your sex nor the color of your skin should determine whether you get a job or are entitled to housing. In regards to supporting Fair housing for all in Missoula - limiting regulations will help all Americans have equal opportunity in achieving the goal of home ownership.

7. Property taxes are the primary source of funding for Montana cities. The City of Missoula's property tax rate has steadily increased over the last decade, putting additional financial pressure on the cost of housing. Given limited funding opportunities how would you prioritize city services? *

I would kindly suggest that "steadily" should be changed to "rapidly". Police, fire, and infrastructure are the priorities.

8. What, if any, local option tax(es) would you support? *

None. I would only support a sales tax if there was a guarantee in city charter and/or the MCA that property taxes would either be eliminated or drastically reduced.

9. As a member of the City Council what do you believe should be the top three priorities for the City? *

1. Property tax relief.
2. Sidewalks paid for with city funds, not property owners.
3. Stop borrowing so much money; we can't afford the interest on the debt.

10. Given the upcoming zoning code reform project, what are the two to three resources that you will use to make informed decisions? *

1. City staff; 2. Local developers; 3. Associations that are familiar with code compliancy

11. Treasurer's Name, Address and Phone Number *

Sandra Vasecka, PO Box 3953, Missoula, MT, 59806 (406)529-3851

12. Will you accept REALTOR® Political Action Committee campaign contributions? *

☒ Yes

☐ No

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.