

EVANSTON FIGHT FOR BLACK LIVES QUESTIONNAIRE

Response of Melissa Wynne, 3rd Ward Alderman

Would you vote YES on a budget that increases the police budget?

No, we need to comprehensively review and re-organize the functioning of our Police Department and related community social service supports to ensure that we are addressing public safety in the most equitable and efficient manner. Our re-allocation of \$200,000 in the 2021 budget for alternatives to police response is only the beginning of the broad-based and systematic re-assessment that I believe is urgently needed.

Would you vote YES on a budget that increases property taxes?

After severe cuts in the City budget that included having to lay off 15 employees, I voted to increase property taxes as a last resort to ensure we didn't lay off another 25 employees whose jobs were on the chopping block. Other revenue-generating ideas included video gaming, increasing fines and fees and selling off public assets. Each of these alternatives would have disproportionately impacted our low-income neighbors in very negative ways. In the wake of the economic downturn caused by COVID, Evanston has lost a number of small and local businesses. These shuttered businesses represent scores of jobs lost, and decreases in sales and real estate tax revenue. Moderately increasing property taxes was the most equitable and financially responsible way to fill our budget gaps.

How often will you host ward meetings?

I hold 3rd Ward Town Hall meetings quarterly at Lincoln School and monthly Office Hours at Brothers K. I was the first alderman ever to hold Ward meetings as well as the first to establish regular office hours. In addition, I regularly meet with community groups, condo associations and other neighborhood organizations on issues of particular interest as they arise. My most important and daily source of communication with residents is phone calls, texts/emails and one-on-one meetings over coffee.

Do you plan to implement CARP?

Yes. As a former member of the Environment Board and current member of the Equity and Empowerment Commission, I know that we cannot achieve the goals listed in CARP without also achieving environmental justice. That's why I support programs that link environmental sustainability to equity in economic and educational opportunity. Recently, I visited Evanston Rebuilding Warehouse. I strongly support their dual mission of salvaging materials for

sustainable reuse while training mostly African American young men in the trades, including plumbing, carpentry and electrical work. This is one way to use more of our environmental assets to expand opportunities to more residents who have earned the dignity of a good paying job along with a valuable skill set.

Do you support defunding the police department?

No, I do not support defunding the police department. Historically, Black and Brown communities have been either over-policed or under-policed. We cannot shrink away from our responsibility to ensure the safety of every community, but we need a balanced policing strategy that honors the dignity of all Evanston residents. I strongly support the City's Alternative 911 Response initiative, to establish alternatives to a police response when a police officer is not needed. I also strongly support the City's Alternatives To Arrest initiative, to keep juveniles out of the criminal justice system.

Would you vote YES on a budget that allots money for D65 and/or D202 SRO's?

Just last month, the bill introduced in the Illinois House to remove SROs from Illinois schools was tabled as education leaders struggle to strike the best balance between school safety and de-policing our children's learning spaces. There are no easy answers, and this is not a City-controlled issue. SROs are managed by school administrators, not by the City or our police department. Our school districts need to continue having thoughtful and comprehensive community discussions about the future of SRO's in our schools.

If given the opportunity, would you ban NIPAS from operating and policing in Evanston?

The Northern Illinois Police Alarm System was first implemented to respond to natural disasters and the disruptive effects of large events. I believe NIPAS officers should only be deployed in Evanston for such reasons, not to deal with crowd control of peaceful protesters.

Would you support a school being built in the 5th ward?

Yes. It is time for a school in the 5th Ward. Today, 5th Ward students, who are mostly African American, travel the furthest just to get to school every day. The burden of racially integrating Evanston schools has been completely borne by Black families, bussing them out of their communities to diversify Evanston schools, while no white students are bussed into Black schools because Foster, the former 5th Ward school, was closed down back in 1967. This is unfair and needs to be corrected.

Do you think Northwestern should pay property taxes?

Yes. However, the Illinois courts have made it clear that NU does not legally have to pay any property taxes to Evanston. A constitutional amendment to the Illinois constitution would be necessary to change this situation.

Northwestern currently gives the city 1 million dollars each year, how will you hold Northwestern accountable in terms of paying their fair share?

Northwestern's \$1 million/year payment to Evanston falls well short of a fair share. I have strongly advocated that Northwestern follow the examples set by Yale, Harvard and Trinity College in providing significant and ongoing monetary contributions to New Haven, Cambridge and Hartford. However, if Northwestern continues failing to follow these examples, we need to find legal methods for charging them for services that the City currently provides for free.

How do you plan to support Evanston's Reparations Subcommittee?

I will support the Subcommittee by (a) working to implement its recommendations on the Council, (b) ensuring comprehensive and effective outreach to the community (which is essential for success), (c) promoting the Subcommittee's deliberations and decisions with 3rd Ward residents, and (d) working to develop additional types of reparations so as to broaden the Council's reparations goals beyond housing.

How do you plan to support affordable housing?

Affordable housing is a critical need in Evanston. I strongly supported the original Inclusionary Housing Ordinance and the various strengthening amendments that have been made in order to increase the size of payments-in-lieu and the percentage of onsite affordable units. I am currently working closely with City staff on developing the underutilized City parking lot on South Blvd. as family-sized affordable housing. We must continue to pursue opportunities like this to create affordable housing that meets this urgent Evanston need.