VOTERS' GUIDE 2026

MINNESOTA HOUSE DISTRICT 33A (ELECT 1)

Angela Thompson (DFL)

City of residence: Hugo
Occupation: Social worker / ICWA guardian ad litem
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• Liaison to the WBLAS American Indian Parent Advisory Committee
• Vice chair White Bear Lake School Board
• Director, Northeast Metro 916 Intermediate School District School Board

Q. Why do you want to serve in the Minnesota Legislature?
A. I am running to bring the voices of District 33A to the table. My roots in these communities run deep. I grew up here, attended the same schools as generations of my family, raised my own family here, and have family and lifelong friends throughout the district. These aren't simply communities I represent; they are the communities that shaped me.

I believe representative government begins with listening. We do not live in politics; politics exists to represent us. I want the people of District 33A to be able to build safe, stable, and affordable lives, with access to healthcare and housing, family-sustaining wages, retirement security, strong public schools, and pathways to successful careers.

As a social worker and school board member, I listen to those most affected, seek expertise, examine evidence, ask difficult questions, and make informed decisions. I will bring that same approach to representing District 33A in the Legislature

Q. What can the state do in the next five years to help Minnesota prosper?
A. Minnesota prospers when the people who live and work here have opportunities to succeed. Over the next five years, we need to invest in strong public schools, workforce development and skilled trades, infrastructure, affordable housing and childcare, while supporting the small businesses that are important to our communities.

We also need to pay attention to affordability and the long-term impact of state decisions. When the state does not adequately fund its responsibilities, those costs do not disappear; they can be shifted to local governments, school districts, property taxpayers and families. We should use public dollars responsibly, measure whether programs are working, address fraud when it occurs, and invest in roads, bridges and infrastructure that support economic growth and family-sustaining jobs.

Minnesota has tremendous resources and a strong workforce. Good planning today can create opportunities while keeping our communities affordable for the next generation.

Q. What are two challenges that the state faces and how might you solve them if elected?
A. Two challenges facing Minnesota are affordability and sustainably funding the services our communities depend on. Families are feeling the rising costs of housing, healthcare, childcare, insurance, property taxes and everyday necessities. There is no single solution. We need to increase affordable housing options, address healthcare and prescription drug costs, expand access to childcare, support family-sustaining wages, and examine how state decisions affect household budgets.

As a school board member, I have seen what happens when the state does not fully fund its commitments: the pressure often shifts to local taxpayers. We need to adequately fund education, infrastructure and essential services while being responsible stewards of public dollars. If elected, I will examine what is working, address waste and fraud, listen to the people most affected, and work with legislators from across Minnesota on practical, sustainable solutions rather than simply shifting costs from one level of government to another.

Stacey Stout (R)

City of residence: Mahtomedi
Occupation: AVP government relations
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• Mahtomedi School Board ISD 832 2016-2026, four years as chair
• Northeast Metro School Board ISD 916 2025-2026
• Mahtomedi Finance Commission 2015-2018

Q. Why do you want to serve in the Minnesota Legislature?
A. As a mom of 2 boys who are 4th generation Minnesotans, an attorney with over 25 years of experience, and a Mahtomedi school board member for 10 years, I understand the importance of public service and the challenges facing our communities. I've built a proven record of accountable, transparent leadership and delivering results. I will be a principled voice at the Capitol, finding practical solutions for fraud prevention, lowering taxes, ensuring high-quality education in our schools, addressing healthcare costs, supporting public safety, and investing in the infrastructure our communities depend on.

Q. What can the state do in the next five years to help Minnesota prosper?
A. Minnesota's economic growth is stagnating because our state has become increasingly uncompetitive and has been plagued by widespread fraud and inadequate oversight. To turn this around, the legislature must restore accountability, crack down on fraud, and create a more competitive environment where businesses of all sizes can grow, innovate, and hire—because a stronger private sector means more opportunity and greater prosperity for everyone. Strengthening our competitiveness will help keep businesses here, expand opportunity, and grow wages for Minnesota families.

Q. What are two challenges that the state faces and how might you solve them if elected?
A. 1. Fiscal discipline – Minnesota had an historic $18 billion surplus, but that has been spent. Instead of using the surplus to provide meaningful, lasting tax relief and strengthen our long-term fiscal position, the government grew significantly without prioritizing core government functions.

2. Fraud – Minnesota has a serious fraud and accountability problem. The billions of dollars lost through major fraud scandals have exposed significant weaknesses in the state's government oversight and financial controls. There should be meaningful consequences for fraud and there needs to be a system that follows through on preventing fraud to begin with.

MINNESOTA HOUSE DISTRICT 36A (ELECT 1)

Jim DeMay (DFL)

City of residence: North Oaks
Occupation: Recently retired, former public affairs director — CSL Seqirus, former adjunct professor at Hamline University in Public Administration
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• Mounds View School Board, Treasurer, 2019-present
• Shoreview Rotary Club
• St. John in the Wilderness Episcopal Church, past Board Chair

Q. Why do you want to serve in the Minnesota Legislature?
A. I believe the government needs to provide the right opportunities to keep Minnesota a great place to live, work and, most importantly, raise a family. I am running for state house to make that a reality for all Minnesotans.

When I grew up, it was possible for the kid of a waitress and a small businessman to enjoy the middle class dream, but those opportunities just aren't there for people in the same way. I was able to succeed because of a great public education at Mounds View Schools, and I'm proud that my wife and I are now parents to two MVHS graduates.

I will fight to fully fund public education around the state, and you can count on me to fight for affordable health care and child care for working people like you.

Q. What can the state do in the next five years to help Minnesota prosper?
A. Minnesota needs to invest in and create opportunities for workers in order for our economy to thrive. This includes creating career pathways for the trades and medical industry in high school. Additionally, community college and trade schools must be accessible to all at a low cost. Finally, we need to lower the cost of and make child care more accessible so parents can participate in the workforce while knowing their kids are safe.

Q. What are two challenges that the state faces and how might you solve them if elected?
A. Going to the doctor shouldn't break the bank. But for too many Minnesotans, skyrocketing costs are making them choose between health care and other essential expenses. If elected, I will push to fund tax credits to reduce premiums for Minnesotans and eliminate anti-competitive practices of PhRMA to lower the price of prescription drugs. I will also work to create pathways for "Medicare for All" for those without insurance through their employers, as well as promote preventive services and regular vaccinations and check-ups to reduce overall costs.

Separately, I will support fully funding the newly created Minnesota Office of Inspector General that creates an independent oversight body to stop waste, fraud and abuse. I will work to protect taxpayer dollars by promoting efficiency reviews and regular audits. I will also work to modernize state computer systems to catch fraud, promote efficiency and increase accountability measures for nonprofits.

Sebastian Stoss (R)

City of residence: Circle Pines
Occupation: Photographer/Videographer
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• Legislative aide at Minnesota Senate
• Citizen investigator
• Congressional staff member

Q. Why do you want to serve in the Minnesota Legislature?
A. I want to serve as our next state representative because politics as usual has failed our state. We have seen unprecedented levels of fraud, affordability has gotten worse and Minnesota student grades keep falling. I have demonstrated action. Just look at my investigation into Ramsey County's property tax spending uncovering how over $38 million went out the back door to unaudited outside nonprofits and NGOs. I didn't sit on the sidelines; I followed the money, demanded answers and got results. The county commissioners backed off and lowered this year's property tax increase by 15%. That's what I've done as a private citizen — now I would like to continue this work as state representative.

Q. What can the state do in the next five years to help Minnesota prosper?
A. At the state level, we can eliminate fraud, impose more oversight and provide tax relief. We need mandatory background checks and more required financial audits to both stop fraud that has already occurred and prevent further fraud from happening. Additionally, I support expanding whistleblower rewards to 10–20% of recovered funds with protections from retaliation. These are just a handful of initial solutions that can help prevent fraud. With the money we save once this is done, we can afford to provide tax relief to all Minnesotans. Specifically, we will be able to afford to lower the currently out-of-control property taxes, income taxes and car tab fees.

Q, What are two challenges that the state faces and how might you solve them if elected?
A. The biggest challenge facing Minnesota currently is fraud. Fraud in Minnesota has become a national embarrassment. Fraudsters have been able to steal from Minnesotans for years without any pushback from our government. This should anger every Minnesota taxpayer. To stop fraud, we need to increase oversight and transparency. For instance, counties are not currently legally required to audit organizations they give money to. This makes it easy for bad actors to get funding and misspend it.

The second challenge facing Minnesota is how unaffordable living has become, especially due to out-of-control taxes. Property taxes in particular burden homeowners and prospective homeowners. People tell me they are getting priced out of their own homes and neighborhoods. To lower the tax burden and make Minnesota more affordable, we need private third-party assessors determining property valuations to ensure fairness, and we need to cap annual property taxes raises.

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MINNESOTA HOUSE DISTRICT 36B (ELECT 1)

Brion Curran (DFL)

City of residence: White Bear Lake
Occupation: Former human services and public safety professional
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• State Representative for Minnesota House District 36B
• Board member at Northeast Youth & Family Services
• Member of White Bear Lake American Legion Auxiliary

Q. Why do you want to serve in the Minnesota Legislature?
A. Serving District 36B is an honor. Before I ran for office, I wished there were more "real people just doing what's right" politicians. I came into this fight for you in 2022 ready to make waves in how the government functions. With your trust and my full commitment, I've delivered on that promise. Your State Representative has one job: stand up for your needs and rights. You put me at the table to challenge systems that haven't worked, make them better, or scrap them and start over. Over the last four years I've become a top negotiator to be reckoned with across political lines and issues, always putting people first. I'm dedicated to navigating a complicated, ugly, and sometimes dangerous system for the purpose of making it better. This is why I serve. I'm running to continue fighting for what's right, for all of us, from the inside.

Q. What can the state do in the next five years to help Minnesota prosper?
A. Everyday Minnesotans face real problems affording a home, groceries, childcare, healthcare, and crushing gas prices. The federal government's corporate greed and astounding disrespect for our rights have far exceeded any level of morality we've seen in this country. This is not the path to prosperity. It is devastating Minnesota families. Building our brighter future together means demanding government transparency, cutting strings that allow billionaires to puppeteer our democracy and ruin the environment, and putting power back in the people's hands. We must focus on investing in Minnesotans, root out corporate greed and fraud, and stop the divisive, unproductive narrative that differences are dangerous. In the next five years, Minnesota has the opportunity to make the ultra wealthy finally pay their fair share, cancel hidden corporate tax breaks, ensure jobs with living wages, and provide relief where it's due: to the average family doing their best to thrive.

Q. What are two challenges that the state faces and how might you solve them if elected?
A. Minnesota was victimized by fraudsters. The scams are abhorrent. I tackle this challenge head-on with deep criticism for politicians past and present. The administration led by Governor Walz fumbled under political scrutiny on this issue, losing sight of real-world outcomes. Despite my direct warnings, funding was hastily cut from people who had done no wrong, putting vulnerable people in jeopardy of going homeless or neglected, and care workers out of a paycheck. When Minnesota prosecuted fraud, the federal government further attacked our funding and our constitutional rights. Minnesota is now challenged to combat massive federal cuts to healthcare as a result of politically-driven choices that harm us all. In 20 years of human services, I spent a decade managing government-funded disability billing with an impeccable audit record. I know how these systems function, where technology can be improved, and have a deep understanding of how state regulations impact service delivery.

Patty Bradway (R)

City of residence: Vadnais Heights
Occupation: Registered nurse - BSN
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• Primary election judge
• Caucus coordinator
• Candidate for Minnesota House

Q. Why do you want to serve in the Minnesota Legislature?
A. I never expected to run for office. I became a candidate in 2024 because state leadership mismanaged Minnesota's $18 billion surplus then approved $10 billion in new taxes and fees which put a financial strain on the families and businesses in our community. Also, the Feeding our Future Fraud scheme – about $250 million of federal funds – further exposed a lack of oversight and accountability within Minnesota's leadership. Now in 2026 fraud has been discovered in just about every government program. I'm running to demand oversite, restore accountability, and protect taxpayers' hard-earned money. I'll do this by bringing common sense, sound judgement and critical thinking to the Minnesota Legislature.

Q. What can the state do in the next five years to help Minnesota prosper?
A. Minnesota prospers when her people prosper. Minnesota needs strong new leadership, less government, and legislators willing to cut taxes across the board. It will not take 5 years to help Minnesota prosper if we follow this plan. We must reduce the corporate income tax rate to entice businesses, the job creators, to expand in our state. Personal income taxes and fees need to be reduced so people can bank more of their earned money. We must implement spending cuts on non-essential programs and reduce burdensome regulations in the housing industry. Minnesotans will prosper when they have good job opportunities, can keep more of the income they earn, and afford the home of their choice, resulting in lasting financial security.

Q. What are two challenges that the state faces and how might you solve them if elected?
A. Affordability: Minnesotan's taxes are too high, and statewide fraud has placed an extra burden on our taxpayers. We are paying more for car tabs, fishing licenses, health insurance, property taxes and more. I will work to cut taxes, reduce spending and eliminate waste to bring relief to families, homeowners and businesses.

Public Schools: We have a crisis in our public school system. The amount of money per student keeps increasing while academic outcomes are flatlining. Our students are graduating at high rates yet less than half can read, do math, and understand science at grade level. Reading is the number one concern. The Republican legislation focusing on the Science of Reading is helping to improve student learning outcomes. Our children's future success in society depends on our public schools. Without the skills to read and comprehend what is written, all other subjects will be foreign to them.

MINNESOTA HOUSE DISTRICT 41A (ELECT 1)

Cole Birkeland (DFL)

City of residence: Lake Elmo
Occupation: Attorney
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
I have represented numerous local governments as a city attorney, serve as the director of community service for the Lake Elmo Rotary Club, and give guest lectures to students about the Constitution.

Q. Why do you want to serve in the Minnesota Legislature?
A. Divisive politics failed us and people are hungry for change. Extremist politicians have spent too much time fighting culture wars while the rest of us got stuck with the rising costs of housing, healthcare, fraud, and pollution. Now is our chance to fix it. I'm running for the Minnesota House because I love people and want to make life better for them. As an attorney, I protect people's civil rights and hard-earned retirement savings through the legal system. If elected, I'll protect people's rights and their livelihoods as a legislator. My goal is to build bridges that deliver common-sense results and improve the quality of life for people in my district and across Minnesota.

Q. What can the state do in the next five years to help Minnesota prosper?
A. We can help Minnesota prosper by making housing and energy more affordable. Because everyone needs them, the entire economy suffers when homes and energy are too expensive. When those costs are too high, there is lower economic growth, a leaner state budget, and Minnesotans having to spend more of their hard-earned paychecks on basic necessities. In order to fix this problem, we can reduce the tax burden on homeownership, build more homes in locations that don't disrupt the character of the local community, and make energy cheaper by utilizing solar panels that harness the abundant energy of the sun. The state has the tools it needs to make these necessary investments, and to slash the red tape that stands in the way of making them. We should do both while ensuring that we preserve local communities' control over their own future.

Q. What are two challenges that the state faces and how might you solve them if elected?
A. Two important challenges our state faces are the coming structural deficit in the state budget and the rising cost of healthcare. The impending structural deficit is worsened by the fact that Minnesota is losing young people to other states due to the excessive cost of living. This leads to an aging in-state population, a smaller tax base, but more spending growth. I will push to lower the cost of living so that Minnesota is an attractive choice for young working people to raise their families and prosper. The recent cuts to federal health services such as CHIP and Medicaid will have the effect of increasing healthcare costs for everyone in Minnesota. If elected, I will champion bills that address the cost of care without this federal funding. I will also push for more transparency in medical billing and regulate unnecessary middlemen that drive up health insurance costs.

Wayne Johnson (R)

City of residence: Cottage Grove
Occupation: Business owner
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• Minnesota House Rep
• Washington County Commissioner
• Cottage Grove City Council Member

Q. Why do you want to serve in the Minnesota Legislature?
A. After a successful first term, I want to continue serving and keep Minnesota moving forward. There are plans to reverse our progress, increase unfunded mandates on counties and schools, and raise taxes at all levels. These policies would create greater challenges for homeowners, parents, students, and families already working hard to pay the bills and build a secure future. I want to prevent that from happening. I will continue working for responsible solutions that improve affordability, strengthen our communities, and move Minnesota forward.

Q. What can the state do in the next five years to help Minnesota prosper?
A. The first step is to start listening to those who are invested in our communities—business owners, local elected officials, schools, and residents. We need to stop developing policies without talking to the people they affect and start asking what they would like to see. Ideas and concerns come to legislators all the time, but we need to spend more time asking and listening instead of telling. Unfunded mandates need to stop and be reversed. Taxing businesses and individuals to the point where they cannot maintain financial reserves is not sustainable.

Q. What are two challenges that the state faces and how might you solve them if elected?
A. The first challenge is finding where the money is going. We created the OIG, and that is a start. We need to use the information it provides to make changes and hold people accountable, including department heads and employees.

The second challenge is reducing mandates on businesses, schools, and counties. These mandates drain money that could be used to help businesses thrive, strengthen communities and schools, and improve affordability. There is too much money being shifted around. Finding where the money is going and stopping unnecessary spending will lead to a better future for all Minnesotans.

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MINNESOTA SENATE DISTRICT 33 (ELECT 1)

Karin Housley (R)

City of residence: Stillwater
Occupation: Real estate agent
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• Serving as board chair of the Mississippi River Parkway Coalition and as a member of the Great Lakes Commission, where I actively protect and preserve our state's precious waterways.
• Co-founder of Greater Stillwater Power of 100 Women, raising over $100,000 for local charities in three years.
• Republican lead on the Capital Investment Committee, securing critical state funding for local infrastructure, roads, bridges, and clean drinking water across our district, including White Bear Lake, Mahtomedi, Dellwood and Willernie.

Q. Why do you want to serve in the Minnesota Legislature?
A. Serving in the Minnesota Legislature for the past 14 years has been the honor of a lifetime. Every day, I am driven by a deep commitment to my neighbors and a passion for protecting the quality of life that makes our communities so special. My focus has always been rooted in common-sense solutions—advocating for families, supporting small businesses, and ensuring our government remains accountable and fiscally responsible. There is still important work ahead to build an even stronger future for the next generation, which is why I am running to continue serving.

Q. What can the state do in the next five years to help Minnesota prosper?
A. STOP THE FRAUD! We must stop the rampant fraud plaguing state programs. Imagine what relief could have been given to Minnesotans had we not lost billions to fraud? Next, we must provide meaningful tax relief by eliminating state taxes on worker tips and overtime pay. Working Minnesotans deserve to keep more of what they earn to address workforce shortages. Finally, we must stop wasting taxpayer dollars, rein in excessive spending, and reduce regulatory burdens. By cracking down on fraud, easing the cost of living, and encouraging private-sector growth, we can ensure families and businesses thrive here.

Q. What are two challenges that the state faces and how might you solve them if elected?
A. Again, "Stop the fraud!" Billions of dollars of taxpayer money! We do this by going over the state's budget with a fine-tooth comb, each agency and their programs. In addition, Minnesota also faces outmigration to our surrounding states, driven by high taxation and life being unaffordable. From property taxes to license tab fees. To protect taxpayer dollars and keep families and retirees in our state, we must crack down on fraud, unfunded mandates and stop taxing Social Security. Addressing these priorities requires rejecting reckless fiscal policies, lowering our overall tax burden and focusing on core government responsibilities.

Nat Smith (DFL)

City of residence: Stillwater
Occupation: Attorney
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• Washington County Community Development Block Grant Advisory Committee
• Stillwater Human Rights Commission
• Community advocate for fraud prevention and whistleblower protections

I'm a Stillwater resident, husband, father, and attorney who has spent my career fighting fraud and protecting whistleblowers. I grew up in Minnesota, attended the University of Minnesota and William Mitchell College of Law, and built my legal career around holding bad actors accountable. I serve on the Washington County Community Development Block Grant Citizen Advisory Committee and the Stillwater Human Rights Commission.

Q. Why do you want to serve in the Minnesota Legislature?
A. I'm running because Minnesota needs an independent voice who will focus on solving problems, making government work, and putting people ahead of politics. As a whistleblower attorney, I've spent my career fighting fraud, holding powerful institutions accountable, and protecting the people who speak up when something is wrong. I've seen firsthand what happens when taxpayer dollars are misused.

With billions of taxpayer dollars at stake, the Legislature needs members who understand how fraud happens, how to uncover it, and how to stop it. I will bring my expertise to the Legislature to protect taxpayer dollars, strengthen oversight, and restore trust in government, so we can focus on the issues families talk about every day: the cost of living, strong schools, affordable health care, and protecting the quality of life in our communities. I'm running to listen, work across differences and deliver results for the St. Croix River Valley.

Q. What can the state do in the next five years to help Minnesota prosper?
A. Minnesotans deserve leaders who will focus on making our state a place where families can afford to live, businesses can grow, and communities like ours can thrive. That means controlling unnecessary government spending while protecting the services Minnesota families rely on. We should invest in excellent schools, a strong workforce, reliable infrastructure, and affordable childcare and health care. We also need to make it easier for small businesses and entrepreneurs to succeed by reducing unnecessary barriers and creating a predictable regulatory environment. We can continue to strengthen our economy, while also being strong environmental stewards. Finally, Minnesota must commit to taking fraud seriously. Every single dollar lost to fraud is a dollar that cannot be invested in schools, roads, public safety, or other priorities.

Q. What are two challenges that the state faces and how might you solve them if elected?
A. Two challenges stand out to me: affordability and trust in government. Families like mine are feeling the pressure of higher costs for housing, health care, childcare, groceries, and just about everything else. We need to make Minnesota a place where families can afford to live, businesses can grow, seniors can thrive, and people have a real opportunity to get ahead.

We also have to rebuild trust by making sure our government is accountable for every single taxpayer dollar. I've spent my career fighting fraud, and I know that accountability cannot be an afterthought. As a citizen, I've already worked to introduce a bill to help combat fraud. As your state senator, I would push for stronger auditing, better use of data to identify fraud, and stronger consequences when public dollars are misused. Minnesotans deserve to know their government is working for them—not wasting their money.

MINNESOTA SENATE DISTRICT 36 (ELECT 1)

Heather Gustafson (DFL)

City of residence: Vadnais Heights
Occupation: Minnesota State Senator, District 36
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• Chair, Legislative Inspector General Advisory Commission
• Vice chair, Senate Education Finance Committee
• Vice chair, Senate State and Local Government Committee

I have represented Senate District 36 since 2023. Before running for office, I spent many years as a high school teacher, following an earlier career in radio broadcasting. I hold a degree from Minnesota State University Moorhead and a Master of Education from the College of Saint Scholastica. I am the mother of four daughters. As a senator, I have focused on affordability, public safety and government accountability, building a strong record of bipartisan collaboration.

Q. Why do you want to serve in the Minnesota Legislature?
A. I spent many years as a high school teacher, and as the mother of four daughters, I saw the same pressures in my classroom as I did at my kitchen table. I see what happens when families fall behind on rent, when a school budget gets stretched too thin, or when a kid shows up hungry because breakfast wasn't an option at home. Those aren't abstract policy problems to me. I ran for office because I wanted to bring that problem-solving mindset to the legislature: listen first, find the people willing to work across the aisle, and get something done instead of just talking about it. That's how I passed the school meals program and created Minnesota's first independent watchdog for government fraud, with Republican co-authors. I want to keep doing that work so families can thrive, not just survive.

Q. What can the state do in the next five years to help Minnesota prosper?
A. Minnesota prospers when people trust that resources are being used honestly and families can actually get ahead, not just get by. That starts with practical, bipartisan solutions to tackle the cost of living directly, from housing to child care to health care, so working families in our district aren't doing the math every time they're at the grocery store. Most people in our district, no matter their party, just want a legislature that solves problems instead of fighting culture wars. That's why I authored bipartisan legislation creating a Minnesota Entrepreneurship Task Force, to bring entrepreneurs, workers, and educators together to strengthen what's working in our business climate and fix what isn't. I've built my record on working with Republicans and Democrats for exactly that kind of work, because the next four years shouldn't be about scoring points. They should be about proving state government can still deliver for people.

Q. What are two challenges that the state faces and how might you solve them if elected?
A. First, I've made government accountability a priority. I authored the legislation creating Minnesota's Office of Inspector General, an independent watchdog with authority to investigate fraud across state agencies, which passed with bipartisan support. I now chair the Legislative Inspector General Advisory Commission, and I'll keep pushing to give that office everything it needs to catch bad actors before they drain public resources.

Second, the cost of living has families in our district stretched thin. I've focused on meaningful relief: school meals, which save families real money every month, and consumer protections like click-to-cancel laws that stop companies from quietly draining people's wallets with recurring subscriptions. Going forward, I'll pursue an affordability agenda rooted in what families actually deal with day to day: groceries, child care, health care costs, and holding corporations accountable when they take advantage of people, so families here can actually get ahead.

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MINNESOTA SENATE DISTRICT 36 (ELECT 1)

Heidi Heino (R)

City of residence: Centerville
Occupation: Associate director of partnership development and small-business owner
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• Member, Minnesota Task Force on Priority Admissions to State-Operated Treatment Programs
• President, Fellowship of Extraordinary Women, Twin Cities Chapter
• Volunteer, Eagle Brook Church One-on-One Care Team for eight years

Q. Why do you want to serve in the Minnesota Legislature?
A. I have spent my career in the private sector, negotiating contracts and solving complex problems for my company and our clients. That experience shapes how I look at government. When I see a problem, I want to understand what is causing it and find a practical way to fix it.

Like many others, I have no pension. I have to plan, save, and take responsibility for my family's future. Every additional dollar taken in taxes is money a family cannot use for its needs today or save for tomorrow.

I am running because Minnesota government needs more people with private-sector experience who will ask hard questions, follow the money, and challenge the way things have always been done. Too often, government measures success by how much it spends instead of whether it solved the problem. I want to help restore accountability and make Minnesota a place where families can thrive.

Q. What can the state do in the next five years to help Minnesota prosper?
A. Minnesota can prosper by making it easier for families and businesses to stay and grow here. First, state government must slow spending growth and review programs for results before increasing their budgets. Savings should be used to reduce taxes and avoid shifting state costs onto local property taxpayers.

Second, Minnesota should shorten permitting timelines, eliminate duplicative regulations, and give small businesses one place to navigate state requirements. The state should streamline permitting without dictating local housing decisions. Cities should have a say in how their communities grow.

Third, we must protect the foundations employers and families rely on: safe communities, dependable roads, access to health care, and schools that teach reading, writing, math, and critical thinking. Minnesota has talented people, strong communities, and innovative businesses. The next five years should focus on removing barriers, protecting taxpayer dollars, and making it possible for people to build their future here.

Q. What are two challenges that the state faces and how might you solve them if elected?
A. The first challenge is fraud and the loss of public trust. Billions of taxpayer dollars have been placed at risk because state programs lacked adequate oversight. Once fraud is discovered, the money is often already gone. I would support stronger front-end verification, tiered oversight based on risk, better coordination among agencies, and meaningful consequences for those who misuse public funds. Fraud prevention must begin before the first payment is issued.

The second challenge is affordability. Families are being squeezed by property taxes, energy costs, housing expenses, and the rising cost of everyday necessities. If elected, I would work to restrain government spending, oppose unfunded mandates that increase local property taxes, reduce barriers to housing development, and lower the tax and regulatory burden so Minnesota can retain businesses and workers. Government cannot eliminate every financial pressure, but it should stop making those pressures worse.

WASHINGTON COUNTY SHERIFF (ELECT 1)

Brian Mueller

City of residence: Lake Elmo
Occupation: Chief of Police for the city of Stillwater for almost six years. Previously spent 23 years at the Washington County Sheriff's Office in a variety of roles including: Patrol Deputy, Detective, Sergeant, Patrol Commander, Investigative Commander and Drug Task Force Commander, SWAT Commander, and Chief Deputy overseeing all Sheriff's Office operations
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• Youth hockey coach - Stillwater Area Hockey Association
• Board member - Canvas Health
• Board member - United Way Washington County East

Q. Why do you want to serve as sheriff?
A. Washington County has been my home my entire life. It is where we are raising our five children and the community I have been privileged to serve throughout my 28-year law enforcement career. I want to serve as Sheriff because I care deeply about the safety and future of this community and believe my experience as Washington County Chief Deputy and Stillwater Chief of Police has prepared me to lead from day one.

Washington County is a safe community, and I want to keep it that way. As Sheriff, I will focus on reducing violent crime, community-focused service, strengthening our response to mental health and substance use challenges, supporting our first responders, and caring for those in our jail.

I believe public safety is built on relationships. I will bring proven leadership and strong community partnerships while ensuring we remain accessible and responsive to the people we serve every day.

Q. What can the sheriff's office do in the next five years to keep the county safe?
A. Keeping Washington County safe requires strong, proven leadership, collaboration, and the ability to adapt to emerging public safety challenges. Over the next five years, the Sheriff's Office must strengthen partnerships with local, state, and federal law enforcement to target violent crime, drug trafficking, human trafficking, and repeat offenders.

We must also continue investing in mental health and substance use response, including crisis intervention training, co-responder partnerships, and alternatives to jail when appropriate. Recruiting, retaining, training, and supporting exceptional deputies, correctional staff, 911 dispatchers and professional staff must remain a priority.

Most importantly, the Sheriff's Office must remain connected to the communities we serve. Relationships within this county matter. I have built strong relationships with residents, schools, businesses, community organizations, and local leaders which will allow us to identify concerns early, solve problems together, and keep Washington County safe for future generations.

Q. What are two challenges that the department faces and how might you solve them if elected?
A. Successful public safety depends on having well-trained, supported professionals. Having lived here my entire life, public safety in Washington County is personal to me, and taking care of the women and men who serve is paramount. As Sheriff, I will focus on competitive recruitment, leadership development, employee wellness, quality training, and maintaining a culture where employees feel valued and supported. Retaining experienced deputies, correctional staff, 911 dispatchers, and professional staff is just as important as recruiting the next generation.

Mental health and substance use challenges also require a coordinated response. I will strengthen Crisis Intervention Team training, expand co-responder partnerships with mental health professionals, and improve collaboration with hospitals, treatment providers, and community organizations. When appropriate, we should connect people with treatment and services rather than relying on jail as the solution.
Both challenges require strong partnerships with all Washington County stakeholders, innovative thinking, and experienced leadership.

Jeremy Bolen

City of residence: Cottage Grove
Occupation: Commander of Administration and Executive Officer to the Undersheriff, Ramsey County Sheriff's Office
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• Grant manager and agency liaison-Ramsey County Sheriff's Foundation
• Team captain, communications Officer, and trustee-Law Enforcement United-Virginia Division
• Volunteer youth basketball and youth recreation soccer coach-Cottage Grove

Q. Why do you want to serve as sheriff?
A. I want to serve as your next sheriff to better Washington County with fresh ideas, a bold stance on crime, improved mental health and substance abuse response and programming, and enhanced community engagement between law enforcement and the communities we serve.

Q. What can the sheriff's office do in the next five years to keep the county safe?
A. Fill vacancies and improve recruitment and retention, restore safe staffing levels in our patrol division, jail, and dispatch center, support staff with balanced workloads and resources, expand mental health and substance abuse services, and ensure accountability through transparency and oversight.

Q. What are two challenges that the department faces and how might you solve them if elected?
A. 1. Mental health and substance abuse response and programming. I will partner with community experts who have experience and knowledge within the field, and I will expand the co-response model where deputies respond to persons in crisis with a social worker.

2. Expand agency resources to coincide with the expansion of our communities. Ensure that sheriff's resources can supplement municipal agencies when understaffed or unavailable to respond to emergencies or calls for service.

VOTERS' GUIDE 2026

WASHINGTON COUNTY COMISSIONER DISTRICT 2 (ELECT 1)

Stan Karwoski

City of residence: Oakdale
Occupation: Retired, Graco Inc. – 38 year career in product development
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• Elected – Currently Washington County Commissioner, District 2; past Oakdale Mayor and City Council Member
• Education – Volunteer service on the Century College Foundation Board and Metro State Foundation Board.
• Commissioner service – Workforce Development Board; Transportation Advisory Board; Washington County Park and Open Space Commission; Minnesota Inter-County Association Board - past President; East Metro Strong Board - Co-Chair; Greater MSP Board; Century Avenue Coalition; and several Local Chambers of Commerce.

Q. Why do you want to serve on the County Board?
A. My pledge is to continue representing residents with proven, trusted, and effective service. Not limited but applying myself to these priorities: Public Safety and Mental Health – As an elected County Commissioner my most important responsibility is public safety. Our County Board approved investments in our sheriff's office to keep crime low. Our county supports our County Attorney's Office to hold criminals accountable. Our county is also making investments in early mental health intervention by embedding our Social Worker Crisis Unit within policing to prevent costly crime and tragic incidents.

Clean Water and Protecting our Environment – Our county is protecting critical pristine water and natural areas to assure clean water for our future.

Workforce Development and Affordable Housing – My workforce commitment is helping residents find quality careers and improved wages. Also working with our Community Development Agency to increase private affordable housing investments. Quality jobs help make housing affordable.

Q. What can the county do in the next five years to help the area prosper?
A. We have an excellent county but cannot stand still and assume our county will continue to prosper. Our community needs many positive quality-of-life factors for our future to remain bright. These are priorities I will work on to assure our county has a prosperous future.

Reasonable County Property Taxes – Continue to support only correct and needed budget priorities.

Workforce Shortage – Our businesses need to grow using our county residents to fill these good paying quality jobs otherwise businesses will leave our county and relocate where they can find skilled employees. I'm assigned workforce development and work on career pathway strategies to meet our current and future workforce needs. My priority is to use our residents to meet this shortage.

Housing Shortage & Affordability – Support adding housing that is quality and affordable for all ages.
Clean Environment, Water, and Natural Areas – Continue protecting important acreage for today and future generations.

Q. What are two challenges that the county faces and how might you solve them if elected?
A. First keeping Washington County a great place to live. Second, keeping county property taxes as low as possible.

I'm very active in our community and these are two important challenges I hear consistently from our residents. A primary elected responsibility is listening and effectively representing all residents by getting their input. An example of listening and acting is building the Wildwood Library, new county 12 with sidewalks, and protecting land and water primarily using our land and water legacy program. These actions make our community a great place to live. Improvements must be made with financial discipline when facing challenges of providing federal and state mandated but needed citizen social service programs with increased federal and state cost shift responsibility to our county. We are managing this financial pressure by collaborating on projects for efficiency with our cities and increasing our county tax base with quality growth.

CANDIDATE EDISON VIZUETE DID NOT RESPOND

BIRCHWOOD VILLAGE MAYOR (ELECT 1)

Jennifer Arsenault

City of residence: Birchwood Village
Occupation: Retired educator
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• Mayor of Birchwood Village
• Member of Birchwood Village Parks' Committee

Q. Why do you want to serve on the City Council?
A. Serving on the City Council provides a unique opportunity to tangibly improve peoples' lives. The decisions the Council makes on behalf of the residents, can often have a direct impact on their daily lives. Serving as Mayor has enabled me to initiate several changes within the City that I would like to see through to completion which is why I am seeking a second term.

Q. What can the City Council do in the next five years to help the city prosper?
A. One of the primary responsibilities of City Council is to develop and manage a responsible budget that reflects the priorities and feedback of Birchwood Village residents. Residents have made it clear that they value a well-maintained community and expect their tax dollars to be used thoughtfully to preserve and improve the City. The current Council had identified City maintenance and improvements and communication with residents as key priorities. Over the next five years, my goal is for residents to see the results from these efforts. I hope that, through thoughtful planning, responsible budgeting and continued engagement with residents, the progress made will be evident in the condition of our roads, infrastructure, and public spaces.

Q. What are two challenges in your city and how might you solve them if elected?
A. Two significant challenges facing Birchwood Village are: on-going road maintenance and the need for infrastructure repair and improvements. These challenges are not specific to Birchwood, but Birchwood's revenue source is. Since the City receives no income from commercial entities, the cost of any repairs or improvements is borne primarily by its residents.

The City Council has a responsibility to ensure that Birchwood maintains safe, reliable, and functional infrastructure while exercising careful stewardship of public resources. The challenge is to address critical maintenance and improvements in a fiscally responsible manner while minimizing the financial burden on residents in an effort to preserve the affordability and quality of life that make Birchwood Village a desirable community.

These challenges can be solved by working closely with all affected stakeholders. Developing a fluid, long-term plan complete with financing options which is approved by the residents would be a logical way to address these issues.

BIRCHWOOD VILLAGE CITY COUNCIL MEMBER AT LARGE (ELECT 1)

Paul Drews

City of residence: Birchwood Village
Occupation: Retired after 40 years. During the first half of my career, I worked as a juvenile group counselor and probation officer, helping people re-enter and integrate back into their communities. Then I moved to the private sector, collaborating with government agencies to improve supervision programs. These experiences gave me valuable insight into navigating government processes, evaluating programs and working collaboratively to solve problems. I'll bring these experiences to city government through thoughtful decision-making, responsible stewardship of taxpayer resources and a commitment to listening to and serving our community.
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• Secretary, Birchwood Village Dock Association
• Volunteer, Valley Outreach

Q. Why do you want to serve on the City Council?
A. I care deeply about Birchwood Village and want to be a good steward of the community we call home. My experience working with government agencies, solving problems and bringing people together can be valuable to our city. With my recent retirement I now have the time, interest and ability to give back through public service. I enjoy working with others, listening to different perspectives and finding practical solutions. I would be honored to help preserve what makes our community special while working together to address the challenges ahead.

Q. What can the City Council do in the next five years to help the city prosper?
A. The City Council should develop a realistic, long-term plan to address aging roads, sewer systems and other infrastructure while remaining financially responsible and responsive to other community needs.

One of the first things we noticed when we moved here were the parks and beaches that make Birchwood Village such a special place. These are treasures that we should protect and preserve for future generations. The Parks and Natural Resources Committee plays an important role in that stewardship, working with partners such as the Washington County Conservation District and Rice Creek Watershed District. The City Council should continue to support these efforts and ensure that protecting our parks, beaches and natural resources remains a community priority.

Finally, we should continue to build on our new Connections Committee's efforts to bring our community closer together by creating opportunities for residents of all ages and interests to connect, participate and build lasting relationships.

Q. What are two challenges in your city and how might you solve them if elected?
A. Two significant challenges facing our city are our aging roads and deteriorating sewer and drainage infrastructure, including erosion resulting from inadequate drainage. Addressing these issues will require a long-term, financially responsible plan that prioritizes the most critical needs, explores available funding and clearly communicates priorities, costs and timelines to residents.

I would also make listening and transparency central to the process. Residents deserve an opportunity to share their concerns, understand the challenges we face and have a voice in evaluating potential solutions. I would work collaboratively with residents, city staff, engineers and other experts to develop practical solutions while balancing infrastructure needs with the city's financial resources and other community priorities.

VOTERS' GUIDE 2026

DELLWOOD MAYOR (ELECT 1)

Mike McGill

City of residence: Dellwood
Occupation: Entrepreneur and mayor of Dellwood
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• Mayor, Dellwood – Last eight years
• City Council, Dellwood
• Treasurer, Dellwood

Q. Why do you want to be the Mayor of Dellwood?
A. To continue the work of the last eight years. Running the city in a fiscally responsible manner that best serves all of the residents of our city.

Q. What can the City Council do in the next five years to help the city prosper?
A. If reelected, I will continue to work with the City Council to operate the city in an efficient and fiscally responsible manner. We have an experienced and dedicated council who are committed to serving the community in a conscientious manner.

Q. What are the challenges in your city and how might you solve them if elected?
A. Dellwood faces many of the same challenges that any small city faces. We must provide adequate services for our residents in an efficient and cost-effective manner. We must evaluate and analyze all issues that come before the council and make judgments as to what is best for our city. Two ongoing issues that we are evaluating are whether to construct the Lake Links Trail within Dellwood and whether or not the city can / should take over jurisdiction of TH 244 within the City.

DELLWOOD CITY COUNCIL MEMBER AT LARGE (ELECT 2)

Brady Ramsay

City of residence: Dellwood
Occupation: Certified Public Accountant
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• City Council also serving as deputy mayor and road commissioner
• Treasurer for the city of Dellwood
• Board member for the White Bear Lake Conservation District

Q. Why do you want to serve on the City Council?
A. I want to continue serving to help preserve what makes Dellwood special while making thoughtful, fiscally responsible decisions for our future.

Q. What can the City Council do in the next five years to help the city prosper?
A. Plan ahead for road needs, deliver essential services efficiently and keep Dellwood a desirable community for future generations.

Q. What are two challenges in your city and how might you solve them if elected?
A. Rising costs and preserving our community's character.

Greg Boosalis

City of residence: Dellwood
Occupation: 45 years as a practicing attorney; 27 years as an FBI Agent, Supervisor and Division Legal Counsel; JD William Mitchel/ LLM George Washington Law School.
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• Third term as City Council member

Q. Why do you want to serve on the City Council?
A. I wish to serve on the City Council because I very much appreciate the unique beautiful rural nature of Dellwood and want to preserve such for future generations.

Q. What can the City Council do in the next five years to help the city prosper?
A. In order to make Dellwood prosper, I plan to work with my other council members to enhance safety by enhancing its roadways for pedestrians as well as making sure that our citizens enjoy a sufficient law enforcement protections and deterrence against crime. I also will ensure that Dellwood remains a fiscally conservative community which uses tax dollars wisely.

Q. What are two challenges in your city and how might you solve them if elected?
A. Over the next five years Dellwood is faced with several challenges. One of which is the bike pedestrian path that has been proposed for Dellwood. What appears to be a simple matter on the surface is quite complex when the proposed trail property is not owned by Dellwood and Hwy 244 is owned by the state. Over the next few years, I will be committed to work with private landowners as well state and county officials to make the trail a reality. The trail however must be balanced with the interests of the private landowners and the potential financial burden on the citizens of Dellwood.

GEM LAKE CITY COUNCIL MEMBER (ELECT 2)

Jim Tschida

City of residence: Gem Lake
Occupation: Retired. Managed property insurance claims for 35 years.
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
This is my first civic involvement role.

Q. Why do you want to serve on the City Council?
A. I want to be on the Gem Lake City Council because I care deeply about our community and its residents. I want to see our city continue to be a place where families feel safe, businesses can thrive and people feel proud to live here. The decisions made by City Council directly affects our neighborhoods, our infrastructure, our public safety, and overall quality of life. These decisions deserve leaders who are willing to listen, ask difficult questions, work collaboratively and always keep the best interest of the residents at the center of the conversation.

Q. What can the City Council do in the next five years to help the city prosper?
A. Not provided

Q. What are two challenges in your city and how might you solve them if elected?
A. 1. Apple Ford redesign and expansion:
If elected I will work collaboratively with Apple Ford, residents, city staff and other stakeholders to develop a thoughtful solution to the Apple Ford rebuild project that is beneficial to both business and community. This plan should address concerns regarding lighting, privacy, traffic flow, and safety, while creating an appropriate transition between commercial and residential areas. I would advocate for a design solution that would soften the ecological impact, including additional green space, trees, native landscaping, stormwater management, and appropriate screening and setbacks. My goal would be to help create a plan that allows Apple Ford to succeed while protecting neighborhood character, quality of life and our community's long-term interests.
2. Ensuring every Gem Lake resident has safe, potable water is a priority for me. I will listen to affected residents, pursue available resources, and work toward practical, lasting solutions to assist the affected households.

CANDIDATE LEONARD CACIOPOPO DID NOT RESPOND

LWV
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF WHITE BEAR LAKE AREA
Hear from your candidates BEFORE you vote!
MN HOUSE • MN SENATE • MAYOR • CITY COUNCIL • SCHOOL BOARD
Candidate forums available at lwv-wbla.org or youtube.com/@lwvwbla
Paid for by LWVWBLA
865973

VOTERS' GUIDE 2026

GRANT COUNCIL MEMBER AT LARGE (ELECT 2)

Greg Anderson

City of residence: Grant for 30 years
Occupation: I'm a civil engineer with three decades of experience working with cities, counties, planning commissions and elected officials. My professional background has given me practical insight into local government, infrastructure planning, budgeting and public decision-making.
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
I currently serve on the Grant City Council, following my appointment in February 2025. I previously served on the Grant Planning Commission from 2023 to 2025 and am a member of the Fusion Learning Partners Board of Directors. I bring preparation, practical experience, and a commitment to respectful, resident-focused service.

Q. Why do you want to serve on the city council?
A. I'm running because I care deeply about Grant and want to continue serving the community my family and I have called home for nearly 30 years. My time on the City Council and Planning Commission has shown me that good local government depends on preparation, common sense, respectful discussion and listening to residents. As a municipal engineer, I also bring practical experience working with cities and counties. I want to serve with openness, fairness and a steady focus on what is best for Grant residents.

Q. What can the city council do in the next five years to help the city prosper?
A. Over the next five years, Grant can prosper by protecting what residents value most while planning responsibly for the future. Updating the Comprehensive Plan (due at the end of 2028) is a key opportunity to preserve Grant's rural character, including current land-use patterns and lot sizes. At the same time, the city needs a practical Capital Road Improvement Plan that identifies priorities, budgets carefully, and makes smart infrastructure investments. With sound planning, transparent decisions and respect for taxpayers, Grant can remain rural, well-managed, and prepared for the years ahead.

Q. What are two challenges in your city and how might you solve them if elected?
A. Two challenges facing Grant are rising costs and keeping residents engaged. To address budget pressures, I would rely on careful planning, practical infrastructure priorities, and responsible spending that respects taxpayers while maintaining essential services. To strengthen public engagement, I would continue listening, showing up at neighborhood meetings and city events, and encouraging residents to serve on committees and commissions. Good decisions come from open conversations, common sense and working together to protect Grant's rural character and long-term future.

John Rog

City of residence: Grant since 2007
Occupation: Consulting engineer, specializing in Six Sigma
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
I have been in City Council since 2018, and before that I was chairman of the Planning Commission for two years.

Q. Why do you want to serve on the City Council?
A. I want the city of Grant to stay rural. 10-acre average, 5-acre minimum. Keep wells and septic. No city water!

Q. What can the City Council do in the next five years to help the city prosper?
A. We are going to have to keep taxes low, and services to citizens the same!

Q. What are two challenges in your city and how might you solve them if elected?
A. The first challenge is our budget. Keeping the inflation rate lower for our taxes is difficult when all of our line items continue to climb. We can lower different areas without increasing all. It's a balancing act.

The state of Minnesota has decided that they know what best for our city and has given us no option on cannabis. That is wrong and I will work to tell our State Legislators how wrong that bill is.

We as a city of 4,100 should be able to opt out. We don't even get gas tax funds for our roads! You need 5,000 residents for that!

VADNAIS HEIGHTS MAYOR (ELECT 1)

Greg Urban

City of residence: Vadnais Heights
Occupation: Business owner
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
- Vadnais Heights Deputy Mayor
- Vadnais Heights City Council Member
- Vadnais Heights Planning Commission

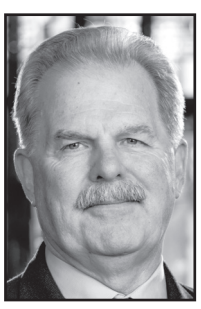
Q. Why do you want to serve on the City Council?
A. I want to serve as the mayor of Vadnais Heights to follow up on the two very successful terms I served on the Vadnais Heights City Council. During my time on the council, we kept taxes low while making record investments in city infrastructure and maintaining quality city services. I believe the 66% increase in the city budget in the past four years is extremely excessive, especially considering more increases are planned. I also believe that a guiding principle must always be that the council is elected to serve the residents, and it seems that this has been forgotten about.

Q. What can the City Council do in the next five years to help the city prosper?
A. The city must listen to their residents, understanding that not everyone will always get their way. It makes no sense to force city projects upon a community when it appears that a majority object. I believe Vadnais Heights is a very nice city as is, and we do not need to reinvent the wheel to keep it nice. My focus as Mayor will be to avoid costly and unneeded city projects and to keep taxes low, all while maintaining what we have and continuing to provide quality city services. Additionally, I would like to see street assessments end, as they place a large financial burden on the affected residents for the apparent privilege of living on a city street.

Q. What are two challenges in your city and how might you solve them if elected?
A. A decision will soon be made on whether the proposed new fire station will move forward, which I oppose due to the proposed costs. To the extent any changes to existing facilities are needed, I believe there are several alternatives that would cost significantly less.

Regardless of how the fire station issue resolves, our public safety costs continue to see significant cost increases. We will need to have community discussions and think outside the box for ways to provide quality public safety services while not placing an excessive tax burden on our residents.

Mike Krachmer



City of residence: Vadnais Heights
Occupation: Retired
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
- I volunteer with organizations providing safe, affordable housing such as Solid Ground and Habitat for Humanity.
- I am engaged regularly with local and regional city government leadership, including Cities for Safe and Stable Communities and the Regional Council of Mayors, and I communicate often with our state legislators. This networking helps identify additional resources for our city.
- I show up at public events to keep connected to the people that we serve, and I meet with residents, at their request, in addition to three scheduled opportunities per month.

Q. Why do you want to serve on the City Council?
A. As mayor since 2023, my understanding of the needs of our community and how to serve our residents has grown significantly. Providing sustainable and reliable city services, updating the city's infrastructure, and improving planning and budgeting processes has been successful to date, but there is more to do. I am running again to continue that ongoing work.

Q. What can the City Council do in the next five years to help the city prosper?
A. I will continue to execute the long-term plans laid out for the city, including:
- designating the funds to reduce and finally eliminate special assessments for street projects.
- implementing the parks master plan.
- implementing the pavement management policy.
- obtaining grant funding for city projects.
- improving communication and engagement with our residents.

Q. What are two challenges in your city and how might you solve them if elected?
A. The current trends in our economy are making the provision of public services and maintenance of infrastructure more and more costly. We need to find ways, together, to provide the quality of life that our residents deserve while limiting tax burdens to the best of our ability. I believe that continuing to refine our strategies for investing and budgeting, with input from our residents, is critical. We will do this by creating a finance commission.

Our city has a housing challenge. We have very limited affordable housing for our teachers and firefighters and those who work in our retail and manufacturing businesses. A large number of our residents are rent-or-mortgage burdened. I will continue to support the development of both workforce and market-rate housing.

CANDIDATE BRIAN HENDEY DID NOT RESPOND

VOTERS' GUIDE 2026

VADNAIS HEIGHTS CITY COUNCIL (ELECT 2)

Craig Johnson

City of Residence: Vadnais Heights, for the past 46 years, where my wife, Nancy, and I have raised two sons. We are now the proud grandparents of seven grandchildren.
Occupation: Engineering project manager, (retired)
List three most recent civic involvement roles
• Vadnais Heights City Council, 2012-2020
• I have been active in my neighborhood, working to modify the Greenhaven Green Street Project. I also helped collect petition signatures to stop the sale of $33 million in city bonds.
• My project engineering and business background help me evaluate projects for feasibility and long-term financial impact and make me qualified to serve on the City Council again.

Q. Why do you want to serve on the City Council?
A. I previously served on the Vadnais Heights City Council after the 2008 council voted to build the Vadnais Sports Dome and hockey rink. The city issued a $20 million bond and spent another $4 million covering losses, which compelled me to run. The city also built Vadnais Commons, the South Fire Station and a maintenance building. Vadnais Commons has become a drain on city resources and is too expensive for many residents to use. The South Fire Station now stores fire equipment, but its living and sleeping quarters remain unused. These poor decisions are why I first ran for council. I believe the current City Council has made similar mistakes with the Green Street Project and its attempt to issue $33 million in bonds for a new fire station without residents' consent.

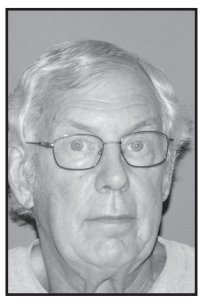
Q. What can the City Council do in the next five years to help the city prosper?
A. The next City Council should focus on maintaining existing infrastructure, including repairing roads more often than every 25 to 30 years. The city should also review staffing and operations to identify duplicated work and services it should no longer provide. To lower and control the annual property tax levy, the city must address salaries and benefits, which make up 80% of the annual budget and are the largest driver of the levy. As the current council adds more infrastructure, staffing needs also increase.

The city also needs to review its interactions with our local businesses and homeowners to remove unnecessary forms and regulations that make building permits difficult to process.

Q. What are two challenges in your city and how might you solve them if elected?
A. The current Council was so confident in their decision to build a new fire station that they hired an architectural firm to complete all the construction drawings using $1 million dollars from the city's general funds. They had planned on simply approving the issuance of $33 million dollars of bonds that the citizens were responsible to pay back. The council hired a public relations firm to convince the voters that there is no other option. We need new alternative options and transparency.

In the future, the City Council needs to recognize that we are a city of 12,000 to 14,000 people. We are not as big as our neighbors, and we cannot afford to have all the same amenities as they do. We will need to look at cooperating and sharing equipment with our neighbors, and we will need to contract out more nonessential services.

Donald Jorgenson



City of residence: Vadnais Heights
Occupation: Retired electrician
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• Attending Lion's Waffle Breakfast twice a year
• Participating in the Vadnais Heights Heritage Days activities

Q. Why do you want to serve on the City Council?
A. I want to bring common sense and fiscal responsibility to the city of Vadnais Heights. I believe that the city has a spending problem. I watched as the playing surface at the local tennis court was resurfaced. A year or two later, the asphalt base was torn out and replaced. The playing surface was then once again replaced. I watched as perfectly good playground equipment was removed and replaced with new equipment.

The city budgeted $50,000 for a new manlift. They spent $20,000 on the manlift. With the remaining money, they decided to purchase a new vehicle for $42,000, to plow the trails. They only received one bid to provide the new vehicle, while spending $12,000 more than budgeted. Why not use the new Bobcat that was purchased last year to plow the trails?

Q. What can the City Council do in the next five years to help the city prosper?
A. The City Council needs to ensure that we have an affordable and safe community to ensure that the city prospers for the next five years. The City Council needs to ensure that city services are easy to use, transparent and cost effective. The recent bond proposal for a new fire station was excessive and would have forced many homeowners out of their homes. The City Council needs to keep our property taxes as low as possible to ensure a diverse, affordable community.

Q. What are two challenges in your city and how might you solve them if elected?
A. The first challenge that the city of Vadnais Heights will face is the South Fire Station. Eventually, the South Fire Station will need to be updated or replaced. A 35-year-old building is fully capable of functioning for several more years. I would suggest that we do things "the old-fashioned way" — that is to save the money and pay cash. The current city hall was paid for with cash; let's do it again.

The second challenge is to avoid subsidizing any development within the city. Tax Increment Financing was originally meant to improve blighted areas. Any undeveloped land within the city is prime real estate, not blighted. TIF dedicates that any increased tax revenue goes to pay off the debt on the project. The city and school district receive none of the increased tax revenue, just the extra cost of providing services. I am completely opposed to using TIF on any upcoming projects.

Katherine Doll Kanne

City of residence: Vadnais Heights
Occupation: Regulatory affairs manager, Abbott Laboratories
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• Vadnais Heights City Council
• Board of Directors of Vadnais Lakes Area Water Management Organization (VLAWMO)
• Vadnais Heights Planning Commission

Q. Why do you want to serve on the City Council?
A. When I ran for City Council in 2022, my goal was to establish better long-term budget planning. Prior to the 2023 city budget, our capital improvement plan planned for the next five years. This shorter-term planning made it difficult to save for larger expenses to maintain our current level of services. Our street replacement program wasn't keeping pace with the rate at which our roads were deteriorating. Our playgrounds were shrinking when we needed to fund replacements. We now have a 10-year capital improvement plan (matching our neighboring cities) and are working towards a 15-year plan. We now have a parks master plan to guide saving and funding our parks. I want to ensure we maintain our longer-term planning mindset so we are acknowledging our budget challenges early and working as soon as reasonably possible to address them.

Q. What can the City Council do in the next five years to help the city prosper?
A. In addition to maintaining a long-term budget planning mindset, the council can help the city prosper by continuing to pursue outside funding opportunities for infrastructure projects. We have had a couple recent big wins securing state funding for two infrastructure projects. In 2026, our city secured $4.75 million from the state bonding bill for the Vadnais Lakes Blvd. Trail in partnership with our state-level elected leaders, and another $2.8 million from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund for nature-based recreation that will improve water quality and reduce flooding issues in partnership with VLAWMO. Our city council should continue to work with our city partners on advocating for our community's interests, as well as empower our city staff with the resources necessary to pursue outside funding opportunities.

Q. What are two challenges in your city and how might you solve them if elected?
A. Most of our city's challenges are tied to funding, so the introduction of longer-term planning in the past four years will help identify and provide time to resolve these challenges. For example, two challenges we're addressing are removing special property assessments and investing in our parks and trails. Last year, we began a 10-plus-year process to build a fund to scale down and eventually remove special property assessments for street projects. This will alleviate the burden on property owners and reduce cost for the city by eliminating the administrative process. We also created a parks master plan with short, medium and long-term priorities (i.e., five, five-to-10 and 10-plus-year timelines). Maintaining longer-term budget planning will aid the city in anticipating expenses years in advance, allowing budget and saving over time to meet the city's future needs.

Kelly Jozwowski

City of residence: Vadnais Heights
Occupation: Industrial sales
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• Vadnais Heights City Council
• Vadnais Heights Planning Commission Liaison
• Vadnais Heights Park, Recreation & Trails Commission Vice Chair

Q. Why do you want to serve on the City Council?
A. I've spent the last four years working to improve infrastructure planning and forecasting, foster a more connected community, and improve the environmental stewardship of the city. There is more work we can do. I would love the opportunity over the next four years to continue working with and meeting residents where they are. I want to hear everyone's concerns and find ways to improve the Vadnais Heights experience. It's a beautiful place to live and raise a family. Everyone in town should have access to and be able to enjoy the natural beauty that is Vadnais Heights.

Q. What can the City Council do in the next five years to help the city prosper?
A. Over the next five years, I see the council spending more time engaging and listening to the community's needs. We succeed when we all work together including the tough subjects like implementing our parks master plan, moving away from street assessments, and managing a predictable and steady levy. I hope to expand our low-interest home improvement loan program as well as support developers for the very few undeveloped lots left in our city to maximize land usage as the market dictates.

Q. What are two challenges in your city and how might you solve them if elected?
A. The biggest challenges currently are funding and development. For years, the councils before us focused on one irresponsible action: keep the levy dangerously low. This meant years of unfunded essential improvements: road repairs, fire truck purchases, public works maintenance projects, etc. Meanwhile, core services like sewer and water continued to climb with inflation. This required proportional corrective levies during my tenure for FY24 and FY25. Since then, the council has worked diligently to level out these increases. Currently, we are seeing those boosts yield benefits with road projects and public safety improvements. The budget has now been reasonably balanced for a city of our size and we must meet the challenge to maintain that stability. As for development, recent research shows a housing deficit, which I intend to focus on. I will work with and support housing developments that make sense for all our community.

VOTERS' GUIDE 2026

VADNAIS HEIGHTS CITY COUNCIL (ELECT 2)

Patricia Youker

City of residence: Vadnais Heights
Occupation: I currently serve as office manager of a healthcare facility, overseeing operations, billing and administration. My experience includes working alongside engineers to improve mainframe computer manufacturing processes. I earned a degree in Fashion Management/Marketing with a 4.0 GPA, developed nationwide retail training and merchandising programs, own a photography business, and worked in a CPA office. These experiences taught me to ask questions, understand numbers, find practical solutions and be accountable for results.
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• Vadnais Heights City Council Member, 2019–2022
• VLAWMO board representative
• VLAWMO treasurer

Q. Why do you want to serve on the City Council?
A. I am running for Vadnais Heights City Council because I care about our community and believe residents deserve a strong voice in how their city is run and how their tax dollars are spent. Having served on the council before, I understand the responsibility that comes with the position. I know the importance of asking tough questions, listening to residents, and challenging what is presented when the numbers or facts don't add up. With city spending and property taxes continuing to rise, we need to get back to basics: prioritize essential services, control spending, plan for what we can afford and involve residents before major decisions are made — not after. Experience has taught me that good governing requires more than approving what is put in front of you. It requires accountability, independent judgment and the willingness to ask whether taxpayers are getting real value for every dollar the city spends.

Q. What can the City Council do in the next five years to help the city prosper?
A. Vadnais Heights is largely developed, so prosperity cannot simply mean more development and more spending. We must make the most of what we have by supporting existing businesses; removing unnecessary barriers to investment; and encouraging responsible redevelopment that strengthens our tax base, benefits residents, and preserves the character and sense of community that make Vadnais Heights a great place to live. Growth should pay its way and bring lasting value.

Responsible spending also means taking care of infrastructure taxpayers have already funded. Streets, utilities, buildings and other public assets require long term planning, anticipating major expenses, setting priorities, building reserves and phasing projects responsibly. Planning ahead helps prevent unnecessary property-tax spikes.
The City Council can help Vadnais Heights prosper by supporting a strong local economy, maintaining dependable services, controlling costs and ensuring taxpayers are not asked to pay more without a clear and demonstrated need.

Q. What are two challenges in your city and how might you solve them if elected?
A. The first challenge is the rising cost of city government. Residents are paying more for nearly every part of their lives, and city hall cannot ignore what taxpayers can afford. We need to separate needs from wants, understand the full, long-term cost before approving major projects, pursue outside funding first, and maintain what taxpayers own before adding new obligations.

The second challenge is restoring public trust. That starts with better communication and transparency. Major financial and development decisions should not feel decided before residents have a meaningful opportunity to weigh in. Financial information should be clear, alternatives and costs presented openly, and public input sought early. The council and city work for the residents — not the other way around.

Residents deserve clear information about what is being considered, the alternatives, and the costs before decisions are made. Meaningful public input should help shape decisions, not simply be acknowledged afterward.

WHITE BEAR TOWNSHIP SUPERVISOR SEAT B (ELECT 1)

Beth Artner

City of residence: White Bear Township
Occupation: Project manager Commercial Construction, small business owner, semi-retired
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• Town Board Supervisor
• Former chair/vice chair Planning Commission (20 years); Township Safety and Utility Commission
• Entira Advisory Board

Q. Why do you want to serve on the Board of Supervisors?
A. I've always been interested in the township, especially through Planning Commission. My family, extended family and many friends love and appreciate living in the township. They asked me to consider running and so I did. My work and life experience has been very useful as a board Supervisor.

Q. What can the Board of Supervisors do in the next five years to help the township prosper?
A. We are mostly built out, so strengthening and enhancing what we have to continue keeping us a very desirable community for work, to live, recreation and environment.

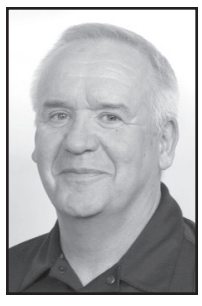
The good news is that the town has made some solid decisions in the past regarding business and residential growth, creating a good balance for township residents.

Q. What are two challenges in your township and how might you solve them if elected?
A. Challenges for the township are unfunded mandates by the state, county and federal governments, which means money for infrastructure projects is not reliable in the current climate. Property taxes have truly reached an unsustainable level. Ramsey County has acknowledged that property taxpayers are overburdened. I'd like to invite any interested residents to form a Citizen Committee, to help identify ways of relieving the pressure of unfunded mandates and unsustainable property taxes.

Township actions could include pooling resources with other cities, looking into creative solutions for increasing efficiency for land and infrastructure maintenance. Continue looking for grant opportunities. Ask residents to plant trees and water them to create more tree canopy along with adding flower and pollinators beds along the streets and boulevards. Researching and communicating to residents things they can do to help the town. Even small gestures are beneficial; let's leave the place better than we found it.

WHITE BEAR TOWNSHIP SUPERVISOR SEAT C (ELECT 1)

Steve Ruzek



City of residence: White Bear Township
Occupation: Retired as regional manager/director, after over 30 years in insurance/financial field; some consulting now in my spare time
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• Town Board Supervisor, White Bear Township
• Town Board liaison to White Bear Township Planning Commission
• Town Board liaison to White Bear Township Park Board

Q. Why do you want to serve on the Board of Supervisors?
A. Serving White Bear Township, my family's home for over 40 years, is a great privilege. Township government, being local and concerned with day-to-day quality of life issues, is grassroots government at its best. Our form of government is uniquely designed for citizen participation, and I feel blessed to be a part of that. I want to continue my efforts in supporting the citizens of White Bear Township as we strive for a proper balance between careful spending to keep costs low and providing modern, quality services to all constituents. This is a great place to live, and I want to do my part to keep it that way.

Q. What can the Board of Supervisors do in the next five years to help the township prosper?
A. The Town Board must not become complacent. We must stay involved in our communities and continue to educate ourselves on what people love about the Township and what improvements we can make. We need to keep a close eye on the economy, including our bond rating, getting the best guidance we can on how best to provide services while being prudent in taking on financial obligations. We must continue to speak up for the needs of our Township, pursuing support for our quality of life and our fair share of local government aid. While we have been successful in working with our state representatives in obtaining some funding, we must work diligently to keep advocating for a fair share. We are proud of the quality of our office and public works staff and must continue to staff prudently. We must continue to plan proactively for our future needs.

Q. What are two challenges in your township and how might you solve them if elected?
A. Maintaining infrastructure is the ever-present challenge. We are the largest township by population in Minnesota with 70 miles of roads to plow and maintain, busy parks and trail systems to manage and improve, water systems to maintain to meet our needs and police, fire and emergency medical services to manage effectively. All these are basic and crucial but costly. The challenge is to manage these needs, always planning for future needs. We need to be frugal and continue to look for funding sources from our partners, searching for grants and cost sharing to lessen the direct tax burden on our residents. Another challenge is to maintain our small-town feel. Citizen engagement to provide a sense of belonging will continue to be key. The Township must actively solicit citizen involvement by listening carefully, responding quickly and communicating effectively through every means available. We must make it easy to be informed and involved.

POLITICAL BRIEF

League of Women Voters seeks questions for forums

The League of Women Voters – White Bear Lake's candidate forum season is in full swing. Voters who would like to submit questions for Minnesota State Senate District 33, Minnesota State House District 33A and the Mahtomedi School Board should do so by Sept. 21. Once completed, the forums will be available online at lvw-wbla.org

How to vote early

By mail
To vote by mail, apply to have an absentee ballot mailed to you. You do not need to be registered to apply.
For your ballot to count, remember this important information:
• Read the instructions that come with your ballot carefully.

• You will need a witness when you vote and complete your ballot. The witness can be either a registered Minnesota voter or a notary.
• Return the ballot and forms right away after you finish. Your ballot will not count if it is received after Election Day.

In person
All voters have at least one location where they can vote early in person with an absentee ballot. Depending on where you live, there may be additional locations.
• You can vote in person at your county election office.
• In addition, you may be able to vote at your city office. Contact the clerk for more information.
For most elections, absentee voting locations must be open during their normal business hours starting 46 days before the election. In addition, locations offering absentee ballots for federal, state or county elections must be open:
• The last Saturday before Election Day (10 a.m. — 3 p.m.)
• The day before Election Day until 5 p.m.
• Some local jurisdictions may provide additional absentee voting days or hours beyond the above required days and times. Call your jurisdiction for more information.

VOTERS' GUIDE 2026

WILLERNIE MAYOR (ELECT 1)

Andrew De Jong

City of residence: Willernie
Occupation: I divide my time between nonprofit financial consulting and being a part-time stay-at-home dad to our two young sons and baby daughter.
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
I've served on the Willernie City Council since 2020 — the only public office I've ever sought. I've also volunteered with county commissions, local schools and nonprofits (including coaching middle-school basketball and my son's soccer teams), and earlier non-partisan work for the Minnesota Legislature.

Q. Why do you want to serve as mayor?
A. I've served on the council since 2020 and care deeply about keeping Willernie the steady, friendly place it is. When the mayoral seat unexpectedly became open, I was asked to step up. After much thought, I put my name forward.

My approach won't change:

• Treat every tax dollar as belonging to the people who earned it, not the city. • Apply the rules evenly to everyone — residents, landlords, and businesses alike. No favorites.

• Keep things running smoothly with our small but mighty staff and without unnecessary drama.

For years the levy rose 4-10% annually. Since 2024 we've worked hard to bring those increases down. Careful control matters in a small city.

My children are growing up here, my wife grew up here, as did her parents and grandparents. We're rooted in our unique community. I'm not looking for a platform — just willing to take on this responsibility with my neighbors' support.

Q. What can the City Council do in the next five years to help the city prosper?
A. Willernie has a real advantage: we are not financially dependent on constant new development to stay healthy. That means we can focus on careful, community-centered progress instead of chasing growth for its own sake. Our city has a character worth preserving.

Over the next five years the Council should keep doing what has worked — protecting taxpayers through steady fiscal discipline, applying the rules fairly to everyone, and making sure our aging infrastructure is addressed honestly and without surprises.

We should also continue supporting thoughtful redevelopment in our business district while remaining guarded against residential over-development that would change the character of our unique little town.

Prosperity here looks like a place that stays livable, affordable, and well-run for the people who actually call it home. I'll keep working toward that — the same way I have since 2020.

Q. What are two challenges in your city and how might you solve them if elected?
A. First, our water and sewer systems are getting older. As a fully developed city we can't put this off forever. As mayor I'll face the numbers honestly, prioritize what needs doing, and keep residents informed every step — no surprises and no shifting costs without a clear plan.

Second, rising home values have pushed property taxes higher for many families, even though our city has worked hard to keep its own increases low. Much of the pressure comes from outside our control. I'll keep asking the same question I've asked on the council: "Is this a wise use of our taxpayers' money?" Holding down unnecessary costs and protecting residents will stay front and center.

I'm the same neighbor who's been showing up since 2020. I am approachable, steady, and focused on the work rather than the title. Contact me anytime — or just look for our little redheads and you'll find me. Email: Info@DeJongMN.com

WILLERNIE CITY COUNCIL MEMBER AT LARGE (ELECT 2)

Toni Karlsson

City of residence: Willernie
Occupation: IT specialist
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• Gentry Academy boys hockey official and proud father of a college hockey player
• Naturalized U.S. citizen committed to each of our individual rights and responsibilities to vote
• Finnish language teacher at the Finnish Language School of Minnesota

Q. Why do you want to serve on the City Council?
A. Through a position on the Willernie City Council, I will honor and strengthen our unique city today and for future generations.

Q. What can the City Council do in the next five years to help the city prosper?
A. Maintain our housing stock and welcome new housing development proposals through clear policies, processes, and procedures

Maintain and strengthen our business community, including welcoming new, successful businesses like we have in recent years

Q. What are two challenges in your city and how might you solve them if elected?
A. Aging infrastructure, including fire hydrants. I will work with the City's public works superintendent, consultant, and emergency services to identify grant opportunities that deliver a high return on our tax-payer investments.

Lack of safe walking routes to school. I will work with our representative on the Transportation Advisory Board to the Metropolitan Council, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, and Washington County to secure grant funding to thoughtfully extend the recent Safe Routes to School investments made in Mahtomedi into Willernie to provide safe and reliable access for our kids and elders.

CANDIDATES AL LANGSETH, MICHAEL KNUTSON, CONNIE LANGSETH AND HOWARD MOORE DID NOT RESPOND

MAHTOMEDI SCHOOL BOARD (ELECT 3)

Allyson Sellwood

City of residence: Mahtomedi
Occupation: Strategic Initiatives Consultant, Hennepin County
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
In recent years, my civic life has focused on kids, starting with my own, ages 8, 6, and 4. I volunteer in their classrooms and with PTO events throughout the year. I'm a fixture at their sports and activities, and I've helped organize and manage our young Zephyr teams. As any parent of kids these ages knows, that's a full calendar all by itself.

Q. What are your top three priorities for the school district?
A. First, excellent classrooms for every student. A decade ago, Mahtomedi was ranked the best public high school in Minnesota. We're still one of the top districts in the state, but "still very good" isn't the Mahtomedi standard. I'll keep the focus on strong academics and measurable results.

Second, supporting the teachers who make Mahtomedi special. Mahtomedi teachers know my kids by name, know how they learn, and teach them like it matters. Great districts keep great teachers by respecting their time and backing them in the classroom.

Third, honest budgeting. New state mandates have added real, recurring costs without permanent funding to match. I've spent my career where state policy meets local budgets. I'll plan honestly, push the state to fund what it requires, and make sure residents always see the full picture.

Q. What do you see as the major issue(s) facing your school district?
A. Long-term financial sustainability. District enrollment is essentially flat, which means state formula revenue is flat, while the costs (compensation, benefits, new state mandates) continue to grow every year. This is the reality the incoming board will operate in.

Mahtomedi voters have said "yes" to levies multiple times in twelve years, nearly tripling what they invest per student. That is extraordinary trust. My job will be to make sure our district keeps deserving it, which at its core is academic, strong schools are why families choose Mahtomedi. Protecting that standard is the foundation of everything else, including the district's finances.

Most recently, the 2025 referendum passed with specific commitments. I will do my part to help deliver on every one of those commitments, while ensuring the district communicates effectively, transparently, and in plain language so district residents can understand their investment.

Q. What is your opinion on the Minnesota Constitutional Amendment increasing the funding for the Permanent School Fund?
A. I support it and look forward to voting "yes" this November. The Permanent School Fund is one of Minnesota's oldest school funding sources, and raising its distributions sends more dollars to classrooms without raising taxes. As Mahtomedi faces rising costs, every reliable dollar that doesn't come from local property taxpayers matters. If I earn the chance to serve on the school board, I'll make sure these new dollars, just like every dollar this community invests, come back as results in our classrooms.

Erica Engelbert-Hensel

City of residence: Willernie
Occupation: Advanced practice esthetician
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
I have volunteered on the Maple Tree Childcare fundraising committee for the past three years.

Q. What are your top three priorities for the school district?
A. Advocating for our community. While working in Mahtomedi over the past 7 years, I have had the opportunity to connect with local parents, students, and staff. I am someone you can trust to listen, be transparent, and represent our district.

Supporting our teachers. Our incredible teachers are the backbone of our schools, and ensuring their needs are met is crucial for the health of our district.

Ensuring every single Mahtomedi student is represented. I believe all of our students are unique individuals who deserve to be celebrated, represented, and respected. My goal is for every single student to graduate from Mahtomedi feeling confident and prepared for their next chapter.

Q. What do you see as the major issue(s) facing your school district?
A. Ensuring our district receives enough funding while families navigate increased living costs.

Q. What is your opinion on the Minnesota Constitutional Amendment increasing the funding for the Permanent School Fund?
A. I believe modifying the permanent school fund will beneficial by offering consistent, dependable funding at no increase to taxpayers.

VOTERS' GUIDE 2026

MAHTOMEDI SCHOOL BOARD (ELECT 3)

Jenny Peterson

City of residence: Mahtomedi
Occupation: Teacher since 2000 in Stillwater
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• Founder and leader of OHA and Middle School Cribbage Clubs
• Founder of Annual Mahtomedi Kids' Triathlon since 2020
• Co-chair to improve outdoor city ice rinks

Q. What are your top three priorities for the school district?
A. 1. To be a district people move to, and stay, for excellent public schools and community.
2. Keep classes sizes below the metro average.
3. Continue to offer a variety of pathways for all students in high school to achieve their highest potential after graduating.

Q. What do you see as the major issue(s) facing your school district?
A. Maintaining a healthy, balanced budget with the ever present wants vs needs, including open enrollment, new constructions, staffing, and unfunded mandates from the Capitol.
I would like Mahtomedi to look at policies surrounding screen time and technology use for kids, especially K-5.

Q. What is your opinion on the Minnesota Constitutional Amendment increasing the funding for the Permanent School Fund?
A. I don't see a downside to the amendment. It will bring our district money without taxing residents. The PSTF has bi-partisan support with the House passing this 134-0, the Senate 43-24, and the new distributions would use a three-year rolling average to manage dips and gains in the investments. The PSTF has had historic gains, let's spread it out for who it is intended for, the kids in the classrooms.

Ryan Domin

City of residence: Grant
Occupation: Enterprise technology executive
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
For the past four years, my primary civic involvement has been serving on the Mahtomedi School Board, where I currently serve as treasurer and on the Finance, Facilities and Calendar committees, as well as liaison to the MSHSL. I've also had the privilege of coaching all three of my daughters in youth soccer. Beyond that, most of my remaining civic contribution seems to involve driving kids around Mahtomedi!
I'm a third-generation Mahtomedi graduate, and my wife, Jessica, and I are raising three daughters - an eighth, fourth and second-grader - who are all proud fourth-generation Zephyrs.

Q. What are your top three priorities for the school district?
A. My top priorities are academic excellence, responsible stewardship of the community's resources, and preparing students for a rapidly changing future.
First, we must keep rigorous learning and teaching at the center of the classroom while preserving the breadth of courses and opportunities that distinguish Mahtomedi and allow students to find their passion.
Second, we must continue to be responsible stewards of community resources - maintaining strong financial discipline while investing thoughtfully in our schools and facilities.
Third, we must build on our strategic plan by keeping students engaged in their education, helping them discover their strengths and interests and preparing well-rounded graduates. As technology changes how we live and work, students need to use new tools responsibly while strengthening enduring skills such as critical thinking, communication, creativity, collaboration and sound judgment.
Our goal should remain simple: an exceptional education that prepares every student to thrive in whatever world comes next.

Q. What do you see as the major issue(s) facing your school district?
A. Mahtomedi is a strong school district in a unique community. Our challenge is to keep moving forward - navigating financial pressures and evolving thoughtfully while protecting what has long made Mahtomedi exceptional.
Over the past four years, our Board has worked collaboratively and focused on students rather than politics. We have maintained rigorous academics and broad student opportunities, responsibly managed resources, adopted a community-built strategic plan and earned voter support for investments in safety and security, HVAC, athletic facilities and high school modernization.
We need to build on that progress: attracting and retaining excellent educators, upholding the high academic standards that distinguish Mahtomedi, implementing these investments responsibly and preparing students for whatever path they choose.
Whether you chose Mahtomedi or have called it home for generations, protecting what makes it special while strengthening it for the future is a responsibility we all share - and one that is deeply personal to me.

Q. What is your opinion on the Minnesota Constitutional Amendment increasing the funding for the Permanent School Fund?
A. I support the amendment. It modernizes how Minnesota manages and distributes earnings from the Permanent School Fund, providing additional funding to public and charter schools without raising individual income or property taxes.
Just as importantly, it protects the long-term health of the fund by requiring it to remain a perpetual financial resource and preserve its purchasing power over time, balancing the needs of students today with those of future generations.
For a smaller district like Mahtomedi, additional state funding helps us sustain the rigorous academics and broad opportunities our community expects while remaining responsible stewards of local taxpayer dollars.
This is a bipartisan, practical approach that puts students ahead of politics, strengthens schools across Minnesota, and maintains responsible long-term management of an important public asset.

WHITE BEAR LAKE SCHOOL BOARD (ELECT 4)

Amanda McFarlane

City of residence: Vadnais Heights
Occupation: Senior business analyst
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• Chairperson Vadnais Heights Park, Recreation and Trails Commission
• Ramsey County election judge
• Volunteer at White Bear Lake Area Educational Foundation's The Closet

Q. What are your top three priorities for the school district?
A. My top priorities are supporting all students, improving communication, and accessible transparency.
First, we must support all students. Every student should have what they need to succeed, and every student should need what they have. No student should feel that their needs are too complex for our schools to meet.
Second, communication should be proactive and two-way. At times, it feels like families, staff, and community members must pull information from the district. I'd like to explore opportunities such as board listening sessions, like those implemented in Centennial, where stakeholders can share concerns and ideas directly with board members.
Third, transparency must be accessible. Posting ten years of financial reports is transparent in theory, but if the information is difficult to understand without specialized knowledge, it isn't truly accessible. We need clear, understandable information so our community can meaningfully participate and hold the district accountable.

Q. What do you see as the major issue(s) facing your school district?
A. One of the major issues facing our district is building trust with all our stakeholders, especially community members who do not currently have children in our schools. Our schools are a vital part of the entire community, and everyone has a stake in their success. We need to strengthen communication, create more opportunities for meaningful two-way engagement, and help all community members understand how strong public schools benefit everyone.

Q. What is your opinion on the Minnesota Constitutional Amendment increasing the funding for the Permanent School Fund?
A. I support the Minnesota Constitutional Amendment to increase funding from the Permanent School Fund. It would increase per-pupil funding at no additional cost to taxpayers while maintaining the fund's long-term future. The proposed updates align with current trust best practices and would make disbursements more predictable, helping school districts plan responsibly for the future.
Importantly, local school districts would retain decision-making authority over how these funds are used. The funding is not tied to state or federal mandates, allowing communities to determine what best supports their students.
I also appreciate that this is a truly bipartisan proposal. Every member of the Minnesota House voted in favor, following the recommendations of a nonpartisan task force. This amendment represents a responsible, sustainable way to invest in today's students while protecting the fund for generations to come.

Amy Puschinsky

City of residence: White Bear Lake
Occupation: Financial operations analyst
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• Chair, Matoska International Elementary PTO (2024–present)
• Volunteer for Clare Housing supporting staff and tenants in South Minneapolis
• Volunteer supporting immigrant families through the Bear Solidarity Network

Q. What are your top three priorities for the school district?
A. Community-powered public education: Families and community members deserve to understand how and why decisions are made. I want to make district information easier to understand, listen to the people closest to our schools, and build stronger partnerships between the district and the community.
Every student belongs: I want every student to feel safe, supported, and connected at school. Students learn best when they know they belong, and that means recognizing that students have different strengths, needs, and ways of learning.
Future-focused leadership: I want our district to make thoughtful decisions that serve students today while also considering their impact years from now. "Leave things better for the person who comes after you" is a value I try to bring to everything I do.

Q. What do you see as the major issue(s) facing your school district?
A. I believe one of the greatest opportunities for our district is improving communication. As a parent and longtime school volunteer, I've seen how deeply families and staff care about our students. Information should be easy to find and understand, and people shouldn't need to be experts in school finance or district policy to stay informed.
Strong communication starts with listening. As a board member, I want to listen to the people doing the work every day, including students, families, educators, and staff. Good decisions come from asking questions, looking at the data, and understanding the stories behind the numbers.
I also see supporting students' sense of belonging and well-being as a critical priority. Students learn best when they feel safe, connected and valued. Addressing these challenges requires transparency, collaboration, and a continued focus on what is best for students.

Q. What is your opinion on the Minnesota Constitutional Amendment increasing the funding for the Permanent School Fund?
A. As a financial operations analyst I support increasing funding for the Permanent School Fund. I believe Minnesota should be looking for sustainable, long-term ways to invest in public education, rather than continually asking local taxpayers to do more.
As someone who works with budgets and financial analysis, I also believe that additional funding should be accompanied by transparency and thoughtful decision-making. We have a responsibility to make sure resources are used effectively and ultimately benefit students.
I also appreciate that the Permanent School Fund is about thinking beyond the immediate moment. That fits with how I approach leadership: we should consider not only what our decisions mean for students today, but what they mean for the students who will walk through our schools five, 10, or even 20 years from now.

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WHITE BEAR LAKE SCHOOL BOARD (ELECT 4)

Bob Krominga

City of residence: White Bear Lake
Occupation: Sales Representative
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• Organized VFW Buddy Poppy Program
• Instructed area Cub Scout Packs on American flag etiquette
• Participated in Veterans Suicide Awareness Walk

Q. What are your top three priorities for the school district?
A. 1. To reverse the trend of declining academic proficiency in reading, mathematics, and science.

2. Changing the current Governance Model to facilitate a more collaborative working relationship between the School Board and District Administration.

3. Ensure that alternative views on policies, agendas, and budgets can actually reach a level of transparent discussion among the School Board, District, and family stakeholders.

Q. What do you see as the major issue(s) facing your school district?
A. We have an ever-increasing budget where our resources are being disproportionately earmarked for fixed costs (facilities) more than classroom instruction. Property Taxes in our district have increased every year, yet our district's academic proficiency in reading, math, and science has diminished. The high graduation rate, which is touted as a benchmark, is showcasing the wrong metrics.

The district is losing dedicated high-quality teachers due to what I believe is a lack of support for their ability to apply consistent disciplinary consequences for students who are repeatedly disruptive and hostile. Students should be held accountable for bullying behavior towards teachers.

Q. What is your opinion on the Minnesota Constitutional Amendment increasing the funding for the Permanent School Fund?
A. I'm generally against it. Increasing the amount of money (from approx. 2-2.5% to 4.5% of fund value) that school districts receive from the Permanent School Fund without raising property taxes would appear to be an easy choice, right?

Currently, school districts receive this money based on their enrollment size and the percentage is based on investment income from the designated trust land with a built-in guardrail that the principal is never touched. This amendment would remove that safeguard, and 4.5% of the fund's value (based on a three-year rolling average) would be distributed regardless of the fund's performance. My reservations include: The legislature being able to increase the PSF payout with a simple majority vote; legislators using the fund as a political bargaining chip; depletion of the fund as a result of removing guardrails; and school districts not practicing disciplined budgeting reform as a result of increased expected income.

Chris Streiff Oji

City of residence: Hugo
Occupation: Principal. I've served Minnesota students for over 30 years as a teacher, principal, district administrator and regional director. I've sat in classrooms, supported teachers, worked with families, managed budgets, and made difficult decisions when the stakes were high.
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• School Board Member - White Bear Lake Area Schools
• Regional director, Collaborative Minnesota Partnerships to Advance Student Success (COMPASS) - Supported 53 school districts and 110 charter schools with systems-level continuous improvement efforts.
• Task Force - EngageMN: Statewide alliance working to accelerate student-centered learning in Minnesota.

Q. What are your top three priorities for the school district?
Every student, every day
A. Children should never have to fit the system—the system should fit the child. Every student, regardless of background, ability, or ZIP code, deserves access to excellent teaching, meaningful support, and the opportunity to reach their full potential. I continually ask: Is this decision making a difference for students? If the answer is no, we need to rethink it.

Safe schools: Safety is more than locked doors; it is knowing that you belong. Students learn best when they feel physically safe, emotionally supported, and respected for who they are.

Fiscal accountability: Every dollar is a promise to our students, families, and taxpayers—and we have an obligation to keep that promise. I want our community to be able to look at its school district and say, I know where our money is going, I understand why, and I can see the difference it's making.

Q. What do you see as the major issue(s) facing your school district?
A. Student academic achievement: White Bear Lake students are performing above the state average. Our 97% graduation rate is exceptional—more than 12 percentage points higher than the statewide average. According to the 2025 Minnesota Report Card, White Bear Lake students also perform slightly above statewide averages in both reading and math.

We should celebrate our progress, but we should not be satisfied with it. Too many students are still not reaching proficiency, and I believe we can do better. As a board member, I would support educators with the resources, training, and systems they need to help every student succeed. I want to see our investments in the Science of Reading and instructional alignment translate into measurable gains. That means looking beyond a single state test and using multiple measures of student learning to identify what is working, where gaps remain, and how we continuously improve outcomes for every student.

Q. What is your opinion on the Minnesota Constitutional Amendment increasing the funding for the Permanent School Fund?
A. I fully support this Amendment, which would increase funding to all Minnesota public, charter, and tribal schools without increasing taxes. This fund, established in 1858, is currently sitting at $2.3 billion and would increase per-pupil funding by replacing an outdated distribution model with a more modern approach while still preserving the fund for future generations. This issue was studied by a nonpartisan group of experts who unanimously recommended this change. This amendment has strong bipartisan support in both the Minnesota House and Senate.

Colleen Berquist

City of residence: Hugo
Occupation: Employer and Individual Operations Management – UnitedHealthcare; Real estate agent; small business owner
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• Candidate for White Bear Lake Area School Board
• Community advocate for transparency and public engagement in the White Bear Lake Area School District
• Local community member and small business owner

Q. What are your top three priorities for the school district?
A. My three priorities are academics, transparency, and good nutrition. I want our schools to challenge every student and give them the support and opportunity to reach their full potential. Families deserve transparency. Parents should understand how important decisions are being made, how taxpayer dollars are being spent, and have meaningful opportunities to engage with the district.

Finally, nutrition matters. Students need healthy food to fuel both their bodies and their brains. Good nutrition should be part of student success, not an afterthought.

Q. What do you see as the major issue(s) facing your school district?
A. I believe we need to take a hard look at academics and ask whether we are doing enough to challenge our students. As a parent, I want my children pushed to learn, think critically, and reach their potential.

I am also concerned about the balance between technology and traditional learning. Technology can be a valuable tool, but a screen should never become a substitute for a teacher, a book, a conversation, or hands-on learning. We need to be intentional about screen time and ensure technology is actually improving learning.

School nutrition also deserves more attention. Healthy meals help students focus, learn, and succeed.

Q. What is your opinion on the Minnesota Constitutional Amendment increasing the funding for the Permanent School Fund?
A. I support the amendment. The Permanent School Fund was established to benefit Minnesota students, and I believe we should use those resources effectively to support students today while protecting the fund for future generations.

If approved, the amendment would provide additional funding to schools without increasing individual income or property taxes. I support bringing additional resources into our schools, but additional funding should come with accountability and transparency.

As a school board member, I would want to see those resources directed toward priorities that directly benefit students, including strong academics, student safety, and healthy school meals.

Dan Arcand

City of residence: Hugo
Occupation: President, Oneka Ridge Golf Course
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
My commitment to service began with my 20 years in the U.S. Marine Corps. Several years of my service included the education and development of young Marines. Both in service and after, I partnered with charities to support wounded veterans and individuals battling PTSD. Now, as president of Oneka Ridge Golf Course, I continue supporting our community. We host fundraisers for civic groups. We also proudly provide facilities to school golf teams in our area and host an exceptional youth golf program. I am ready to bring this dedicated leadership to our school board.

Q. What are your top three priorities for the school district?
A. My top three priorities center on delivering an open, safe, and academically excellent school district:

• Elevating core academic standards: We must refocus on instructional excellence. I will prioritize rigorous curriculum standards, comprehensive teacher support, and targeted intervention programs to ensure every student masters essential reading, math, and science skills.

• Restoring district transparency: Public trust requires open doors. I will be an accessible board member, clearly communicating budget allocations, and proactively updating policies so parents and taxpayers know how decisions are made.

• Ensuring robust school safety: Learning requires security. I will advocate for updated physical measures, mental health resources, and emergency protocols. Crucially, true safety means building a culture where both students and teachers can raise safety or behavioral concerns and trust that they will be taken seriously, investigated promptly, and addressed effectively without fear of retaliation.

By focusing these items, we can build a stronger district where students thrive.

Q. What do you see as the major issue(s) facing your school district?
A. Our most pressing issue is rebuilding the vital partnership between our school board and local families.

Lately, many parents feel left out of the loop and disconnected from the decisions directly impacting their children's education. When public boards operate without active community input, it creates an environment where parent voices feel undervalued or overlooked. This disconnect erodes public trust.

As a board member, I will prioritize transparency and active listening. Parents are not bystanders; they are essential partners in our students' success. I will champion policies that actively involve families before major decisions are finalized. Our community deserves a school board that genuinely values, respects, and seeks out parent perspectives at every step.

Q. What is your opinion on the Minnesota Constitutional Amendment increasing the funding for the Permanent School Fund?
A. I support the Minnesota Permanent School Fund Amendment. It modernizes state trust investments to deliver a needed funding boost to our local classrooms without raising individual income or property taxes. This is a rare, common-sense opportunity to secure unencumbered revenue directly for our students' success.

However, a funding boost never negates the school board's responsibility to use resources wisely. Whether managing state trust payouts or local property taxes, our fundamental duty remains the same: we must be disciplined stewards of public funds.

If elected, I will do my part to ensure these new dollars are directed where they are most effective, supporting teachers, raising academic standards, and enhancing school safety. More funding should mean better results, not government bloat.

VOTERS' GUIDE 2026

WHITE BEAR LAKE SCHOOL BOARD (ELECT 4)

Melissa Roberts

City of residence: White Bear Lake
Occupation: Assistant controller
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• PACER Center Parent & Community Engagement Participant
• Industrial Wastewater & Environmental Stewardship Community Contributor
• Public Works Community Support & Volunteer Involvement

Q. What are your top three priorities for the school district?
A. My top priorities are safety, fiscal responsibility, and policies that support students, support staff, teachers, and families. First, ensuring the safety of students and staff is foundational. A strong learning environment depends on clear safety protocols, well maintained facilities, and proactive mental health supports. Second, fiscal responsibility and visibility are essential for maintaining trust. With my background in finance and government operations, I am committed to transparent budgeting, responsible for long term planning, and making sure resources directly support classroom needs. Finally, policies must work for both students and parents. As a parent with two children in the district, I understand the importance of clear communication, consistent expectations, and meaningful family engagement. I want to strengthen accessibility of information and ensure district policies reflect the needs of our community.

Q. What do you see as the major issue(s) facing your school district?
A. Our district is facing several significant challenges that require thoughtful, collaborative solutions. Safety remains a major concern, both in terms of physical security and the growing need for mental health resources. Students and staff must feel supported and protected in order to thrive. Additionally, fiscal pressures continue to shape how we prioritize programs and staffing. Rising costs, aging facilities, and evolving educational needs demand careful financial planning and transparency. Another major issue is ensuring policies keep pace with the needs of families. As a parent with two students currently enrolled, I hear directly from families about the need for clear communication, consistent expectations, and meaningful opportunities to engage with the district. Finally, we must continue addressing achievement gaps and ensuring all students and teachers have access to high quality instruction and support. These issues are interconnected and require strong leadership and community partnership.

Q. What is your opinion on the Minnesota Constitutional Amendment increasing the funding for the Permanent School Fund?
A. The Permanent School Fund plays an important role in supporting public education, and increasing its funding through a constitutional amendment is a significant decision. In general, I support efforts that strengthen longterm, stable funding for schools, especially when they promote transparency and accountability. Any amendment that increases investment in the Permanent School Fund should ensure that dollars are managed responsibly, distributed equitably, and used in ways that directly benefit students and teachers in the classroom. As someone with a background in finance, I believe it is essential that any changes include clear oversight, measurable outcomes, and protections to ensure funds are used efficiently. Minnesota's students deserve reliable funding that supports academic success, safe learning environments, and modern educational resources. If structured well, increased funding for the Permanent School Fund can help achieve those goals.

Ryan Vernosh

City of Residence: White Bear Lake
Occupation: Elementary School Principal
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• Governor's appointee to the Professional Educator Licensing Board
• Coordinating support for immigrant families
• Board member for the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless

Q. What are your top three priorities for the school district?
A. My top three priorities are growing literacy achievement, strengthening inclusion and accessibility, and improving transparent communication practices. First, we must strengthen literacy instruction and intervention by providing teachers with the resources and time to meet the needs of each student, particularly for students with dyslexia and other learning challenges. We must do this while ensuring every student has the opportunity to be themselves and feel a sense of belonging in school. We know that students thrive when they are safe, supported, and valued for who they are. Finally, I believe the district must be intentional and transparent in its communication with families, staff, and the community—not only seeking feedback for major decisions, but clearly explaining how that feedback was used and, when it was not, why.

Q. What do you see as the major issue(s) facing your school district?
A. There are three major issues facing our district: literacy achievement, funding and budget challenges, and stagnant enrollment. Reading is the gateway to future opportunities. While our district serves most students well, we must strengthen support for students with dyslexia and other learning challenges to ensure every child has the opportunity to become a successful reader with access to any pathway they choose after graduation. School funding has not kept pace with inflation, and uncertainty around federal funding makes sustaining important programs more challenging. This increases the need to ensure every dollar is focused on student support and outcomes. Enrollment remains below pre-pandemic levels, with declining birth rates across the metro creating additional long-term challenges. With fewer students in our district, we need to better understand why families choose White Bear Lake Area Schools and why some choose other options.

Q. What is your opinion on the Minnesota Constitutional Amendment increasing the funding for the Permanent School Fund?
A. I support the proposed Minnesota Constitutional Amendment increasing disbursements from the Permanent School Fund because it strengthens funding for public education while preserving the long-term purpose and integrity of the fund. This bipartisan increase in funding does not raise taxes or change the purpose of the trust. Instead, it updates how the existing fund is managed to better align with modern trust and endowment management practices. This approach allows Minnesota to responsibly increase the benefits available to students today while protecting the fund's long-term value for future generations. I recognize that this amendment will not solve all of Minnesota's public school funding challenges, but it is a meaningful step toward providing schools with additional support.

WASHINGTON COUNTY COMISSIONER DISTRICT 2 (ELECT 1)

Stan Karwoski

City of residence: Oakdale
Occupation: Retired, Graco Inc. – 38 year career in product development
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• Elected – Currently Washington County Commissioner, District 2; past Oakdale Mayor and City Council Member
• Education – Volunteer service on the Century College Foundation Board and Metro State Foundation Board.
• Commissioner service – Workforce Development Board; Transportation Advisory Board; Washington County Park and Open Space Commission; Minnesota Inter-County Association Board - past President; East Metro Strong Board - Co-Chair; Greater MSP Board; Century Avenue Coalition; and several Local Chambers of Commerce.

Q. Why do you want to serve on the County Board?
A. My pledge is to continue representing residents with proven, trusted, and effective service. Not limited but applying myself to these priorities: Public Safety and Mental Health – As an elected County Commissioner my most important responsibility is public safety. Our County Board approved investments in our sheriff's office to keep crime low. Our county supports our County Attorney's Office to hold criminals accountable. Our county is also making investments in early mental health intervention by embedding our Social Worker Crisis Unit within policing to prevent costly crime and tragic incidents.

Clean Water and Protecting our Environment – Our county is protecting critical pristine water and natural areas to assure clean water for our future.

Workforce Development and Affordable Housing – My workforce commitment is helping residents find quality careers and improved wages. Also working with our Community Development Agency to increase private affordable housing investments. Quality jobs help make housing affordable.

Q. What can the county do in the next five years to help the area prosper?
A. We have an excellent county but cannot stand still and assume our county will continue to prosper. Our community needs many positive quality-of-life factors for our future to remain bright. These are priorities I will work on to assure our county has a prosperous future.

Reasonable County Property Taxes – Continue to support only correct and needed budget priorities.

Workforce Shortage – Our businesses need to grow using our county residents to fill these good paying quality jobs otherwise businesses will leave our county and relocate where they can find skilled employees. I'm assigned workforce development and work on career pathway strategies to meet our current and future workforce needs. My priority is to use our residents to meet this shortage.

Housing Shortage & Affordability – Support adding housing that is quality and affordable for all ages.
Clean Environment, Water, and Natural Areas – Continue protecting important acreage for today and future generations.

Q. What are two challenges that the county faces and how might you solve them if elected?
A. First keeping Washington County a great place to live. Second, keeping county property taxes as low as possible.

I'm very active in our community and these are two important challenges I hear consistently from our residents. A primary elected responsibility is listening and effectively representing all residents by getting their input. An example of listening and acting is building the Wildwood Library, new county 12 with sidewalks, and protecting land and water primarily using our land and water legacy program. These actions make our community a great place to live. Improvements must be made with financial discipline when facing challenges of providing federal and state mandated but needed citizen social service programs with increased federal and state cost shift responsibility to our county. We are managing this financial pressure by collaborating on projects for efficiency with our cities and increasing our county tax base with quality growth.

CANDIDATE EDISON VIZUETE DID NOT RESPOND

BIRCHWOOD VILLAGE MAYOR (ELECT 1)

Jennifer Arsenault

City of residence: Birchwood Village
Occupation: Retired educator
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• Mayor of Birchwood Village
• Member of Birchwood Village Parks' Committee

Q. Why do you want to serve on the City Council?
A. Serving on the City Council provides a unique opportunity to tangibly improve peoples' lives. The decisions the Council makes on behalf of the residents, can often have a direct impact on their daily lives. Serving as Mayor has enabled me to initiate several changes within the City that I would like to see through to completion which is why I am seeking a second term.

Q. What can the City Council do in the next five years to help the city prosper?
A. One of the primary responsibilities of City Council is to develop and manage a responsible budget that reflects the priorities and feedback of Birchwood Village residents. Residents have made it clear that they value a well-maintained community and expect their tax dollars to be used thoughtfully to preserve and improve the City. The current Council had identified City maintenance and improvements and communication with residents as key priorities. Over the next five years, my goal is for residents to see the results from these efforts. I hope that, through thoughtful planning, responsible budgeting and continued engagement with residents, the progress made will be evident in the condition of our roads, infrastructure, and public spaces.

Q. What are two challenges in your city and how might you solve them if elected?
A. Two significant challenges facing Birchwood Village are: on-going road maintenance and the need for infrastructure repair and improvements. These challenges are not specific to Birchwood, but Birchwood's revenue source is. Since the City receives no income from commercial entities, the cost of any repairs or improvements is borne primarily by its residents.

The City Council has a responsibility to ensure that Birchwood maintains safe, reliable, and functional infrastructure while exercising careful stewardship of public resources. The challenge is to address critical maintenance and improvements in a fiscally responsible manner while minimizing the financial burden on residents in an effort to preserve the affordability and quality of life that make Birchwood Village a desirable community.

These challenges can be solved by working closely with all affected stakeholders. Developing a fluid, long-term plan complete with financing options which is approved by the residents would be a logical way to address these issues.

BIRCHWOOD VILLAGE CITY COUNCIL MEMBER AT LARGE (ELECT 2)

Paul Drews

City of residence: Birchwood Village
Occupation: Retired after 40 years. During the first half of my career, I worked as a juvenile group counselor and probation officer, helping people re-enter and integrate back into their communities. Then I moved to the private sector, collaborating with government agencies to improve supervision programs. These experiences gave me valuable insight into navigating government processes, evaluating programs and working collaboratively to solve problems. I'll bring these experiences to city government through thoughtful decision-making, responsible stewardship of taxpayer resources and a commitment to listening to and serving our community.
List three most recent civic involvement roles:
• Secretary, Birchwood Village Dock Association
• Volunteer, Valley Outreach

Q. Why do you want to serve on the City Council?
A. I care deeply about Birchwood Village and want to be a good steward of the community we call home. My experience working with government agencies, solving problems and bringing people together can be valuable to our city. With my recent retirement I now have the time, interest and ability to give back through public service. I enjoy working with others, listening to different perspectives and finding practical solutions. I would be honored to help preserve what makes our community special while working together to address the challenges ahead.

Q. What can the City Council do in the next five years to help the city prosper?
A. The City Council should develop a realistic, long-term plan to address aging roads, sewer systems and other infrastructure while remaining financially responsible and responsive to other community needs.

One of the first things we noticed when we moved here were the parks and beaches that make Birchwood Village such a special place. These are treasures that we should protect and preserve for future generations. The Parks and Natural Resources Committee plays an important role in that stewardship, working with partners such as the Washington County Conservation District and Rice Creek Watershed District. The City Council should continue to support these efforts and ensure that protecting our parks, beaches and natural resources remains a community priority.

Finally, we should continue to build on our new Connections Committee's efforts to bring our community closer together by creating opportunities for residents of all ages and interests to connect, participate and build lasting relationships.

Q. What are two challenges in your city and how might you solve them if elected?
A. Two significant challenges facing our city are our aging roads and deteriorating sewer and drainage infrastructure, including erosion resulting from inadequate drainage. Addressing these issues will require a long-term, financially responsible plan that prioritizes the most critical needs, explores available funding and clearly communicates priorities, costs and timelines to residents.

I would also make listening and transparency central to the process. Residents deserve an opportunity to share their concerns, understand the challenges we face and have a voice in evaluating potential solutions. I would work collaboratively with residents, city staff, engineers and other experts to develop practical solutions while balancing infrastructure needs with the city's financial resources and other community priorities.