

CARTER LAKE MUNICIPAL PRIMARY | VOTER GUIDE

Meet the Carter Lake City Council candidates

The Nonpareil asked the six candidates for Carter Lake City Council to respond to a questionnaire. Four responded, and a fifth, Victor Skinner, initially declined but later asked for The Nonpareil to accept answers in a phone call, and we created a transcript of his answers with the assistance of Otter.ai. A sixth candidate, Timothy M. Mandolfo did not respond to our invitations to participate in the voter guide. Only three candidates elected to provide a photo.

What's presented below are responses edited for length, clarity and style. Find the candidates' complete, unedited responses at nonpareilonline.com.

Primary voters will be asked to choose up to two candidates. The top four will advance. Two seats are available.

Philip Buchanan
Age: 45
Occupation: Self-employed
Why do you want to serve in this office? Carter Lake has been my home for 45 years. I love this community and the people who make it special. I want to serve on the City Council to give back to the place that has given me so much. My goal is to listen, represent our neighbors, and work hard to make sure the needs of our community are met.

What should voters expect if you're elected? If elected, I will listen to the people of Carter Lake and make sure their voices are heard. Every decision I make will be guided by what I believe our community wants and needs. My priority will always be to represent the direction that the people of Carter Lake want to go.

What else should voters know about you? I've worked for the City of Carter Lake in the maintenance department, which has given me firsthand experience with how our city operates day-to-day. I know the internal workings of city government and where improvements can be made. Most importantly, I've listened to our residents and learned what matters most to them. That knowledge will guide me in making the changes needed to better serve our community.

In a sentence, why are you the right choice? I am the right choice because I deeply care about Carter Lake and am committed to serving and protecting the community I've called home for 45 years.

Keebie Kessler
Age: 69
Occupation: Retired
Why do you want to serve in this office? I've always been of the opinion if you don't like things the way they are, try to get in a position to make a change.

What should voters expect if you're elected? I'm not here for a personal agenda. What you see is what you get. I won't tell one person one thing and someone else another.

What else should voters know about you? Like I said before, what you see is what you get. I'm for our employees, kids and public safety.

In a sentence, why are you the right choice? I'm not running for one certain item. I'm here for improving our ENTIRE city. I'm involved in our community and care very much about it.

Timothy M. Mandolfo
Timothy M. Mandolfo did not respond to our questionnaire by the deadline. If he provides a late response, The Nonpareil will make it available on our website.

On a post in the "Carter Lake IA Bulletin" Facebook group, Mandolfo announced a meet-and-greet event Wednesday from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Carter Lake Community Center at 1120 Willow Drive.

Matthew Allen Seminara
Age: 46
Occupation: General Contractor
Why do you want to serve in this office? I want to help serve my local community.

What should voters expect if you're elected? I will listen to local citizens concerns and make their voices heard.

What else should voters know about you? I am born and raised in Carter Lake. Just



SCOTT STEWART, THE NONPAREIL

A sign notes the council chamber at Carter Lake City Hall along with the Iowa Code section on disorderly conduct on Monday, Sept. 22, 2025. Carter Lake voters will elect two members of the Carter Lake City Council during a general election Tuesday, Nov. 4, 2025, but first the field will be narrowed during a municipal primary scheduled for Tuesday, Oct. 7, 2025.

recently built a home for myself and family here. I am happily married, and we are raising our 10-year-old daughter. I absolutely love our neighbors and our community.

In a sentence, why are you the right choice? I believe I will listen to the community and work out the details and issues at hand. I will bring their voices to the council and come up with a solution, plan, and execute the matter.

Victor Skinner
Age: 64
Occupation: Industrial pump mechanic.
Why do you want to serve in this office? I served the first four years, and I feel like I got a lot of things not fully accomplished, but there's a lot left on the plate that I'd like to see finished through. We got a couple housing projects going. We got possible additions and remodel to the fire station. And I also want to be part of our new city administrator, see how he goes.

What should voters expect if you're elected? Well, I've been in there for four years, so they pretty much know what to expect out of me. When they call me, I take care of their needs best I can. I hope to continue being transparent with the city and just to keep our city moving forward in a positive direction.

What else should voters know about you? I'm a lifetime resident. I've been here 64 years, and anytime they question me about anything, I try to get them an answer. I try to be transparent. I try to let them know what's going on, if they so wish, and I pretty well stand behind anybody that needs our help.

In a sentence, why are you the right choice? I believe, since I've had four years of experience up 'til now, and I did the library board for six years, and just been involved with a lot of different things, I think I can add some more forward momentum to the city progress. I guess my answer would be to add to and keep the city moving in a positive and forward direction.

JacLeen 'Jackie' Wahl
Age: 74
Occupation: Classroom teacher with a Masters of Education and ESL endorsement
Why do you want to serve in this office? Being on the council provides a chance to make a positive impact to our community, bringing citizens' concerns to the forefront so

they are duly represented. Through my eight years serving on council, I've gained valuable knowledge and experience, including how city government works, how to provide support for the betterment of the community, and facilitate a voice for the citizens of Carter Lake.

As a fiscal conservative, I want to make sure tax dollars are being spent efficiently for the benefit of all citizens' needs. Through my representation, I would like to positively impact Carter Lake to further it being a welcoming, vibrant place to live, work, and play.

What should voters expect if you're elected? If I'm elected, I feel my duty is to serve the public by viewing whatever is presented impartially and voting according to the values, needs, and desires of the residents.

Carter Lake is a special place. My goal is to safeguard and improve the quality of life in Carter Lake. I will continue to support economic development projects, increases in public safety, programs for all ages, and measures to strengthen our business community. I promise to continue to be accessible to everyone.

What else should voters know about you? I headed a Green Space Committee which began by securing grants and guidance from the National Park Service and American in Bloom. Our committee developed a plan that connects the school, library and Carter Lake Community Center utilizing the green space surrounding them. I developed a profile that lead an award presented to our community for Community Vitality at the 2024 America in Bloom Symposium.

Some of the activities that I helped organize have included the Winter Festival, pollination workshops, Carter Lake cleanup, CLIC coed sand volleyball league, kayak and golf groups, and a pickle ball clinic. I also have volunteered with the Garden Walk Committee, Storm Water Committee, a Vision Session for Future of Carter Lake, Planning and Zoning Commission, Senior Baskets, Our Lady of Carter Lake Church, and the Community Center Planning Team.

In a sentence, why are you the right choice? As shown in my previous years on the council, I put the community first rather than personal interests and try to be accessible, transparent and accountable by being involved throughout the city, doing countless hours of research on issues that I share with other council members. and by analyzing all possible outcomes before making final decisions.

Iowa have a more focused attention and better communication with helping the local communities find solutions.

Is the city going in the right direction?

Philip Buchanan: Yes, I believe Carter Lake is moving in the right direction. My goal is to help keep that positive momentum going while making sure we continue to build on our progress in a way that benefits everyone in our community.

Keebie Kessler: My personal feelings are, right now, no. Hopefully, the new city administrator position can fix that.

Matthew Seminara: I believe so, but for sure there have some bumps in the road. I believe things get overlooked and are not followed up on.

Victor Skinner: I believe we are. I think there's a lot of good, positive things coming, and we've tried to do some positive things. My first two years on council were a little rough. We didn't get a whole lot done other than some arguments amongst groups.

JacLeen Wahl: The city's hiring of a new city administration was welcomed by most citizens. Carter Lake has struggled in the past with the lack of human resource policies, ordinance enforcement, required record keeping, and other department management concerns.

The city has endeavored to take steps to update infrastructure. Sewer and water issues are a priority for all citizens. Required communication for ongoing projects has improved.

Continued community programs are being developed through the addition of a community center and enhanced library resources.

Candidates respond to questions about issues facing voters

The following responses to questions posed by The Nonpareil are edited for length, clarity and style. Find the complete, unedited responses at nonpareilonline.com.

Timothy M. Mandolfo did not respond to our invitations to participate in the voter guide, so no answers were available from him.

What's the most important issue facing voters?

Philip Buchanan: I believe the most important issue for Carter Lake is how we handle growth and opportunity. Our community deserves to grow in a way that creates new opportunities while still protecting the small-town values and close-knit feel that make Carter Lake special.

Keebie Kessler: The most important issue is we need to get back some of the respect to our city.

Matthew Seminara: I believe the most important issues are public safety, zoning reform, quality of services, street maintenance, and our city parks.

Victor Skinner: I think everybody right now is interested in getting some affordable housing.

JacLeen Wahl: Residents of Carter Lake want transparency and accountability, which includes fair enforcement of ordinances and better communication. I will encourage and support elected council members and administrative staff work together with more transparency to find additional ways of keeping the public informed and involved.

Working with the new city administrator, the council will have necessary support to develop new policies and processes to improve human relations, finance and budget processes, code enforcement and department oversight.

What's something else you plan to focus on?

Philip Buchanan: I plan to focus on improving our public works and infrastructure. Well-maintained streets, reliable utilities and strong city services are the foundation of a safe and thriving community. Investing in these areas will make daily life better for all of us and prepare Carter Lake for the future.

Keebie Kessler: Currently, we have a lot of unhappy employees. Hopefully, with the new city administrator, some of these can be fixed. Also some of the employees are very underpaid.

Matthew Seminara: I want to work with local police department on the safety of our city parks and homelessness issues and enforcing our current ordinances. I also want to make improvements to our current rain gardens, let our local children use our ballfields and let our local citizens feel safe in our city parks.

Victor Skinner: Wow, a lot. One of my main goals would be to see if we can help the fire department get their new addition and the remodel, see if we can get the condos to build down by the lake area and, just overall, keep the city moving forward. We've done a good job on getting most of our infrastructure done — just to keep moving along.

I also want to see our youth sports keep moving forward. We have great facilities, and our youth sports needs to keep going strong.

JacLeen Wahl: Budget management is highly important to me. I hope to focus on department accountability through responsible fiscal policies and resource allocation, I will advocate for taxpayer money to be spent wisely in an effort to sustain or lower taxes.



SCOTT STEWART, THE NONPAREIL

A sign welcomes motorists to Carter Lake on Monday, Sept. 22, 2025.

I plan to continue development of community programs that encourage citizens of all ages to become involved.

I have engaged, and will continue to engage, in ongoing outreach to citizens to encourage discussions on ways to improve their lives in Carter Lake.

If you could have the state adopt or change a policy, what would you want?

Philip Buchanan: I would support legalizing recreational marijuana use to bring in tax revenue and cut down on unnecessary legal costs.

Keebie Kessler: I would recall city officials who are doing wrong.

Matthew Seminara: I would have homeowners protect their investment.

Victor Skinner: That's a tough one. I guess I don't really have an answer for that. We don't have, in my opinion, a whole lot issues with the state — maybe change their — can't think what the word is — how they how they value our taxes.

JacLeen Wahl: The state could provide more programs to help cities address homelessness and housing shortages. The issue of homelessness affects not only Carter Lake but also our surrounding communities. I would like to see