



## Candidate Questionnaire, Whitewater, WI Municipal Election, April 2, 2019

### Councilmember Aldermanic District 3: Incumbent – Christopher Grady

**1. What motivates you to want to become or seek another term as Common council member?**

I have lived throughout the Midwest and found this university town the best place to live. I have lived in my current home for 20 years and became interested in politics through the Starin Park Neighborhood Association where I am Past President. The issue of neighborhood preservation brought me to the city's zoning rewrite committee. Protecting the character of our neighborhoods while respecting the need for good student housing is paramount to the future of Whitewater.

Rather than having student housing take over the neighborhoods surrounding the university I have pushed for preservation in some areas, and redevelopment in others. As a result, the city now has districts where redevelopment is encouraged, others where zoning has made it advantageous to convert homes into student housing, and other areas where zoning discourages conversion.

Today, two issues confront Whitewater's future, good single-family housing, and a lack of retail shopping including a grocery store.

UW-W had consistent growth for many years, but now is showing a decline in enrollment. As a result there is an excess of student housing. The large number of single family houses converted to student housing has left Whitewater with a shortage of single family housing. I am currently a member of the Whitewater's CDA (Community Development Authority), who is responsible for sponsoring housing development and redevelopment in the city. There are low interest loans and grants available to repair and improve homes that are under-utilized.

Retail is the lifeblood of the community. A full-service grocery store along with other retail would allow residents to stay in Whitewater to shop rather than travel to other communities. I encouraged the redevelopment of the old sentry site when it became clear the university controlled the property.

I look forward to continuing to serve Whitewater.

**2. What aspects of your background will help you best represent the people of Whitewater on the Council?**

To be a good council member you need many skills.

- a. The ability to listen and not prejudge. Listening to what others say without trying to find the error in what they are saying leads to better judgement calls on issues. I have always listened to other points of view. I try to keep an open mind and understand where a person is coming from even if I don't agree with their point of view.
- b. The ability to take a stand and do the right thing, knowing some will not agree. I was appointed to the Landmarks commission and corrected the belief that the Landmarks Commission was



## Candidate Questionnaire, Whitewater, WI Municipal Election, April 2, 2019

### Councilmember Aldermanic District 3: Incumbent – Christopher Grady

responsible for the Birge Fountain. These are two different Whitewater committees and per the city attorney, the Birge Fountain committee has the responsibility for the fountain.

- c. Knowledge about city finances. My full time job involves managing a worldwide inventory for CaselH. This has given me knowledge about finances that most people don't have. Cities rely on borrowing to finance projects just like CaselH does with inventory. It is necessary to understand the difference between General obligation debt and debt used to finance the utilities. Both have a financial advantage, though overusing one over the other may cause the cities credit rating to decline which makes future borrowing more expensive.
- d. Knowledge of commercial and residential development. Whitewater's community development authority (on which I serve) is tasked with attracting new residential or commercial development (including a grocery store) to the city. This in turn increases the tax base and allows even better services to be offered to the public by the city. The CDA also is tasked to fight urban blight. We currently have an excess of student housing, some of which is not in good shape. The CDA can help homeowners repair and improve their homes.
- e. In this altermatic district, the representative must be able to represent single family residents as well as students. I have been an active member of the Starin Park Neighborhood association since its inception. This group has done a lot to protect and improve the character of the neighborhood. I was one of only two council members who voted for possible new student housing to be built just north of the campus. Having the students here is a major plus to the city. They bring youth and vitality that otherwise would be absent.

#### 3. **What part of Whitewater's resources are most likely to stand the city in good stead going forward?**

Whitewater is a great place to live and play. The fourth of July festival is one of the biggest in the area. Few towns our size have an indoor water park. A new band stand is going to be built in Cravath Lake park. A new splash pad will soon be built at Starin Park. The University has many cultural opportunities that no other city in the area has. The city provides services like free garbage pickup unlike many cities in the area, while still having some of the lowest tax rates around. Fifty miles east of Whitewater property taxes are nearly double what we pay.

#### 4. **Do you think the city should be doing more to encourage the sharing of roads in the city between automobiles and bicycles? If so what would you recommend?**

Whitewater has some bike lanes throughout the city. Most streets are not wide enough to accommodate bike lanes without giving up on street parking which is very heavy used in a university town. Where it makes sense, I support the development.



Candidate Questionnaire, Whitewater, WI Municipal Election, April 2, 2019

Councilmember Aldermanic District 3: Incumbent – Christopher Grady

**5. Do you think the city should be doing more to promote all-electric vehicles? If so, what would you recommend?**

In a city where the budget is as tight as ours is, adding infrastructure to accommodate electric vehicle charging is not possible. This infrastructure needs to be a public/private partnership with extensive study done on what is practical to do and what is financially possible to achieve.

**6. Should public locations like City Hall be encouraged to have signs in both English and Spanish?**

With the increase in the Spanish speakers here in Whitewater this should be done.

**7. Are you satisfied with the city's involvement in working with the University to choose the next chancellor?**

The city manager and common council have been invited to provide input into the selection. More importantly, the interim chancellor is showing a willingness to work with the City. This had been lacking.

**8. How do you think the relations are between the citizens of Whitewater and the Police department?**

My personal interactions with the police department have been very positive. I have heard of no major issues.

**9. What if anything should the city be doing to encourage the sort of downtown commercial and cultural activity to attract visitors and new residents to Whitewater?**

The CDA is tasked with improving the retail environment of Whitewater. Through grants and low interest loans they can encourage new development as well as revitalizing current structures. For the size city we are, Whitewater is low on retail opportunities. We heard from Walmart that they did not have as good a black Friday as they had hoped, partially because people shop in cities where there are multiple venues to choose from. We need to improve the breadth of the shopping choices here. Similarly, towns our size normally have more than just a Walmart for groceries. Delavan has three including Walmart.

**10. Is the proximity of agricultural land to the city something to be welcomed or should building be encouraged for the sake of the tax base?**

New development should not just look outward. There are districts of the city where redevelopment of the neighborhood may be more desirable than expanding the city limits.