

Village Board Questionnaire: Sam Kaufmann

What motivated you to run and what issue do you feel uniquely suited to address? Where do you hope to make the biggest difference?

I was motivated to run because I feel that a fresh perspective in local government is needed. I've attended nearly all the village meetings for over three years now so I already have a lot of knowledge on village government, making a transition to a trustee role relatively smooth.

I feel uniquely suited to address transparency issues. From attending meetings as a citizen, I have observed the process closely and taken note of what works and what doesn't. I hope to make the biggest difference in historic preservation. Nothing has really happened with that subject area, whereas Westport has done a great job with a historic resources survey and other efforts. I would like to see design guidelines for the downtown implemented. The 2017 Comprehensive Plan addressed them, but they haven't gone anywhere yet. A historic resources survey would be fantastic both for use as a guiding document in planning and a valuable source of knowledge for future generations on local history.

How do you feel you can make an impact on Waunakee getting a Community Pool?

I certainly think exploring a pool process is a fine idea. I would like to see it go to referendum within the next several years and let the voters decide if that is an expenditure the board should move forward with.

What is your stance on allowing more apartments and/or lower cost living in Waunakee? How do you feel this positively or negatively affects residents?

I support workforce housing in the village. I hear time and time again from a variety of local employers and the school district about challenges they face in hiring and retaining workers, and workforce housing is something that would benefit them. Workforce housing is an investment in a strong future for our local economy and employment climate.

How do you communicate best, and in what ways or means do you use to communicate with residents currently? Any ideas or areas related to communication in our community that you think need improvement?

Currently I communicate with residents mostly through email, phone, and social media. In-person communication is where I am best, and I look forward to doing more of that as more citizens are vaccinated and the weather warms up.

I have heard from residents throughout the campaign that communication is an area that could use improvement. I'd start by writing an email newsletter with meeting agendas and a link to each meeting packet. I would also work to modify the village's social media policy to have an interactive FB page and also allow individual trustee Facebook pages to share information with the community. If citizens want to discuss specific issues, they can then reach out to me through the official channels (email or phone) listed on the page. Many elected officials in other communities take a similar approach and have noticed increases in citizen engagement. I would encourage citizen involvement by posting when applications are open for village committees to attract diversity of members and opinions, in order to ensure that a variety of perspectives are heard.

What are your views about intergovernmental relationships, and using the "good neighbor" policy, for instance with the Town of Westport, and how do you see your role representing our Waunakee community when it comes to working with nearby communities?

Intergovernmental relationships are crucial to the success of our village. Currently, we do not have boundary agreements in place with two of our neighboring towns: Springfield and Vienna. Those expired a number of years ago. I would like to work with the Springfield and Vienna town boards to begin the process of creating new boundary agreements to make sure we are working together and planning for future growth.

Are there any current laws or ordinances you'd like to add, amend or change?

Change the height limit increase for the downtown. Create an ordinance that public hearings will be held at both the plan commission and village board level with at least a week's notice for any public hearing that isn't already covered under state statute. It's not a law so much as a general practice, but I would want any trustee to be able to place an item on the board agenda. Create a historic preservation commission.

In addition, I would want the Community Development Authority's role to be clarified as only advisory. I think it's important that any policy changes, or large money appropriations be voted on by elected officials, not by appointed committee members.

I would like to create clearer guidance on ethics issues. For example, I work at Octopi, so I would recuse myself if something came before the board involving them. People want to trust officials are acting in citizen's interests with no appearance of a conflict of interest.

**What steps will you take to make village government more transparent?
Please be specific.**

I want to do whatever I can to make village government more accessible to the citizens of Waunakee. I would like to see all village committee meetings recorded and available on YouTube. Zoom makes it easy to record and there is no additional cost associated with it. Most village meetings are recorded and available now, but a few committees do not do recordings. Recordings are helpful for both the public and board members who can watch meetings later in the event someone is busy that evening and cannot watch a meeting live.

In addition, I'd support standardizing the public comment policy across all the committee meetings to items on and off the agenda with two minutes speaking time. It can be confusing for the public when participation policies vary.

Lastly, I want to respond to every email from a citizen that I receive if elected. The people elect board members to represent them and I have an obligation to give them the common courtesy of a response. Other ideas would consist of clearer public hearing notices (include commonly used building name and/or physical description besides just the address), physical placement of public hearing notice signage on properties in question, utilizing a listserv to share public hearing notices and post notices on a specific section of the village website, and consistent release meeting packets to the public on the Wednesday before board and Plan Commission meetings. I would be open to holding my own listening sessions with constituents as well.

What is your stance on TIFs in general?

Overall, I am generally not in favor of TIF, as it is a barrier to a free market and often serves as a handout. Waunakee is a desirable community in a booming metropolitan area. TIF hurts the school system and other taxing jurisdictions by freezing tax revenue for 27 years (in most cases) and keeping it within the associated TIF district. Many businesses in our community have been able to expand or relocate successfully without needing to use TIF. I would like to see a review process for any TIF proposal be created so we are looking at benchmarks the TIF would have to meet, such as creating living wage jobs.

What is your view on the use of closed meetings?

I'm in favor of using as few closed sessions as is necessary. It's important for as much of local government business to be conducted in open session as possible. There are certainly some instances where closed sessions are required for personnel issues and negotiation strategy; however, their use must stick to the limited exemptions in state statutes.

What steps would you take to ensure Waunakee is a welcoming, diverse and inclusive community? Please be specific.

First, I would like to see the formation of a subcommittee to review existing policies and procedures to determine areas where equity improvements may be needed, and make recommendations to the board on any potential changes.

Second, recognize Pride and Black History Months (and others) through resolutions at the board level, which the school board has already done. Third, I would like to see auto-translation services available on the village website so non-English speakers are able to receive and understand the same information there as those who do speak English. The city of Middleton and the Waunakee school district both currently have features on their websites to assist with translation. If feasible, I would like to see the enabling of a similar feature on the village's agenda and packet hosting website OnBase.

How would you partner with the business community as well as with regular citizens?

I understand that a strong and growing business base, especially in the business park with well-paying jobs, is important. Commercial tax base provides tax relief to regular citizens. The village has valued Chamber input and should continue to hear from them. It's important to hear from citizens as well as businesses when making decisions that impact Waunakee taxpayers.

If you had to pick one candidate other than yourself to be elected, who would you pick and why? If you had to pick one who would NOT be elected, which one and why?

I don't believe in picking teams, as that is the role of the voters in elections. I encourage voters to do their homework on all candidates running so they can make an informed vote. Spring election turnout usually isn't that high so I hope that as many residents as possible take the time to vote on or before April 6.