

Pullman Chamber of Commerce

Candidate Questionnaire 2021

Pullman City Council Candidates



The Pullman Chamber Government Affairs Committee put together this questionnaire for the candidates in the Pullman City Council races. The answers to the questions appear as they were submitted by the candidates with no edits made. We encourage you to reach out directly to the candidates with any additional questions you might have. Responses are in order of Ward, then alphabetically by last name.



Name: Francis Benjamin - Ward 1 Candidate

Campaign website: BenjaminForPullman.com

Question #1: What experience do you bring to the table to make you a successful City Councilmember?

FB: The experiences which will make me a valuable and successful councilmember include past experience on Pullman's city council, my long-term involvement in the community and my understanding of other Washington communities. I have previously served 12 years on Pullman's city council so I have an understanding of council time commitments, what is expected and the processes.

Heidi and I have lived in Pullman for over 35 years, we raised our family here and are very involved in the community. My service as co-chair of Pullman 2040, on the boards of the Pullman Chamber of Commerce, Kiwanis, Pullman Community Council on Aging and the Palouse Knowledge Corridor gives me broad insight into the community and experience promoting community desires. My service on the board and as president of Association of Washington Cities provided connections and insights into other communities and how Pullman compares. As a result, I know areas where Pullman should improve and examples and resources to help us make these improvements.

Question #2: How do you view the relationship between the City Council and the community?

FB: The City Council is tasked with the development of policy and the city's community vision. This means the City Council should be planning long-term and enacting policies which anticipate the future. This requires engagement in the community and building collaborative efforts. Unfortunately, the City Council is missing opportunities.

The city is not consistent in supporting local businesses. When it comes to the downtown, the council is fixated on angled back-in parking and not business support. It has been over a year since businesses first requested, in the midst of Covid, the ability to utilize parking areas for outside safe eating locations. A year later, the city still doesn't have a path forward for businesses to do this. Other towns in the area figured out how to support businesses in this way, we should also.

Collaboration needs to be a focus. Communities who do economic development successfully have figured out that a city can't be successful if they work siloed off from other entities. Unfortunately, instead of building collaborations, I see barriers being put up in Pullman and silos created which produce duplicative effort and inefficiencies.

Question #2 continued:

FB: Some community members and groups are feeling that the city doesn't support everyone. For example, when the city was making decision on where to cut because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the city cut the senior center director position. This was done during the time when the community members most vulnerable to Covid and the most isolated from the rest of the community needed instead to experience community support.

Question #3: What would your top three priorities be if elected?

FB: Building a welcoming community

We need to build community together and work to make Pullman a place where everyone feels welcomed, connected, and "home". We have the opportunity to connect Pullman's incredible community members and experience their depth and experiences. It is in working together that we can identify the best path and accomplish more.

Downtown

We need a vibrant downtown which draws people and provides great shopping, entertainment and food experiences. To do this requires building a bypass to reduce truck traffic and noise on Main and Grand, investment in attracting and growing businesses and a communication platform which communicates city information and community events and activities.

COVID-19 Recovery

The pandemic has touched our community in a very wide and deep way. It has affected how our businesses operate, how our schools teach, job opportunities, medical and long-term care. Adjusting to the new normal will take time and as a community we need to support the build-back process.

Question #4: Would you support a City resolution to ban a local income tax, if it were to be determined such a tax was legal and permissible by the Washington State Supreme Court or the Washington State Legislature?

FB: Pullman is a border community which requires us to think in the context of regional competitiveness. Each tax decision needs to be balanced between funding needs, community ability and support, regional competitiveness and legality. For this reason, if it is deemed legal, I am open to evaluate a local income tax ban in the context of the city's total funding package.

Question #5: What policy changes or investments are necessary to encourage broader employment in Pullman?

FB:

Local Business Support: As we come out of the pandemic, we need to provide support to our businesses to help them adjust to the new normal, recruit and retain employees and operate wisely.
Improve Housing Attainability: Accomplish this through improved zoning which focuses on parking, accessory dwelling units and flexibility. Streamline processes and improve consistency so that developers are not delayed and know what is expected of them. Recruit developers to increase housing stock to reduce the current supply/demand issue.

Vibrant Downtown: Support the Pullman Downtown Association as it works with the city of Pullman, Chamber of Commerce, Washington State University and other partners to create a vibrant downtown which draws people and provides great shopping, entertainment and food experiences.

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Name: Al (Alan) Sorensen - Ward 1 Candidate

Question #1: What experience do you bring to the table to make you a successful City Councilmember?

AS: I have lived in Pullman since 1966. PHS and WSU graduate. I Operate Pioneer Insurance, I instructor in the CCB WSU teaching personal finance. Active in our community, on City Council 11/29/2005 to 12/31/2007 and 1/1/2014 to present. I am or have been a member of SEWEDA, Pullman Park & Rec, Police Advisory Board, PHS Boosters, Rotary, Pullman Junior Golf, PMGA, PRMA and many more. I understand the mechanic's of the city and I get things accomplished. I ask the tough questions and vote NO on

things that do not serve the majority of the community. I stand strong now and will always.

Question #2: How do you view the current relationship between the City Council and the community?

AS: Good, with COVID lot's of things have retreated but now, we are moving forward again with great progress. We as a council listen to our citizens. My process is to make decisions for the majority of the Residents of Pullman.

Question #3: What would your top three priorities be if elected?

AS:

1. Downtown Revitalization: the city needs to be at the Front and the Leader in is process. I have committed my time and energy to this process for years. We as a city need to mwork with our downton businesses to make this happen. The repair of sidewalks and streets is a big part. We need to keep the process moving as citizens I believe want this to happen. We have to break throught he barrier with our property owners and all work together for the better good of Pullman.
2. Economic Development: Focus on Downtown but absolutely include ALL of Pullman. We need to rebrand and start selling our City in new and innovated ways. We are moving in this direction with our recently hired Economic Development Director and we are in the process of hiring a Marketing person.
3. Infrastructure: Specifically streets, We need to get back in control of our declining steets. This will take time and money but we have to do it or we will be in such disrepair that it will be very difficult to come back from.

Question #4: Would you support a City resolution to ban a local income tax, if it were to be determined such a tax was legal and permissible by the Washington State Supreme Court or the Washington State Legislature?

AS: This all depends on what the a local income tax would be used for. I would need to have much more information before I make a descission. The will of the people is what I would follow. Community input would for sure be needed.

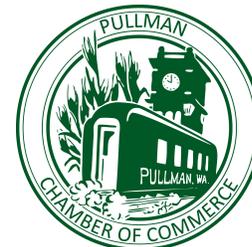
Question #5: What policy changes or investments are necessary to encourage broader employment in Pullman?

AS: Focusing on Pullman using our new Marketing person. We need to Promote Pullman in New and Fresh ways. This has not been the case in recent years through past channels. Now with the Economic Development Director and soon to be Maerketing Person we will be able to campaign and promote Pullman as iit should be. This will help in broadening our employment in Pullman

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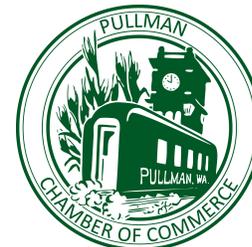
Name: Dan Records - Ward 2 Candidate

The Chamber did not receive a response from candidate in time for publication.

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Name: Megan Guido - Ward 3 Candidate

Email: meganguidoforcitycouncil@gmail.com

Question #1: What experience do you bring to the table to make you a successful City Councilmember?

MG: My professional experience includes 30 years working in marketing and communications for non-profits and healthcare organizations. I have served in leadership roles that utilize my relationship and consensus building skills and my strategic communications skills. My strengths are distilling complicated information and creating understandable messaging. My journalism background taught me to think about what the public wants and needs to know. I think a city council person needs to view their job through the lens of the public – what do citizens need to know, why

should they care and what is the impact on them.

I have a bachelor's degree in Journalism and a Master's in Public Administration.

I have lived in Pullman for most of my life with some time spent in the Seattle area. I'm passionate about Pullman retaining its desirable elements but also believe we must proactively plan for the future.

Question #2: How do you view the relationship between the City Council and the community?

MG: I am concerned that there is a perception that the city council and mayor are somewhat complacent, not forward thinking and afraid to make tough decisions. There is also a perception that there are very strong personalities that are difficult to work with and impede progress. We need strong leadership by both the mayor and councilmembers to set the priorities and course of our future, both short and long term strategies. Continuing attention to communication and transparency to the public will be essential. Additionally, the council needs to meet weekly to attend to the business of a growing city. If there is no business, then education, training or updates to the citizenry should take place.

Question #3: What would your top three priorities be if elected?

MG:

1. Downtown improvements/revitalization.
2. Responsible development that takes in to account our water supply and traffic and avoids urban sprawl. Affordable housing.
3. Review of codes to bring up to date and code enforcement.

Question #4: Would you support a City resolution to ban a local income tax, if it were to be determined such a tax was legal and permissible by the Washington State Supreme Court or the Washington State Legislature?

MG: Washington state has many taxes and we do not need a local income tax. This is really a national and state issue. If the wealthiest people in Washington and the country paid their fair share of income tax, cities would not need to look at levying a local income tax on its citizens. It's time everyone pays their fair share and not get away with using tax loopholes.

We could raise our local sales tax a tenth of a percent if needed.

Question #5: What policy changes or investments are necessary to encourage broader employment in Pullman?

MG: As we know, COVID has had a major impact on the service industry and Pullman is no exception. Service industry workers are demanding higher wages and better hours/more days off in a row, etc. While I understand this is financially difficult for business owners, some concessions must be made. We need owners of buildings in the downtown area to reduce their rents or temporarily waive rental fees while businesses start up to give them a fighting chance at success.

We must invest in the trades and work with schools and industry to train workers in fields such as electricity, construction, plumbing, concrete, solar, and wind. These positions are at an all-time shortage nationally and locally and the shortage is impeding growth in Pullman.

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Pullman School District Director Candidates



The Pullman Chamber Government Affairs Committee put together this questionnaire for the candidates in the Pullman School District Director races. The answers to the questions appear as they were submitted by the candidates with no edits made. We encourage you to reach out directly to the candidates with any additional questions you might have. Responses are in order of District, then alphabetically by last name.



Name: Nathan Roberts - District 4 Candidate

Question #1: What experience do you bring to the table to make you a successful School Board Director?

NR: I have four years experience as a School Board Director and 15 years living in our Pullman community. Professionally I've worked, taught, and believed in education throughout my adult life. I'm an advocate for the working people who need our schools to function well and provide our children with the best possible opportunity to become successful, fulfilled, and responsible citizens.

Question #2: What grade would you give Gov. Inslee for his response to the COVID-19 pandemic pertaining to schools and why?

NR: Governor Inslee has done the best job that he could do for the people of Washington State during this pandemic.

Question #3: How do you see yourself connecting small businesses with our community's education mission?

NR: Through encouraging more business mentors and professionals to participate in our mentorship programs and the larger curriculum development process. Gathering input on what skills to teach, especially at the High School level, is important to putting students on the path to success in their professional lives.

Question #4: In your ideal scenario, what mix of state and local funding should be used to operate schools? I.e., what portion of the school budget should come from state, and what portion from local funds?

NR: The state should provide basic education to every student regardless of their location or capacity to pay locally.

Question #5: What are your thoughts about mastery-based learning?

NR: Mastery-based learning is vital to educational continuity in our district and throughout our state. If we can achieve a level of interoperability throughout the district it allows students to share a common experience they take with them throughout their education. It also ensures through professional collaboration that we teach the highest quality and most up-to-date materials.

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Pullman School District Director Candidates



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Name: Carolina Silva - District 4 Candidate

The Chamber did not receive a response from candidate in time for publication.

Name: Amanda Tanner - District 5 Candidate

The Chamber did not receive a response from candidate in time for publication.