

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: Vanessa Nordyke

Office for which you are a candidate: Salem City Council, Ward 7

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

My priorities are public safety and livability, affordable housing, and supporting Salem's vulnerable residents, including persons experiencing homelessness, as well as persons struggling with mental illness, addiction, and exposure to gun violence. I am advocating for additional funding from the state of Oregon to help address the city's budgetary challenges. I

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

I was an Oregon AFSCME member for about 14 years (Local 1085). As a City Councilor, I helped our Code Compliance Officers overcome pushback from management to help them get ballistic vests. I have marched alongside AFSCME members in support of labor rights. I have advocated and voted for the increases in compensation packages for city staff many times. SPEU (Salem Police Employees Union) wrote a letter in support of buying body cameras, which I voted to support. I joined our firefighter's union in urging the mayor and other members of Council to withdraw the City's appeal of the award of benefits to a firefighter's widow.

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?

I have advocated at televised Council meetings and in closed-door meetings with management to retain staff and pay our staff better. In comparing the rate of pay for city staff compared to other similar cities, we are embarrassingly behind. I have told city management that I support increasing staff pay and hope we will continue to do so. I support the city's efforts to invest in the professional development of employees, so that employees can grow, thrive, and advance. It would be great to see the city provide tuition assistance for employees who want to further their education.

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 prioritize transparency and public engagement in resolving conflicts in our budget. I generally oppose budget cuts which disproportionately hurt low-income residents, especially children, workers, and seniors. Between inflation, gas costs, and the lack of affordable housing, it's become difficult for workers to raise a family in Salem. Gas taxes could be devastating to workers who must drive to work. Many city jobs, including many of jobs represented by AFSCME, simply cannot be done remotely.

I want to find additional funding sources to relieve pressure on our City's General Fund and reduce budgetary conflict. Before a slim majority of Council voted for the payroll tax, I suggested a public safety levy. Voters have passed public safety levies in several Oregon communities, including conservative communities typically reluctant to support taxes. Because levies must be renewed by voters every few years, levies create accountability mechanisms that a permanent payroll tax does not. We should be creating performance metrics for our city departments and then make our case to the voters. The payroll tax would have disproportionately hurt workers making just above minimum wage. I look forward to seeing what recommendations the Revenue Task Force comes up with.

I have joined the bipartisan effort of local leaders to advocate for payment-in-lieu-of-taxes from the state of Oregon. If successful, PILT would generate over \$5 million per year for public safety and other city services.

As another example, Governor Kotex wants to increase affordable housing. We should take full advantage of state dollars to free up general fund dollars to retain and support our SHA employees and others engaged in affordable housing projects.

Our homeless service providers like Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency and Church at the Park are aggressively pursuing other funding sources to continue services currently funded by the City. I have used my platform to highlight the work that both organizations do to address homelessness, addiction, workforce development, mental illness, and other needs.

We must take full advantage of state and federal funding opportunities to address homelessness. We have also applied for several grants to support city infrastructure, tree plantings, and so on. We have already secured \$300 million in infrastructure bond funds thanks to the voters, and implementation of those funds is already underway.

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 agree wholeheartedly with public oversight of contracted work. Any City Councilor or Mayor can ask city staff questions at a Council meeting. We can also--by majority vote--make motions to direct staff create a staff report, conduct in-depth research and/or studies, request a Council work session, and so on. All of those

Council tools can be used to create oversight of contracted work. I welcome suggestions from AFSCME on which project(s) should be first in line for greater oversight. Let me know how we can work together on this!

6. Why are you interested in our endorsement?

I am proudly pro-union, and welcome the endorsement of any union. But as an AFSCME union member for 14 year, AFSCME's endorsement is important to me for personal as well as professional reasons. Professionally, there can be no doubt that AFSCME's endorsement makes a big difference in a City Council campaign. Personally, I received better working conditions and a better compensation package because of my union's tireless efforts at the bargaining table. When managers became difficult, my union went to bat for me and my coworkers every time. As a former DOJ lawyer, I had the privilege of representing and defending AFSCME members in litigation. This included hundreds of ODOC correctional officers. Also, I know that Local 2067 employees keep our city running. For all these reasons, your support means a lot to me.

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

First, please know that my door is always open to AFSCME members. My cell phone is 971-304-8003. As I said in my endorsement interview, I welcome opportunities to ride along, tour work sites, and meet with AFSCME members. As an effective public speaker with a sizable online following, I am pretty darn good at community engagement. I know how to raise awareness, get people involved, and marshall public support for positive change. I welcome opportunities to shine a light on the work that your members do every day. Help me tell your story!