

## **Fort Collins Community Action Network, City Council Candidate Questionnaire**

The Fort Collins Community Action Network (FCCAN) mission is to create community based on furthering economic, social, and environmental justice, sustainability, human rights, and peace for all by building coalitions, developing strategies and actions, and supporting existing progressive organizations. Having incredible impacts on Fort Collins communities, we believe our City Council is extremely important. We care about who is representing our communities' interests and how. With that in mind, FCCAN has prepared a short survey to give our communities more insight to who may be representing us. FCCAN is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and does not endorse any political candidates.

All City Council candidates for 2021 are listed below. Those whose names are listed in **bold** have their responses reflected after each survey question. Those candidates who were not able or opted out of participating in the survey are listed below in standard font.

- Mayor
  - **Jeni James Arndt**
  - **Gerry Horak**
  - Molly Skold
- District 1
  - **Nick Armstrong**
  - Susan Gutowsky
- District 3
  - **Tricia Canonico**
  - Gavin Kaszynski
- District 4
  - **Jessica Dyrda**
  - **Erin Hottenstein**
  - **Shirley Peel**
  - **Melanie Potyondy**
  - **Sidna Rachid**
- District 5
  - **Jeff Hansen**
  - **Kelly Ohlson**

**1) Given the recent appellate court ruling in Colorado v. Wiemold, do you believe people in Fort Collins should be ticketed for sleeping outside when no other option is available to them?**

- Jeni James Ardnt (Mayor): No
- Gerry Horak (Mayor): No
- Nick Armstrong (District 1):
  - i. I believe case tracking should begin and resources brought to bear to bring our most vulnerable neighbors in out of the cold. We have to be cognizant that a portion of the transient homeless population is not here with honest intent, so mindful case management is required to make sure resources will be applied to those neighbors who will benefit the most in our community.
- Tricia Canonico (District 3): No
- Erin Hottenstein (District 4): No
- Shirley Peel (District 4):
  - i. I believe we need to find a better option for people sleeping outside than to ticket them.
- Melanie Potyondy (District 4): No
- Sidna Rachid (District 4): No
- Jessica Dyrdaahl (District 4): No
- Jeff Hansen (District 5): No
- Kelly Ohlson (District 5): No
  - i. No. People should not be ticketed for sleeping. However, camping in conserved natural areas is not an acceptable solution to a real homelessness problem. You end up with two unacceptable outcomes. We can do better for people while conserving our natural areas.

**1A) In regards to question 1, what do you think "no other option" means?**

- Jeni James Ardnt (Mayor):
  - i. No other option means a shelter or hotel (provided by the city).
- Gerry Horak (Mayor):
  - i. When shelters are filled and/or the individual situation e.g. gender, animal companion - a shelter is not available to accommodate
- Nick Armstrong (District 1):
  - i. It could mean many things in our community - a truly comprehensive, 360\* solution does not exist in Fort Collins YET but could if we worked hard to make it so through creative, collaborative partnerships that minimizes overlap and eliminate gaps.
- Tricia Canonico (District 3):
  - i. They do not have a home or adequate access to a safe place to sleep.
- Erin Hottenstein (District 4):
  - i. I would have to read the Colorado v. Wiemold ruling to see what the intent is. I would imagine that it would be quite difficult to capture all of the nuances at play in people's lives, which might force them into homelessness, and can envision that this language is being used for that very reason: to provide discretion to the individual making the determination.
- Shirley Peel (District 4):
  - i. When they have no other place to stay.
- Melanie Potyondy (District 4):
  - i. I would consider no other option to mean no available housing of one's own, no reasonable options amongst friends/family, and no available shelter beds.
- Sidna Rachid (District 4):

- i. I don't think anyone should be ticketed for sleeping outside even if there is a bed available in a shelter. Many people have dogs, want to stay with their partners, or feel uncomfortable in closed surroundings and this can't be accommodated in a shelter. I would like to see an area set aside for spending the night in a vehicle.
- Jessica Dyrdaahl (District 4):
  - i. That the person has gone through other options and sleeping outside is the one most viable to them at the time.
- Kelly Ohlson (District 5):
  - i. No other option probably means no available shelter, etc. if you are following the appropriate rules established by the shelters. That is not a very common occurrence and should never be the case. If you are under the influence of alcohol or other substances or have a history of violence and are not allowed in the shelter, then we need to come up with appropriate solutions for those instances. Again, sleeping outside or illegal camping are not long-term answers. I believe we can do better rather than just discussing the legalities of "no other option".
- Jeff Hansen (District 5):
  - i. First of all, I think that wording is way too restrictive language in regards to allowing someone to sleep outside. With that aside, strict interpretation of "no other option" wording in the ruling would require an extensive and exhaustive search for other sleeping arrangements prior to choosing to sleep outside.

## **2) Do you support a policy of universal housing (housing for all)?**

- Jeni James Ardnt (Mayor): Yes
- Gerry Horak (Mayor): No Response
- Nick Armstrong (District 1): Yes

- Tricia Canonico (District 3):
  - i. I support the principle of universal housing. If elected, I will look at a variety of innovative policies to increase our supply of affordable housing as well as addressing the root causes of homelessness..
- Erin Hottenstein (District 4): Yes
- Shirley Peel (District 4):
  - i. I believe as a society we need to work to make sure our people have housing and help them have a personal initiative in having their own housing.
- Melanie Potyondy (District 4): Yes
- Sidna Rachid (District 4): Yes
- Jessica Dyrdaahl (District 4): Yes
- Kelly Ohlson (District 5): Yes
- Jeff Hansen (District 5): No

**2A) In regards to question 2, why or why not?**

- Jeni James Ardnt (Mayor):
  - i. We shouldn't criminalize homelessness. Housing is critical to one's health and opportunity for success.
- Gerry Horak (Mayor):
  - i. Not sure how that works and who is responsible for providing and for how long.
- Nick Armstrong (District 1):
  - i. Pathways to home ownership are required as part of a solution to homelessness. Stability is the first step to that.
- Tricia Canonico (District 3): “Answered above”
- Erin Hottenstein (District 4):

- i. Housing is a basic need and we must strive to create a safety net for people which includes housing.
- Shirley Peel (District 4): No response
- Melanie Potyondy (District 4):
  - i. I believe having a safe, stable, affordable housing situation underlies all other life functions: physical and mental health, familial harmony, successful employment, etc. We must expand the housing options in our community to meet the breadth of needs, so that individuals and families are able to shift their focus away from getting their basic need for shelter met, and toward actions that help them pursue other goals.
- Sidna Rachid (District 4):
  - i. Fort Collins has spent a lot of money criminalizing homelessness. Let's connect the homeless with services if they'd like. We should try to make their lives easier not harder.
- Jessica Dyrdaahl (District 4):
  - i. I believe as a society we need to focus on our most marginalized populations first.
- Kelly Ohlson (District 5):
  - i. Because it is the right thing to do.
- Jeff Hansen (District 5):
  - i. Our focus should be helping homeless individuals overcome health, mental health, education and/or job training and job placement limitations so they can obtain adequate housing on their own.

**3) Do you feel local government and local law enforcement should play a role in immigration policy enforcement?**

- Jeni James Ardnt (Mayor):
  - i. No. Immigration is a federal purview.
- Gerry Horak (Mayor): No
- Nick Armstrong (District 1):
  - i. Not really; although if involvement of local government and law enforcement creates more just or equitable outcomes, then yes.
- Tricia Canonico (District 3): No
- Erin Hottenstein (District 4): No
- Shirley Peel (District 4):
  - i. Our immigration policy is broken and our government needs to fix it. Until such a time, I don't believe local law enforcement has a choice but to enforce the laws on the books.
- Melanie Potyondy (District 4): No
- Sidna Rachid (District 4): No
- Jessica Dyrdaahl (District 4): No
- Kelly Ohlson (District 5):
  - i. Not day-to-day, but when there is a genuine threat to the safety of others, then local law enforcement has a legitimate role.
- Jeff Hansen (District 5):
  - i. immigration policy enforcement should be addressed primarily by federal agencies. On rare occasions this may require cooperation from local law enforcement.

**4) Would you support an initiative to establish a ranked choice voting system for municipal elections?**

- Jeni James Ardnt (Mayor):
  - i. Yes! That's my bill in the House, right now.
- Gerry Horak (Mayor): Yes
- Nick Armstrong (District 1): Yes
- Tricia Canonico (District 3):
  - i. I think voters should decide whether to adopt ranked choice voting.
- Erin Hottenstein (District 4): Yes
- Shirley Peel (District 4): No
- Melanie Potyondy (District 4): Yes
- Sidna Rachid (District 4): Yes
- Jessica Dyrdaahl (District 4): Yes
- Kelly Ohlson (District 5): Yes
- Jeff Hansen (District 5): Yes

**5) Do you support ending police presence in the Poudre School District?**

- Jeni James Ardnt (Mayor):
  - i. There should be a safety presence in the schools. When I was a high school teacher, my life had a credible threat. Teacher should be able to teach and students to learn in school. Safety officers (whether they are police or community safety personnel can help ensure a safe environment.)
- Gerry Horak (Mayor):
  - i. Always willing to review a polciy. There are pros and cons to police presence in schools. Prior to the 22-23 buget a review should be performed
- Nick Armstrong (District 1): Yes
- Tricia Canonico (District 3):



- i. I support significantly limiting police presence to rapid response & prevention of emergency/safety situations only as well as opportunities to develop positive community policing roles. We want to keep our children safe but automatically having officers in schools isn't the best way to achieve that and often results in unintended consequences. Police officers don't need to be in every school. Unfortunately in too many cases, having SRO's has instead perpetuated discriminatory policing.
- Erin Hottenstein (District 4):
  - i. The presence of School Resource Officers or other police in schools can have a detrimental effect on kids' academics and their mental health. And unfortunately, kids of color and those with disabilities are more likely than others to be targeted by SROs for disciplinary action and even arrest. (New York Times article. Do Police Officers Make Schools Safer or More Dangerous? June 12, 2020) But we all know there are no easy answers here. School violence is a part of our kids' everyday experience, and that has to change. It will be vital that we work collaboratively to find solutions to the problem of gun violence in schools, which don't lead to other, more insidious problems for kids. Every child deserves to have a good education, and the various stakeholders need to come to the table willing to ask hard questions and work collaboratively to find solutions.
- Shirley Peel (District 4): No
- Melanie Potyondy (District 4):
  - i. I believe a long-term goal of reducing police presence in the schools is appropriate, as the ideal would be focus upon preventative services in lieu of more reactive ones. As a school-based mental health professional, I currently utilize my assigned SRO for a variety of safety-related functions (e.g., reporting sexual assaults, threat assessments, transport of suicidal/homicidal students to the hospital). I would like to see suitable replacement options for these functions

identified and implemented before a gradual reduction of police presence at the secondary level.

- Sidna Rachid (District 4): Yes
- Jessica Dyrdaahl (District 4): Yes
- Kelly Ohlson (District 5):
  - i. I would defer to the elected leadership of the Poudre School District and parents of students who are or will be enrolled.
- Jeff Hansen (District 5): No

**6) Do you believe that City dollars should go to funding SROs (School Resource Officer) in the Poudre School District?**

- Jeni James Ardnt (Mayor):
  - i. I believe that the city should collaborate with our school district to promote health, safety, equity and learning. I suppose, ideally, the school district pays for everything in schools. But if they needed assistance, it would be hard to deny them. Colorado is 49th in support of education and I find it hard not to support students, especially the most in need. I was a special education teacher.
- Gerry Horak (Mayor): “See above”
- Nick Armstrong (District 1):
  - i. I believe that mental health resources can be a very useful thing in our schools and that representation is powerful. SROs can be helpful in some cases and not so helpful in others, so it may be that we should reapply SRO funding to make progress on other outcomes (mental health, social support, hunger, etc).
- Tricia Canonico (District 3):
  - i. Only if we can drastically limit & re-shape the role of SRO's, again not necessarily having a dedicated officer in each school but having specially trained

officers to deal with true school related emergencies & juvenile issues through a lens of community policing & restorative justice.

- Erin Hottenstein (District 4):
  - i. In addition to what I wrote above, public funding should shift to prioritize mental health and school counselors.
- Shirley Peel (District 4): Yes
- Melanie Potyondy (District 4):
  - i. I support a gradual reduction of SRO services in the schools should appropriate replacement measures be available to ensure safety.
- Sidna Rachid (District 4): No
- Jessica Dyrdaahl (District 4):
  - i. I think funding allocated for SROs can be better utilized but it could depend on the school itself
- Kelly Ohlson (District 5):
  - i. I'm not sure. It is perhaps more of a financial responsibility of the school district if they desire the SROs.
- Jeff Hansen (District 5):
  - i. I don't believe there is a current need for SROs in the Poudre School District but I would not rule out the possibility if enough unfortunate evidence were presented which supported that need in the future.

**7) Do you support ending exclusionary school discipline practices that disproportionately impacted students of color, undocumented students, and students with disabilities?**

- Jeni James Ardnt (Mayor): Yes
- Gerry Horak (Mayor):
  - i. I support a review of those policies and practices to ensure they are fair and fairly

administered.

- Nick Armstrong (District 1): Yes
  - i. we need to get to the root of why those exclusionary practices exist. Ending them is one thing, dismantling thoroughly the structures that created them in the first place is the real goal.
- Tricia Canonico (District 3): Yes
- Erin Hottenstein (District 4): Yes
- Shirley Peel (District 4):
  - i. School discipline should be enacted evenly across the board when needed and all discipline should be looked at, not as punitive but as a chance for training our students.
- Melanie Potyondy (District 4): Yes
- Sidna Rachid (District 4): No
- Jessica Dyrdaahl (District 4): Yes
- Kelly Ohlson (District 5):
  - i. I don't know enough to have a reasoned opinion. It sounds like improvements need to be made.
- Jeff Hansen (District 5): Yes