

AFSCME Local 2067 City of Salem Questionnaire

Good afternoon, candidate for Salem City Council, 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 on context or need additional information feel free to reach out to Odalis Aguilar at oaguilar@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 Odalis Aguilar at oaguilar@oregonafscme.org.

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

Your name: Celine Coleman

Office for which you are a candidate: Salem City Council Ward 1

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

Incentivizing businesses to come and remain in Salem, supporting career connected learning for local high-schoolers via internships with the City of Salem's many departments, collaborating with community-based organizations to strategically address homelessness for better outcomes, and balancing the city's budget without a worker tax for a sustainable financial future, and reducing gun violence with input from Salem's residents from all backgrounds.

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

As an epidemiologist in public health I work in a field with individuals from a lot of different educational and cultural backgrounds. I am a staunch advocate for workers that do not have higher education in public health to procure education (via their employer) in their departments especially when being asked to participate in "other duties as assigned." There are times when employees fear retaliation from their employer however their employer won't provide accommodations to reduce the risk of those employees being exposed to life-threatening diseases. I've worked with the SEIU union to bring some of these concerns to their attention as they represent a significant portion of these individuals. Lack of information and/or education can be used to control employees and I encourage employees to take some of the control back alongside the union to improve their working environments and promote upward mobility.

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?

City council should be aware of the challenges the City is facing when it comes to the City of Salem's employees. Are there gaps with the onboarding process between established supervisors and new hires? Is there a common reason turnover in the police department is higher than in the fire department? Are employees more content working 8-hour shifts instead of 10-hour shifts? These are

just a few questions City councilors should ask as the answers may have an effect on why certain vacancies persist, departments that may benefit from additional staff, and also provide opportunities for new positions to be created. Recently with the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) assessment toolkit was provided that can be used in departments to aid in equitable hiring practices. Incorporating these steps will improve retention of capable workers for the City of Salem.

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?

By taking a deep dive into expenses that are often overlooked. There are some departments that have had estimated expenses increase 400% from fiscal year 2023 to fiscal year 2024. Even with inflation, labor shortages, and crumbling infrastructure the justification for a 400% increase is nowhere to be found. However, in addition to combing through the expenses City Council will need to come together on sustainable ways to increase revenue that are not detrimental to Salem residents or employers.

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?

When projects have been completed by contractors there should a City of Salem employee that follows up with that contractor to ensure the project was completed accordingly. Resident's input is also of value and should be engaged neighborhood association meetings, city council meetings, in addition to e-mail communication with the city as we should be flexible with methods to listen to residents. Wage protection of contracted workers is important for economic growth as inflation continues to occur thus pay of contract employees shall be competitive in line with industry pay scales. Safety standards are also important and must to reduce the potential for workplace injuries and liability. When individuals are safe in their environment, they are more likely to stay, therefore safety is paramount to maintain the City of Salem's standards when it comes to contractors.

6. Why are you interested in our endorsement?

AFSCME has done an excellent job of fighting for workers' rights and wages. As a member of city council we should be advocating for our residents and engaging them when it comes to changes that will affect them as well as the future generations. I'm a passionate, driven and determined individual that will advocate for my ward's concerns and share values identified by AFSCME.

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

My focus is on collaboration, incentives, balance, and improvements. When we unite our city becomes stronger and better and collaboration to address the homeless and violence in our city is necessary for long-term outcomes. Businesses have left downtown and we as a city can do more to attract businesses leaving other places. The budget is of great concern and there are alternatives ways it can be balanced that do not have negatives consequences for residents. Salem's future generations should have greater support for career connected learning accessible to all high schoolers. City councilors should be of the people and for the people.