



Candidate Questionnaire for Whitewater Municipal Election April 3, 2018

Aldermanic District 4: Lynn Binnie

What motivates you to want to become or seek another term as a Common Council member?

I'm currently completing my fifth term as a Councilmember, and believe that I've made a solid contribution to its work. I do my homework, not only reading all of the materials provided by City staff, but oftentimes doing further research on my own. I make substantive contributions to the discussion, and am anxious to consider new, creative ideas. Finally, I enjoy serving on the Council, representing my constituents, and having an influence on City services and policies.

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

My B.S. in Business Administration with a major in accounting together with over 35 years of experience managing nonprofit retirement communities have given me considerable applicable knowledge and judgment. I also served twenty years in total on the Boards of Directors of the Indiana Association of Homes and Services for the Aging and LeadingAge Wisconsin, including service as President of both organizations. I have learned a great deal about zoning and planning issues through serving for the past nine years on the Plan and Architectural Review Commission. Of course my tenure on the Council itself has provided me with a good deal of background that is useful in dealing with new issues. I believe that it is healthy for a council to have a mixture of newer and longer tenured members.

What role can the Council play in restoring a grocery store to Whitewater?

The Community Development Authority is primarily delegated the responsibility of attracting new businesses, such as a grocery store. Their Executive Director has made many contacts with grocers over the past two years, and unfortunately there have been few expressions of interest. I am not optimistic about our odds of attracting an outside company in the foreseeable future.

My wife and I were among the first members of the Whitewater Grocery Co., and I believe that the potential development of that co-op is our best hope. I've been very impressed by the commitment and hard work of the leadership of the organization. Although I would like for the Council to ultimately consider playing a supportive role in making the co-op happen, at

this point it's up to our citizens and residents of nearby areas to concretely demonstrate their serious interest.

The bottom line is that when we are successful in gaining a new store, whether a co-op and/or a traditional grocer, we residents will have to commit to supporting the store better than we supported Sentry in recent years. Meanwhile, we do have a few options for limited groceries other than Walmart, including Walgreens, Simply Convenient and other convenience stores, La Preferida, and La Tienda Mexicana San Jose.

What role can the Council play in maintaining and improving the quality of public education in Whitewater?

As is the case with most rural school districts in the state, our district has suffered a loss in student enrollment in recent years. That, of course, results in a loss of funding for the district, which makes for challenges in maintaining/improving the quality of public education.

The Council can play a role in attempting to attract/retain families with children to our community. The lack of a full-service grocery store is one barrier that we need to overcome. The continued growth in attractive employment opportunities is another factor. Businesses that work with our City Planner and Plan Commission in gaining approval for new construction or additions often comment that our process is much more efficient than that of many other municipalities.

We also need more good quality single family homes in price ranges from "starters" to around \$300,000. I have attended several meetings recently where we have heard from developers, bankers, and other interested parties about the unmet need and ideas for ways that the city might facilitate new housing development. We have heard that recently there have been prospective residents who have been unable to find suitable housing here, and ended up in another community.

Beyond the steps mentioned above, everything that we do to enhance the quality of life in our community will contribute to gaining developers' and prospective new residents' attention.

How can the retail environment in Whitewater be enlivened?

Our downtown is now healthier than those of many of our peers. In particular it has been great to see a thriving restaurant scene develop. The City Markets have brought more residents downtown, in addition to bringing out-of-towners into the city more often. Downtown Whitewater has worked hard and creatively on these kinds of events, and I have been supportive of the City's annual contribution to that organization. Tournaments at Treyton's Field of Dreams and the Discover Whitewater runs have brought more customers to town, as will the soon-to-be-constructed Fairfield Inn.

Attracting a larger population will, of course, enhance the retail environment. I also hope, though, that the loss of Sentry may have caused many of us longer term residents to be more mindful of the impact that our shopping habits have on the success of our retail establishments as well as the attraction of new ones. "Shopping local" does make a difference.

What can the Council do to improve town-gown relations?

The Council almost always has a UW-W student as a member, so we have the opportunity for first-hand input regarding student concerns and perspectives. We have also made a point of holding a Council meeting on the campus each year. The biggest University related concern that we've heard recently is the removal of parking meters on Prairie and Prince Streets, resulting in increased numbers of student/staff vehicles being parked on residential streets. There also have been concerns about the difficulty to locate parking for short-term visits to campus. The Council attempted to communicate these concerns to the appropriate UW-W staff, but very minor changes were made in response.

Recently I feel that we've made progress in preserving single family neighborhoods while offering a range of off-campus housing choices for students. Considerable high density development is occurring, as planned, between Prince/Tratt and Main/Starin Streets.

Town-gown relations will always include something of a balancing act. We want students to have a positive, fun experience in Whitewater, and to even consider making this their home after graduation, but we also need to encourage respectfulness towards the longer-term population that often includes children.

The relatively new Community Involvement and Cable TV Commission has student representation, and we are looking for input from those members as to ways we can enhance communication with and involvement of students in community life.

What would you do to encourage broader citizen participation in municipal government?

This is an area of focus for the relatively new Community Involvement and Cable TV Commission. The City is increasingly using social media to help the populace to be informed about local happenings, new initiatives, and opportunities for citizen participation in Common Council and the many commissions and committees. It seems that fewer municipalities even have municipal cable channels, so it is a plus that we still have the opportunity to broadcast various meetings. Eventually I expect we will also be live streaming.

What can the Council do to help give the public library the space it needs?

The Library staff and board have periodically given the Council updates on their space needs evaluations and plans. I think most of us are in agreement that there is a need for expansion and for updating the Library to today's technologies and the desire for a more comfortable "third space." The possibility of a joint venture was explored but did not come to fruition. Something along those lines might still be a possibility. Unfortunately, the City's debt is currently near the maximum prudent level, so a major Library project is probably still a ways away. The Finance Committee, of which I am a member, is currently working with a new financial consultant in developing long-range financial projections. By the conclusion of that project I believe we will have greater clarity in the potential timeline for the Library.

What can the Council do to promote gun safety in our community in the face of

inaction from Madison and Washington, D.C.?

Per State Statute 66.0409, "Local regulation of weapons," municipalities are preempted from passing any legislation regarding guns except to address the discharging of a weapon in the municipal limits or to regulate the construction or expansion of a shooting range. The Council could ask the Parks and Recreation Department to consider offering courses regarding gun safety. We could encourage the School District to communicate to parents the importance of finding out whether there is a gun in the home of a child their child is visiting, and if so, whether the gun is safely secured.

All of us can play a part in trying to make sure that everyone who lives here, particularly youth, is valued and respected. If we see or hear anything that raises concern that someone may intend to hurt others, we should immediately notify the Police Department.

What can the Council do to support the immigrant population of Whitewater?

Recently the Council established a task force on Immigrant and Latino Relations. I attended the meetings of that task force as a private citizen. We polled a number of immigrants, and in general found that they are happy with their life here and feel welcome. There were exceptions where people reported being stared at in stores or told to speak English. The task force discussed the idea of planning citywide celebrations that would help to share the cultures of other countries. Unfortunately, that idea has not yet come to fruition, but I believe it warrants continued effort.

We are fortunate to have an active English Language Learner program at the high school. The school district is sending bilingual communications to parents. The city will soon be introducing a new website, and the plan is to provide as much Spanish translation as possible. The City Manager already provides a video welcome in Spanish on the website.

It is important that we encourage all residents, including immigrants, to participate in the 2020 census, as this provides data that may assist the city in attracting new businesses, obtaining grants, and other funding.

How might public transportation in Whitewater be improved given the merger of UW-Whitewater and UW-Rock County?

Unfortunately, I do not anticipate that the merger will provide opportunities to improve public transportation. As you may know, several years ago the City assisted in funding an "Innovation Express" bus that traveled from Janesville through Milton and through Whitewater. In spite of efforts to increase utilization of that service, ridership was very low, and consequently the cost per rider was impossible to justify. I would hope that as there may be students taking classes on both campuses, there will be opportunities for facilitated ride sharing.

Although our local taxi service is not available 24/7, I believe that it fills the needs of most of our populace. It seems to me that the biggest unmet transportation need may be for those who do not drive and have medical appointments in Fort Atkinson.