

# 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](mailto: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](mailto:dlantz@oregonafscme.org)

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

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Your name: Nathan Soltz

Office for which you are a candidate: Salem City Council, Ward 3

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

So many things. Our city is in a historically challenging period, exacerbated by record growth and stagnant insufficient resources. Beyond addressing the specific issues of housing, transportation, development, safety, and the long list of others, one thing underscores them all for me: relationships. As a city councilor, I will prioritize building relationships with partners at all levels – federal, state, regional and local. With my work and active involvement in our community, I have established meaningful relationships with leaders and colleagues at all these levels, in both public and private sectors. I know what it takes to foster meaningful working relationships with others and negotiate challenges together. We cannot overcome the challenges facing our city alone, and that will also mean working with those who see things differently. I have never shied away from having conversations and working with those whom I know have different perspectives; in fact, I value it. And I have always put a high value on collegiality. It's time that our city takes a renewed approach to how we govern – one that actively involves the voices of our constituents and community partners – and I am committed to seeing that happen.

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

In 2014, when I was a junior in high school, teachers in my school district (Medford) went on strike. I didn't want to cross the picket line and go to class, but we were told we had to and absences would count against us. I was out on the picket line with my teachers every day and they encouraged me to be their "bug," relaying back to them every day exactly what the day was like for us. Union leaders connected me with local reporters to give interviews. I would even go out on the sidewalk and play my saxophone alongside my band teacher who was striking.

Now I work full-time as Chief of Staff for Senator Lew Frederick and have been in that role since 2019, having worked in the State Senate since 2016. As a legislative staffer, I was proud to be a member of the original Volunteer Organizing Committee that made Oregon's legislative staff the first in the country to unionize. I am a proud union member (IBEW Local 89) and advocate for workers' rights and protections, and that especially includes the right to unionize and have a strong collective bargaining unit that is recognized and duly respected by the employer.

My mother has been working in the Medford School District my whole life as a classified employee and is an OSEA member. Recently, she got a letter in the mail from a conservative group (I believe it was the Freedom Foundation) encouraging her to opt-out under *Janus*. She called me about the letter and I explained to her why she shouldn't, and I'm proud to say that she didn't opt out even when many in her workplace were advocating for others to do so.

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?

As a city councilor, I will bring my position strongly supporting workers' rights to Salem City Hall and fight to ensure that all of our city contracts, including city employees, enjoy the right to unionize and that we uphold the value of recognizing and respecting our workers. A strong union contract is the best way to ensure that employees are being respected and treated fairly. I will vocally support fair bargaining and oppose any efforts to undermine workers' rights and union authority.

The City of Salem works because of its city employees. When it comes to retention, we should be encouraging and providing opportunities for employees to continue their education while also having the opportunity for meaningful upward mobility. Key to upward mobility is leadership development, continuing education, and training. This approach helps retain and encourage folks to stay, but also saves the city money, as it is a better investment than trying to find new recruits for more senior positions. Also, I believe we must prioritize maintaining an amount of staff that allows for a true work-life balance for our employees, avoiding having employees work overtime just to continue city operations.

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?

First, I want to say clearly that I feel strongly about the need to increase revenue. But looking at cuts, I want to prioritize protecting things that directly serve city residents and protect long-term investments. In particular, I believe strongly that affordable housing meets both of these goals. The more folks we get off the streets and into shelter, the less we have to spend on emergency services for them.

Further, I believe in prioritizing projects that address our critical infrastructure. Those projects not only are essential to serving our constituents well, but they also create economic development within our community. Jobs that build our infrastructure are jobs that historically have good wages that go to folks within our community, which is how it should be.

And when it comes to city staff, I believe in protecting existing jobs as much as possible. If cuts are necessary, I favor eliminating unfilled positions and freezing hiring over terminating positions for current employees.

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?

I also believe that public services should have public oversight, including in contract work. How we spend our dollars reflects our values. I do not believe that "government should be run like a business." The first goal of a

business is always to turn a profit; the first goal of government should always be to best serve its constituents. As a city councilor, I will not just rely on administrators to simply tell me how things are going, I will want clear information and I will want to personally see how projects are progressing. I will also want to hear from the workers themselves, as they are the best judge of work.

I believe that any contractor awarded a public contract should be able to demonstrate completion of OSHA safety programs and adherence to those standards. I also view Project Labor Agreements as a part of responsible contracting. I will always support PLAs. I also will stand firm against efforts to eliminate prevailing wage protections and against "Right to Work" legislation, which I always refer to as "Right to Work for Less."

6. Why are you interested in our endorsement?

I am a pro-labor candidate, and I believe that I am *the* pro-labor candidate in this race. I believe that unions are essential to a healthy and just economy. I will always stand up for workers' rights and union rights, and I hope to show that both through my words and commitments, but also to prove it through my actions should I be elected. Earning AFSCME Local 2067's endorsement would be very meaningful to me, as it would mean that I have earned your trust to fulfill my commitment to you to be a pro-labor ally in City Hall.

I also respect that AFSCME has a history and a reputation of not only representing their workers' best interests but also advocating for the betterment of all Oregonians. AFSCME's advocacy goes beyond just issues that most directly serve their members; it involves issues that address social justice matters and making sure our system is fair and equitable for all. I very much respect that approach and the intersectional work of your union.

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

I want to emphasize that if I am elected, my door and my ear will always be open to you. I take seriously the role of being an elected official, listening to my constituents and being responsive to their concerns. I also take seriously my executive role within the city government itself. It is my job to truly understand what is happening in our city administration and how our city's employees are doing. We cannot most effectively serve our whole city if the hardworking folks interacting with the general public every day are not receiving the support they need and knowing that they have individuals in positions of power and oversight who care.