

AFSCME Local 2067 City of Salem Questionnaire

Good afternoon, candidate for Salem City Government, this is the questionnaire that must be filled out and returned prior to interview for endorsement from AFSCME Local 2067, City of Salem.

Please answer the questions to the best of your abilities, should you have any questions or need additional information feel free to reach out to Doug Lantz at dlantz@oregonafscme.org

Interviews will be March 2, 2024 so questionnaires will be due back by midnight on February 16, 2024. Please email the questionnaire to Doug Lantz at dlantz@oregonafscme.org

Your responses will be posted on the local's website.

Your name:

Office for which you are a candidate:

1. What would your goals and priorities be as city leader?

I have been the mayor for 16 months. In terms of goals and priorities, this is a very short time period. When I ran for mayor the first time I said, "My goals and priorities as mayor are to continue building on the work we've accomplished over the past 5 years. That work includes addressing the homelessness crisis, climate action plan, smart growth (including Our Salem, the revision of the uniform development code, the transportation plan, parks plan and Goal 5 inventory).

I want to continue the revitalization of downtown and increase the housing supply. And I want to pass the bond measure in November."

I am very proud of the progress we have made on all of these priorities, but there is still much more work to be done. I want to continue my work as mayor to further all of these priorities.

2. Give examples of how you've advocated for worker's rights in the past.

I'm a union person. Those aren't just words. When I was a deputy sheriff, I was the president of our Local (then an affiliate of SEIU Local 503). I've filed grievances on behalf of workers, and I've negotiated contracts on behalf of our Local. I also helped other agencies organize when they struggled with doing so on their own.

As a city councilor, I participated in informational pickets with AFSCME-represented city employees to help ensure they received the safety equipment they needed.

As a state legislator, I supported and voted for the Fair Shot For All agenda in the 2022 session, including SB 1510, SB 1543 and HB 4002. I also signed on as a cosponsor of HB 4113 which fixed inequities with the cancer presumption for firefighters.

3. Recognizing the value and importance of employee retention, proper training and work/life balance what do you see as your role in improving retention and ensuring that capable employees are attracted to make long careers at the City of Salem?

Two years ago, this is how I answered this question: "First and foremost, we must hire a city manager who shares these values. We have to hold the city manager accountable to ensure we create and maintain a work environment that enables people to bring their best work in service to the residents of Salem. People stay where they are valued and supported. As mayor, I will ensure the resources are available and that valuing employees remains a core value of the city."

I am happy to reflect on this answer and say that we, indeed, hired a city manager who shares these values. It continues to be my duty to find resources to ensure we can pay adequate wages and benefits. The payroll tax was an effort to do exactly that. Sadly, that was overturned, so we are back at the drawing board. But I am confident we will find a path forward while maintaining and supporting core values.

4. Given increasing inflation, projected labor shortages, crumbling infrastructure and expanding issues related to the unsheltered in our City, how would you prioritize conflicts in the City's budget?

I am working hard to resolve the revenue shortfall. The truth is, there will be no easy or pain free way to resolve our budget situation without fixing the tax system or receiving additional revenue.

We have increased the number of federal grants for which we have competed, and we have significantly increased the amount of federal dollars we have received. I support the work of the revenue task force.

If we are not successful in increasing revenue, we will be left with the painful decision of which services to cut. We can no longer continue to "thin the soup." We will have to end entire programs to balance the budget. I will approach that work by looking at core services and balancing community need.

5. We believe that public services should have public oversight, even when that service is being contracted out. How will you ensure there is public oversight of contracted work? What are your thoughts on protecting wages and promoting safety standards of contracted workers?

Contracted work is sometimes seen as a panacea to get around all the perceived challenges with government work. It is not. I fully support contracted work when it makes sense and when there is not a better option, but it must be limited and guarded. Private contractors are driven by profit which is very difficult to balance with providing basic services. Oversight to ensure quality work is critical. As the mayor, I will continue to expect the city manager to closely monitor that work to ensure our values and goals are maintained.

6. Why are you interested in our endorsement?

No matter my role, whether it was as a union member, union officer, manager, or elected official, I have always viewed unions as an integral partner in making government work. I greatly value my relationship with AFSCME and the local leadership. I couldn't be as effective as a mayor without that partnership. AFSCME represents the vast majority of represented employees within the city. Your endorsement would be personally meaningful, politically and professionally significant and would be my great honor to receive.

7. What do you want our members to know about you and your plans?

You know me. You know you can count on me to be there for you. You know that I won't raise nearly as much money as my opponent. And that's okay. I was far outspent last time, and we still won by 11 points. With organized people, we can take on organized money and we can win again. My plan is to garner as much support from people willing to help with canvassing, phone calling, etc, as last time and reach out to Salem voters to get the word out about this campaign. Your help with that will be invaluable.