

# MainPAC Candidate Survey

## 2021 Kansas Elections

Q1-5.

**Candidate Name:** David Neal  
**Candidate Email:** david@nealformerriam.com  
**Candidate Phone:** 913-908-5072  
**Office Sought:** City Councilmember  
**Office County:** Johnson  
**Office City:** Merriam  
**Office District:** 4

**Candidate Rating: 94%**

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**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: I strongly believe that for any issue that my role as a City Councilmember requires me to make a decision on, I must do my independent research including obtaining feedback from constituents. If that feedback indicates a strong majority view, I will reflect / have reflected that view in my vote. If there is significant division in constituent feedback, that means that further work on my part and on the part of the city may be required to find an appropriate solution. The division may be due to an incomplete understanding of the problem or proposed solution, in which case further community discussion is my first priority. After a more thorough analysis, then I always try to work with staff and other council members to try to find an alternative/compromise that better reflects the views of a majority of the constituents. Party ideology has little to no influence on how I decide city government issues which are typically local and specific. Ideology rarely applies to such situations. Experience, judgement and seeking public engagement are better signposts towards the best solution.*

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**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](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: I am a strong advocate of local control under the principles of Home Rule that the Kansas State Constitution provides. I have worked in a leadership role with local government groups like the Kansas League of Municipalities and on federal advocacy committees of the National League of Cities to oppose attempts at the state and federal level that diminish local control.*

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**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: Mental health is an underserved area in our community and nationally. Personal mental health crises actually occur in real time at the local level. For too long police officers have had to deal with these incidents*

without the right training and tools to optimally handle these situations. I am proud that as a City Council member in Merriam we started a program which provides a mental health professional to go out on police calls and do the follow up for mental health incidents so that people in crisis are both safely handled during the crisis but also helped after the crisis in seeking treatment. I am currently monitoring the data to see if we need to increase the resources in this area. I also support funding more mental health infrastructure locally.

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**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: When I first ran for office, one of my biggest issues was the lack of transparency in our city government. I have been fighting vocally and tirelessly to improve transparency in Merriam. Unfortunately, I and my collaborators initially ran into resistance from some city staff. Among the goals that I believe should be considered as minimal transparency standards are (1) online availability of City Council (and other key public) meetings, (2) make the City's web presence more user friendly, (3) using online/digital public outreach tools to actively solicit input on important City projects and initiatives rather than just announce inconvenient in-person public meetings to present the already formulated plans, (4) Make it easier for City Council members to meet and communicate with constituents (we do not currently have any access to contact information for our residents). Finally after 3-1/2 years, we will be putting our City Council meetings on YouTube. We are supposedly close to selecting an online resident engagement platform and we have recently updated our web presence. We are still not as far along as I believe we should be.*

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**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: To the extent that we can, local government should support things at the local level that increase access to healthcare, but generally the major lift needs to occur at the county, state and federal levels.*

**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: Diversity is very important but is not the sole way to improve representation. Competency and knowledge are critical to good local government. Assuming that someone's race or gender automatically make them less qualified to serve is wrong. But assuming race and gender alone make someone better qualified to serve can be problematic as well.*

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**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 scrutinize the professionals who work in public service*

*Candidate Comment: The wording of this question makes it difficult to answer. I believe that the structure of our city government is a dual model where the Mayor and paid professional staff represent the executive branch and the City Council represents the legislative branch. In a system of dual branch governance, both branches provide checks and balances on the other. The legislative branch more directly represents the voice of residents and other stakeholders in the community while the executive branch should be more focused on operations and recommendations. While we have excellent professionals working diligently for the benefit of our residents, I believe that the City Council has a duty to diligently review those recommendations and the performance of the paid professionals. A working balance must be struck that encourages progress but also has enough oversight that the professionals are encouraged to produce the best product possible for the residents and other stakeholders.*

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**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: I believe that climate warming is clearly happening at a rapid pace and requires our major attention. I believe that there are a number of things that we can do at the local level to both help slow the warming and to remediate and prepare for the effects that are already starting to happen. I have been active in local government efforts to identify and propose action steps in these areas.*

**Issue: Gun Safety**

*Candidate Answer: Very Relevant*

*Candidate Comment: Gun safety should be very important and should be a local control issue to some extent. Unfortunately, in recent years the Kansas Legislature has taken all power regarding this issue away from local government. I would very much like to see some measure of control on gun safety issues returned to the community level.*

**Issue: Voting Access**

*Candidate Answer: Very Relevant*

*Candidate Comment: Voting access also should be very important and should be partially a local control issue at the county level at least. Unfortunately, in recent times the Kansas Legislature used its power regarding this issue in ways that may be more restrictive in some cases. I would very much like to see voting access made easier rather than harder. I fully support anything that can be done at the city level to improve voter access. At the city level this mostly involves making sure we fully collaborate were applicable with the county election efforts and making sure we are not creating impediments to campaign activities, etc.*

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**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: I believe quality publicly funded education at the K-12 level is essential for a strong community, state, and nation. Access to private schools is necessarily limited by the very definition of private education. I believe public resources should be directed at schools that provide universal access to all members of the community, so I am skeptical of providing public support to private schools.*

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**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 believe in the right of individuals to freely practice their religious beliefs, but I believe that we must maintain a strong wall between church and state. It is not right to impose public policy that conforms to one religious tradition to the detriment of another. Matters of faith should remain outside of concrete public policy decision-making, while not restricting anyone's practice of personally adhering to their own faith. When someone's faith extends to trying to legislate their beliefs onto another person's behavior, that activity is something I will strongly oppose.*

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

*Candidate Answer: My role as a councilmember is multifaceted. I primarily act as a bridge between the community and city government, as a data gatherer for constituent input, as a solution designer for problems, and as a sounding board for staff ideas with the goal of improving where applicable the solutions enacted for our community. I believe it is essential to have an independent voice on the City Council, with the knowledge, and initiative to help improve the final legislative product of the City Council without impeding overall progress or without political grandstanding. I believe that I fill that role well.*

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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: nothing thus far*

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Q18. How many donors does your answer above reflect?

*Candidate Answer: 0*

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

*Candidate Answer: n/a*

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

*Candidate Answer: n/a*

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

*Candidate Answer: After serving as a Merriam Ward 4 City Council member for the past 3-1/2 years, I have filed for re-election. With my background in information technology, engineering, construction and property tax, I believe I have brought a thoughtful expertise to the*

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**END SURVEY**