

MainPAC Candidate Survey

2021 Kansas Elections

Q1-5.

Candidate Name: Lisa Larson-Bunnell
Candidate Email: llb4shawnee@gmail.com
Candidate Phone: 3145186427
Office Sought: City Councilmember
Office County: Johnson
Office City: Shawnee
Office District: 3

Candidate Rating: 94%

Q6. Political discourse in Kansas could be characterized as siloed and divisive. How do you intend to engage citizens and colleagues in potentially difficult conversations? (Available points: 1)

- A. If elected I will seek to find compromises when it is clear my constituents are divided. (1)
- B. If elected I will be loyal to the ideology associated with my party affiliation.

Candidate Answer: If elected I will seek to find compromises when it is clear my constituents are divided.

Candidate Comment: The city of Shawnee is large and our residents have nuanced views on many different issues. We are often portrayed as divided, and I think that is true to some extent. More so, I think our city is a reflection of the country at-large. We do have a fair amount of partisan tribalism, but anyone who believes they can fairly represent our residents by sticking to partisan talking points and philosophies is mistaken. I have spent my time on the council making sure different viewpoints are represented. I have even voted in ways that I would not have otherwise done except for the fact that I reached out to people with different perspectives who helped me understand the best path forward.

Q7. Which of the following statements best aligns with your stance on local elected officials making decisions for their communities, particularly local tax and revenue decisions? For information about Home Rule please see https://www.lkm.org/page/Home_Rule. (Available points: 2)

- A. Local elected officials should have ultimate authority in decision making for their communities, consistent with Home Rule. (2)
- B. Local elected officials should have limited authority in decision making for their communities. (1)
- C. Local elected officials should not have authority in decision making for their communities. Decisions should be made by the state.

Candidate Answer: Local elected officials should have ultimate authority in decision making for their communities, consistent with Home Rule.

Candidate Comment: Local elected officials should have ultimate authority on local tax and revenue decisions. We are the individuals closest to our residents and our communities. This control also allows us the ability to quickly pivot and make corrections where needed. However, I would caution that other policy decisions are better managed at the state and federal level. I was very involved in advocating for a non-discrimination ordinance in Shawnee. I saw this step as a last resort, as it is the type of issue that is better legislated by the state or federal government so we do not end up with inconsistent law throughout the state.

Q8. Do you support allocating additional resources specifically for implementing/expanding mental health programs?

(Available points: 1)

- A. Yes (1)
- B. No

Candidate Answer: Yes

Candidate Comment: We have a mental health crisis in the United States. For years, we did not adequately fund mental health facilities and treatments and at the same time have stigmatized mental health care to the point that people are afraid to have a mental health diagnosis. While serving on the City Council, I have consistently voted to increase our

mental-health co-responder availability. I have also voted in favor of zoning changes that have allowed mental health facilities and homeless shelters to be built within the city limits.

Q9. Which of the following statements best aligns with your opinion about transparency in local government?

(Available points: 1)

- A. Local government should be as transparent as is legally possible in all circumstances. (1)
- B. Transparency is important, but should be secondary to efficiency.
- C. There are some times when transparency is important, but there are other issues the public doesn't have the capacity to understand and transparency becomes less important.
- D. The people vote for a candidate because they trust them, so transparency is not as important for elected officials as for other public leaders.

Candidate Answer: Local government should be as transparent as is legally possible in all circumstances.

Candidate Comment: I believe local government should be transparent and accessible. To this end, I made the following recommendations at our April 26th council meeting (in no particular order): 1) Accept live public comments via Zoom for those who pre register. 2) Allow community members to submit WRITTEN public comments that are shared with the entire Council prior to the meeting and for those comments to become part of the meeting minutes. 3) Clarify and clearly offer the process for community members to request an American Sign Language interpreter. 4) Livestream of meetings including audio and video, not just audio. 5) Add a closed captioning option for live meetings and recordings. We have learned that people streaming on devices cannot always hear, or are not in a position to turn their volumes up. Closed captioning helps everyone.

Q10. Which of the following statements best aligns with your opinion about access to health care? (Available points: 2)

- A. Local government has a responsibility to support access to health care. (2)
- B. Local government in my area is currently meeting the community's access needs. (1)
- C. Local government has no role in health care.

Candidate Answer: Local government has a responsibility to support access to health care.

Candidate Comment: We know that access to healthcare is a strong social determinant of one's overall health and financial well-being. There are many barriers to access in our healthcare system. Some barriers relate to geography and others to funding. Both of these barriers can be mitigated by appropriate government programs. While a city may not have the budget to provide insurance for its residents, they can help by providing things like transportation as well as direct financial support for providers who care for uninsured and underinsured individuals.

Q11. To what degree do you believe that diversity in representation at all levels of government is critical to effective governing? (Available points: 1)

- A. Extremely Important (1)
- B. Neutral
- C. Not important

Candidate Answer: Extremely Important

Candidate Comment: Representation matters. Period. I have spent my time on the council mentoring community members throughout Johnson County who are interested in running for local office. I am excited to work with community members who come from different ethnic backgrounds, have disabilities, or are open members of the LGBTQIA community (e.g.). I will continue to foster these relationships and support diverse candidates as long as I am on the council and know that one day, it may be best for me to step aside so we can have a more diverse council in Shawnee.

Q12. Professional public entity staff are expected to bring expertise, research, and accuracy to assist elected officials in their work. These may include health professionals, legal experts, research librarians, school administrators and the like. Regarding these professionals, which of the following is generally most true?

(Available points: 1)

- A. It is the role of locally elected leaders to **support** the professionals who work in public service (1)
- B. It is the role of locally elected leaders to **scrutinize** the professionals who work in public service
- C. It is the role of locally elected leaders to **stay distant** from the professionals who work in public spaces
- D. It is the role of elected leaders to **closely manage** the professionals who work in public service

Candidate Answer: It is the role of locally elected leaders to support the professionals who work in public service

Candidate Comment: One of the biggest challenges on our current Council is when council members question the professional input of staff. This happens with some frequency, and it leads to very demoralized team members. Maybe we are unique in Shawnee, but we have magnificent staff. Their level of professionalism is demonstrated by their many accreditations and the fact that our city has been able to maintain a AAA bond rating. They are amazing! That is not to say the Council should not ask questions that may be pointed at times. We should not turn a blind eye when it is clear that staff is incompetent, but it is our job to make sure we have a strong city manager who can hire the best people possible.

Q13. Which of the following most closely aligns with your view of the role of local government in each of these policy issues? (Available points: 6)

- A. Very Relevant (2)
- B. Somewhat Relevant (1)
- C. Irrelevant
- D. Not Applicable

Issue: Climate Change

Candidate Answer: Very Relevant

Candidate Comment: The city's role in climate change is very relevant. We have the opportunity to pass local ordinances that allow our residents to do things like use solar panels or rain barrels. We can provide direct assistance to homeowners who make improvements to make their homes more energy efficient. We can pass codes that require builders to create energy efficient housing. We can require electric car chargers to be constructed in all city parking lots. These are just some of the things local governments should be considering as it relates to climate change, but there are many others.

Issue: Gun Safety

Candidate Answer: Somewhat Relevant

Candidate Comment: I believe strongly in common sense gun reforms. However, this is a very difficult area to legislate at the city level. This is particularly true since Kansas law prohibits municipalities from passing more restrictive gun laws. We are also not permitted to run a "gun buyback" program. As a city, we can put common sense firearm reform on our legislative agenda, but I am skeptical that doing so would make a difference.

Issue: Voting Access

Candidate Answer: Very Relevant

Candidate Comment: Although the state and Johnson County control who may vote and how elections are administered, a city can do things to encourage voting. We can provide our residents with information about upcoming elections, host voter registration drives at public locations, provide transportation to the polls, and advocate for our residents to have voting locations that are appropriate given the residential locations of our residents. These are just some examples of things a city can do to increase voter turnout and advocate for voting access.

Q14. Which of the following statements best aligns with your opinion about K - 12 schools? (Available points: 1)

- A. Public money should only be used to support public schools. (1)
- B. Public money should be used to support all schools, regardless of their public or private status.

Candidate Answer: Public money should only be used to support public schools.

Candidate Comment: Like any parent, I find the arguments that there are children being left behind in our public schools compelling. However, as a consumer, I also realize that private schools are not regulated in the same ways public schools are. They are not required to have standardized tests by which we can fairly measure academic performance. They are not required to accept children with developmental or intellectual disabilities. They are also permitted to discriminate against kids on the basis of gender, religion, sexual orientation, and gender identity. When I think about public funding, I think it is important that our education dollars go to schools that are regulated and available to all.

Q15. In light of the current political landscape, what is your stance on the role your personal religious beliefs should play in policy decisions? (Available points: 1)

- A. If I have personal religious beliefs that are important to me, I know they might differ from other's beliefs; therefore I will strive to respect the separation of church and state in policy decisions and my votes. (1)
- B. My personal religious beliefs are important to me therefore my religious beliefs will be the driving factor in policy decisions and my votes.

Candidate Answer: If I have personal religious beliefs that are important to me, I know they might differ from other's beliefs; therefore I will strive to respect the separation of church and state in policy decisions and my votes.

Candidate Comment: I was raised Baptist with a Jewish father. I feel very comfortable in a world which values different religious viewpoints and feel strongly that government and religion should not mix. I also understand the importance and value of religion in people's lives. I believe I can find common ground with almost anyone.

Q16. How do you understand the role (the duties, responsibilities, and scope) of the position you are seeking?

Candidate Answer: I have served on the Council since I was appointed in November of 2018. I then ran to keep my seat in 2019 and won. I feel confident in the role of a city council member as well as a candidate.

Q17. You will have to publicly account for your political contributions. To date, how much money have you collected or has been pledged to your campaign?

Candidate Answer: \$5170

Q18. How many donors does your answer above reflect?

Candidate Answer: 41

Q19. From which other organizations have you received endorsements? (Enter "n/a" if none).

Candidate Answer: N/a

Q20. From which other organizations are you seeking endorsements? (Enter "n/a" if none).

Candidate Answer: Johnson County Democratic Women, Labor Unions, Moms in Office

Q21. Is there anything else you'd like to add to this survey? Please do that here.

Candidate Answer: I was honored to be endorsed by Mainstream in 2019. I believe my time in office has shown my commitment to Mainstream's values of respect for the rights, beliefs, and freedoms of all individuals. Thank you for your consideration.

END SURVEY