

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 Doug Lantz at dlantz@oregonafscme.org.

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

Your name: Dr. Irvin M Brown

Office for which you are a candidate: Salem City Councilor | Ward 5

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

The **City of Salem demographics are changing**, and I am running for this position because we need a greater representation of all its citizens and business owners front and center. I believe I can leverage my relational capital - including working with the AFSCME Local 2067/City of Salem to maximize the efforts of a changing city which encompasses nearly 180,000 people. I also believe I can utilize a non-partisan approach to engage business owners and City staff for stronger advocacy to engage all communities, increased visibility and marketing to attract a wider range of businesses, and relational connectivity to build harmony and collaboration. Consistent with trends in so many cities across the Country, the City of Salem continues to experience shifting violence rates and determinants. In 2023, the Salem PD partnered with some subject-matter experts to conduct a thorough analysis of gun and weapon violence.

As a City Councilor, I hope to do the following to address the growing **violence problems**:

- Host monthly conversations with Salem PD, Marion County Sheriff's Office, SKSD, Marion County District Attorney's Office, local culturally relevant community orgs and businesses, faith leaders, Salem City staff (with invitation to Keizer's Mayor and City Staff), and Marion County Juvenile Probation and Parole.
- Bring back the Salem PDs Gang Enforcement Team to gather and share gang intelligence; and use the data to curb the violence uptick.
- In 2020, SB 1008 took center stage. According to Salem PD Gun Violence Problem Analysis (2018-2023), most victims and suspects are between the ages of 18-34, juveniles made up a larger proportion of suspects (18%) relative to victims (10%), and this percentage of juvenile involvement is slightly higher than observed in other cities conducting violence statistical analyses. Secondly, the City of Salem needs to create and utilize a **24/7 equity lens**. Since 2008, Salem has grown by 26,000 people – comparable to the City of Woodburn – yet the city has not increased its staff. Salem's population is projected to grow an additional 30% in the next 20 years, the current demand for affordable housing is expected to continue, and it may continue to be difficult for all Salem residents to find affordable and safe housing. And thirdly, **affordable housing is a top priority** – especially for our Black, Indigenous, People of Color and Tribal

communities, **unsheltered population**, people on fixed incomes and those with disabilities, Veterans, and others who are struggling with poverty.

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

As a State Policy Advisor, former legislative director, and Navy Veteran, I understand that creating new policies is a necessity if we are going to protect worker's rights and the most vulnerable populations. That protection not only requires identifying and removing barriers but it also mandates the use of an equity lens that sees all faces and hears all voices. I have supported paid family leave programs for workers, HB 4129 (Homecare Modernization Act), HB 4045 (Public Safety Workforce Stabilization Act of 2024), SB 1595 (Family Financial Protection Act), increased funding for micro-shelters, and addiction treatment centers for families struggling with substance use disorders.

Collaboration is essential. I believe as a City we must continue the trajectory we are currently on in creating more jobs and building more affordable housing. Strengthening our partnership with the Salem Housing Authority, state agencies, faith leaders, and community organizations remains a priority. The Salem Housing Authority has been recognized by the *"Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance as the first agency - statewide - to use resources from the Governor's Emergency Order to assist people with rapid rehousing."* [[City of Salem Housing Authority](#)]

Additionally, I recently met with the Pastors of the Seed of Faith Ministries (Bishop Wade & Pastor Evelyn McCoy-Harris) to tour their facilities [1248 Winter Street NE]. They recently joined Salem's Warming Network to assist in serving our growing unsheltered population. I will continue advocating for more facilities like this until every person in our City has a place to call home and a job to maintain economic growth and sustainability.

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 founding member of Salem's first [Equity Roundtable](#), I support funding and initiatives for diverse hiring and retention, more first responders, educational assistance programs, and employee assistance programs (i.e., wellness and fitness centers, medication/pharmacy discounts, etc.). As a former teacher and current member of the SKSD Superintendent's Transition Team, protecting jobs must be an ongoing priority. But to do this effectively and sustainably, we must center race, health and gender equity, and social justice issues. If we can move the dial a little closer during this year's short session (and next year's long session), we will lower the cost of living, improve the quality of health, life, and community resilience, and reduce climate pollution.

Salem must be resilient and ready to recover from earthquakes, fires, flooding, and other natural disasters. In the past few years, our city has suffered devastating snow/ice storms (and fires) which crippled transportation, complicated access to downtown and surrounding communities, and many of our city services. As City Councilor, I would listen to input from our residents – including Neighborhood Associations to identify barriers and potential risks to each Ward. Secondly, I would create alliances

and working partnerships with local business owners and community-based organizations – *especially* organizations that are culturally-specific. And third, I would review past goals by doing an equity audit and use those results to design and implement new strategies that would increase community resilience and job sustainability.

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?

The City of Salem is not immune from budget shortfalls. Fire, emergency, and police personnel are now responding to almost twice as many calls with the same number of staff as 15 years ago. The gap between the cost of providing services and the available revenue is a structural imbalance that grows larger year-over-year. The General Fund supports many of the most recognizable City services – what makes a city a city, police, fire, library, parks, and recreation, neighborhood services, youth services, municipal court, and Citywide benefit departments (i.e., IT, HR, etc.) are all paid for by the General Fund. My preferred solutions will be:

- Use the recommendations from the current **Revenue Task Force** committee to increase revenue streams.
- Propose current **legislation (HB4072)** to offset some costs of expenditures from the General Fund. State land is exempt from paying the property taxes that cover city fire, police, and medical services. This must change. Currently, Salem collects less in property taxes than similarly sized cities which have more privately-owned land.
- Fix/amend **measures 5 and 50** which were passed in the 1990s. These measures constrain the growth of Salem's General Fund by limiting both increases in the taxable value of property and year-over-year growth in taxes. The result is that the amount of funding the City receives from property taxes does not keep pace with inflation, population growth, as well as the increasing costs of providing City services.

As a City Councilor, we need more success stories like Sequoia Crossings, and we must sustain services like Salem Outreach and its Livability Services Program (SOS). Including maintaining a Safe Parking Network for those who are unsheltered to stay in their vehicle overnight. During City Council Meetings or communicating with business owners, and volunteering for ride-alongs with first responders, I have repeatedly heard heart-wrenching stories about countless interactions with people sleeping on the sidewalks with substance use disorders, mental/behavioral health concerns, and I believe we need more voices to advocate for our homeless/unsheltered population. It takes all of us working together as one. Creating housing sustainability will require more legislation and using a non-partisan approach is the best available approach.

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?

Supporting and protecting worker's rights and contracted work is necessary and must be a collaborative partnership for continued success ([BOLI | Fair Labor](#)). As the son of a carpenter and union member,

protecting wages, creating more apprenticeship jobs, and promoting safety standards must remain a top priority ([BOLI | ATD 2024](#)).

- **Greater Public Oversight Requires Education.** It would be helpful to educate our communities on knowing what and how environmental justice impacts our daily lives and the generations to come. *"Environmental Justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. This goal will be achieved when everyone enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards and equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work."* (US Environmental Protection Agency, 2007)

As City Councilor, I will seek input and representation from residents and community organizations about their specific needs and wants, incorporate input and feedback into planning and the development for neighborhood hubs/mixed-use projects in low-income and underserved communities.

- **Council Meetings and Chamber.** In collaboration with fellow Councilors, business owners, culturally specific organizations, and faith leaders, I will increase the accessibility, diversity, and inclusivity of public meetings, including City Council meetings, through best practices and multiple modes of engagement (e.g., virtual and in-person attendance options, electronic/online and hard copy materials).
- **Increase climate resilience.** Create a network of neighborhood resilience hubs, indoor gathering places that can function as community centers, cooling centers, food distribution, places to access electricity during power outages, evacuation sites, daycares and community learning centers.

6. Why are you interested in our endorsement?

As a Black/African American man living in Salem, race is always a factor. When one understands the racialized history of Oregon and the continued reckoning with its past, race takes center stage. My platform supports **all-things inclusive**. Escaping the grip of exclusion or being othered is not easy. The oppressor never voluntarily gives freedom to the oppressed. In the words of Dr. King, *"You have to work for it. Freedom is never given to anybody. The oppressor has you in domination because he plans to keep you there, and he never voluntarily gives it up. And that is where the strong resistance comes. Privileged classes never give up their privileges without strong resistance."* I believe with your endorsement, our community will be better positioned to advocate for all voices to be heard, all faces seen, and all identities affirmed. Diversity is not a liability but rather our greatest strength. Together in solidarity.

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

The moral imperative of a servant leader requires a deep cultural change that mobilizes the passion and commitment of local neighborhoods and communities, employees and staff, business owners, and others to improve the City's growth and response rate towards economic stability. Guiding and leading operational systems to improve is a challenge with the greatest payoff. Success in leading this level of change requires an understanding of people in work practice, fostering a clear vision for City programs and operations, collaborating with the County, and an unwavering belief in racial equity. I believe I am the most qualified candidate for this job.

I am an effective change agent for work culture, building morale, and supporting community development. As Chair of the Citizen Budget Committee, this hunger has equipped me to successfully transform the capacity of systems to benefit all while focusing on the tenets of economic mobility, inclusion, good governance, gender equity, and social justice.

At the state level, the clarity of a visionary leader is critical to reducing and ultimately eliminating predictable barriers toward equitable outcomes. My 20+ years of experience in DEI initiatives, building relationships in Brown and Black communities, policy development and implementation, hiring decisions, data, and budget management, tracking reports, performance evaluations, and team building has equipped me with the educational tools and knowledge to have an immediate and positive impact in this role.