

# 2017 Minneapolis Park Board Questionnaire

\* Required

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Candidate Name \*

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Seat you are seeking

Park Board District 4

Do you intend to abide by the DFL endorsement?

Yes

No

Are you a MYDFL Constituent (under age 36, or enrolled in an technical, academic, or professional degree program)?

Yes

No

Please write a short statement (200 words maximum) on how you will engage and enfranchise young people. In particular, how will you prioritize youth of color/Indigenous youth (YOCI), women/femmes, and/or LGBTQ+ young people. The statements may appear on the website and in publications as written. MYDFL will only edit for length.

My goal in this park board race is to start a conversation about engaging a new generation of Minneapolis residents who have not traditionally felt welcome or enfranchised to be involved in shaping our parks. I am running to lead our entire community in transforming our park system to be for all community members. That means especially providing structured, funded opportunities for youth, people of color, women, and the LGBTQ+ community to be leaders in shaping our parks. I believe that our beloved parks are a special place where we can build community and common understanding as we aspire to create a better future for

our children. I believe that the mostly untapped perspectives of our young people and our most vulnerable community members are the greatest hope for making our park system more safe, equitable, and fun for everyone.

## Why are you seeking the endorsement of the Minnesota Young DFL (MYDFL)?

I am a relatively young person who believes in advocating for working people and democratic principles. I believe the endorsement of MYDFL, with its goals of inclusion and equity, will help in building connections with communities not traditionally part of decision making processes.

## How is your campaign engaging young people, particularly YOC in the political process?

I am engaging my neighbors and friends, most of whom are between the ages of 22 and 30, in being actively part of this grassroots campaign. The DFL process already has an unprecedented number of younger people and people of color who are delegates to the DFL convention (though this unprecedented number is still woefully inadequate). After the convention I plan to host youth-oriented engagement events at schools and rec centers. I enjoy playing basketball, so I also want to host a campaign-oriented basketball tournament. I hope to have a

dialogue with MYDFL leadership about how to better engage with young people of color and indigenous youth in this process.

This year, most of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) candidates identify as men. What will you do to promote gender equity within our parks system?

I recognize my privilege and will use my position on the Park Board to listen to and lift up the voices of marginalized groups who are not well represented in positions of power, either on the park board or elsewhere. This includes women, trans people, the disabled, people of color, the elderly, immigrants, and the homeless. A big part of my campaign is localizing park decision making to the community level, and in doing so enfranchising community groups and vulnerable populations to shape the future of their parks.

What is your plan to fight climate change and ensure a sustainable future for the people you represent?

We need to develop a climate action plan, invest in carbon sequestration, and end the use of pesticides in our parks.

How do you see a path to make Minneapolis a Zero Waste City?

Our path to zero waste consists of two major focus areas: Coordination across local governmental jurisdictions and community education. Minneapolis has taken waste reduction steps across its operational contingency. The park board must continue to coordinate with Minneapolis and Hennepin county, and take bold steps to lead this effort. The park board also has a role to play in educating communities and working hand in hand with neighborhood organizations, nonprofits, schools, and the rec centers to ensure that every person in Minneapolis is working together to achieve this goal. We can only achieve zero waste if our communities are committed to it. It can simply be viewed as an goal intrinsic to the governmental entities and their operations.

How will you honor the Indigenous communities, upon whose land our parks reside?

I will advocate tirelessly for the park board to put their money where their mouth is on equity. That means investing dollars in Indigenous organizations to plan the future of our parks. Organizations like NACDI are already doing impressive planning work, and the park board should prioritize awarding contracts in planning and design to indigenous organizations. I also believe that their should be more consistent and intentional outreach to ensure native perspectives are

elevated in all aspects of park decision making. The most recent debacle with the scaffold sculpture at the Walker is a case in point. Also, let's make sure that Little Earth gets to decide how it best wants to keep its local parks safe and fun for its community.

Minneapolis is known for having the some of the worst racial disparities in the country. One way to address these disparities is raising the minimum wage. Do you support a \$15 minimum wage. Should any workers, including young people, be exempt from this increase?

I support a \$15 minimum wage for our park workers, including youth, and would prioritize this investment in budgeting decisions.

Minneapolis has the highest cost of living of any city in Minnesota. Do you support a wage policy that increases the minimum wage in tandem with the cost of living?

Ideally, yes. I think this is an important discussion to have while we evaluate our budget and I would like to find a long-term funding solution to ensure that wages rise in concert with cost of living. I believe that we first need to educate our

communities on the value of investing in our park employees so that we can build broad support for this necessary policy.

How do you plan to use this position to address the achievement gap in Minneapolis, and improve high school graduation rates?

I will work to build strong relationships with school board members, park staff, school leadership, and youth. I believe there is ample opportunity to more effectively coordinate the work of rec programs and the work of our MPS teachers.

How can the MPRB develop diversion programs that keep young people, especially Black youth, out of the school-to-prison pipeline?

I am a proponent of piloting restorative justice diversion for all park-related altercations involving youth. That means providing youth opportunities to be accepted into communities where they may have caused harm and provided with



opportunities to make positive change, develop a sense of community pride, and make positive connections with peers and adults.

What will you do to ensure that students and athletic teams from Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) have priority access to park facilities, regardless of their socioeconomic standing?

I believe that our public school students should have every opportunity to use our parks as needed for recreation and growth. I believe we should remove any bureaucratic barriers to participation like inordinate park fees, ID requirements, or other hurdles. I would also look to school leadership and youth to better understand what barriers currently exist to access and participation, and work alongside these groups to seek a speedy solution.

Do you support making all summer park programs free for participants? Why or why not?

Yes, I support free access for families making up to 150% of the area median income. I would support free access for all if we can develop complete community support for that kind of investment, which I think would benefit our communities greatly, both for the education and social-emotional health of our youth, and for our public safety.

Nationwide, 40% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ+. What will you do to make sure Minneapolis does not follow this trend?

I advocate for using best-practices models, like those employed (with great success) by Larkin St Youth Services in San Francisco, tailored to Minneapolis. Coordination with social service agencies, including non-profits, congregations, Hennepin County, and the City of Minneapolis is key. This deeply concerning rate of LGBTQ+ youth homelessness can be combatted effectively with wraparound services, many of which can be operated in our parks, and harm reduction strategies.

How do you and your campaign plan to be inclusive of the LGBTQ+ community during the election season? How do you interact with the community?

I am fortunate to have friends and supporters who are part of the LGBTQ+ community. As an ally, I look for guidance from my supporters and friends for how to best learn from and raise up the voices of our LGBTQ+ neighbors. I personally interact with the community by hanging out with my friends and neighbors and going to LGBTQ+ events like Pride. I am also a frequenter of the 19 bar.

Current state and national political climates are attacking our most vulnerable community members, especially immigrant families and LGBTQ+ residents. How do you see your campaign and yourself working to protect those rights?

I will work to codify our parks' status as sanctuary spaces. I will also work to create systems that are welcoming to these communities. We need Community Advisory Committees and budgeting committees that can be accessible and engaging for our LGBTQ+ and immigrant neighbors. We can develop these by engaging these communities in co-development of localized park decision making.

How will you ensure that young Black lives matter? Programs like Countering Violent Extremism (CVE), profile and surveil young Black Muslims, particularly Somali-Americans. How will you use your position on the council to support and protect our neighbors?

I am opposed to CVE and will vehemently oppose its implementation on park property. I will advocate for community-led solutions to safety concerns for black lives, and am and advocate of rethinking how our park police work.

What will you do to ensure bridge the divide between park police and POCl communities? Specifically, how will you ensure that police build trust with young people?

Implementing restorative practices within the park police is a place to start. There are ample examples of successful restorative practice models that police departments here in the twin cities have employed. Investing in additional youth-oriented offices (currently there is one in a force of thirty), is a step in prioritizing youth outreach. Finally, reducing the number of park police who patrol in cars.

How will you train park police to engage with intersectional communities, including POCl, neurodivergent residents, disabled folks, LGBTQ+ people, etc.?

I believe the first step is investing in mental health professionals to work alongside park police. I believe the second step is holding dialogues on equal

footing between police and POCI, LGBTQ+ community members, disabled people, and the neurodivergent.

Do you support disarming the park police? Why or why not?

I am in support of having park police operate more like national park rangers, who do not carry guns.

Right now, any young person who wants to play on a park team must have a valid ID. Most young people do not have an ID and though they are available through the MPRB, the cost prohibits many low-income (and YOCI) from participating. Do you support eliminating this program? How would you reappropriate the funds?

Yes, I do support eliminating ID requirements. My priority for any fund reappropriation is the \$15 minimum wage.

After incidents of misconduct, either by park police or members of the MPRB, how will you ensure the responsible parties are held accountable?

I am unsure to which types of misconduct this question refers. Any illegal activity committed by any park board employee or commissioner should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. This includes use of force by park police on community members. Anything that is described as misconduct within employee guidelines should also be speedily dealt with as stipulated by the guidelines of the park board human resourced department.

What measures do you support to make Minneapolis more bike-friendly and encourage residents to use alternative transportation methods?

1. Bolster the free bike program for youth, and pair it with a weekly riding program run by adults in the community.
2. Coordinate with our schools and the school board to lead "biking school buses" to our schools and parks.
3. Prioritize repaving of our deteriorating bike lane infrastructure.
4. Ensuring that all our of long term capital plans include infrastructure improvements that make biking and walking safer. These include advance stop bars, RRFBs, dedicated bike paths that do not cross with pedestrian paths, creative crosswalks, raised crosswalks, etc.