

## **EVANSTON ROUNDTABLE QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Response of Melissa Wynne, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward Alderman**

### ***1. How long have you lived in the ward?***

32+ years. My husband & I have lived at 1130 Hinman since 1988, where we raised our son and daughter, sending them to Lincoln, Nichols, and ETHS.

### ***2. Take us on a tour of your ward that includes its top three assets and its top three challenges.***

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward is extremely fortunate in its assets, but each of those assets also presents challenges:

Asset #1 – Our 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward residents: First & foremost among our many assets are the remarkably diverse, intelligent and engaged residents who have chosen our semi-urban ward as their home. Whether just starting a career, raising a family, or retired from formal work, all of our residents bring an extraordinary mix of talents, training & commitments to the community that makes the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward unique.

The ongoing challenge here, as elsewhere, is affordable housing – a critical element in ensuring the continued vibrant mix that makes the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward so attractive. I've steadfastly advocated for the City's affordable housing initiatives, strongly supporting the original Inclusionary Housing Ordinance and various strengthening amendments to increase the size of payments-in-lieu and percentage of affordable units onsite. I've also worked closely with City staff to locate and develop underutilized properties as potential sites for affordable housing, including most recently our initiative to develop the underutilized City parking lot on South Blvd. with affordable family-sized apartments. We also must continue looking carefully at modifying our zoning to permit new types of housing, such as accessory dwelling units, which provide affordable housing and extra income to homeowners so that they can stay in Evanston. Finally, we must always promote smart development, both commercial and residential, to strengthen our Evanston tax base.

Asset #2 – The Main-Dempster Mile: Another of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward's prime assets are our neighborhood businesses, which have combined into The Main-Dempster Mile Merchants Association. These local shops and restaurants defy the internet, with owners we know by name, curated wares, and shopping experiences that can't be replicated in cyberspace.

Recognizing the critical importance of this asset, I provided key Council support in the formation of Main-Dempster Mile, to provide our local businesses with a platform to jointly promote the unique attractiveness of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward's business community. The results of this initiative have been striking – a steady stream of new businesses, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward neighbors enjoying each other's company in gathering spots, and pedestrian shoppers lured from the broader area by our walkability.

The challenge, of course, is the COVID pandemic, which threatens businesses and so the livability of our ward. I continue to (a) strongly back economic development support from the

City to retain and attract business, (b) work closely with our business community on innovative solutions (as with Space and Few Spirits), and (c) staunchly support entrepreneurs in developing new businesses in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward and throughout Evanston.

Asset #3 – Our lakefront: Another treasured asset of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward, our magnificent lakefront, provides recreation to all, in all forms – a place to picnic, run/walk/bike/skate, toss a ball, read, meditate, swim/sail/surf/kayak/paddleboard and even snowshoe! The list is endless.

But our lakefront is threatened by rising Lake Michigan water levels, in part due to climate change. I have strongly advocated for environmentally appropriate responses – protective sandbags, additional barrier rocks, and faithful adherence to our Climate Action Resiliency Plan, to do our part in the fight against climate change. I’ve also been vigilant in curbing pesticide use, promoting systematic new planting of trees, and defending the Lakefront Master Plan (developed with my leadership) to protect our lakefront as non-commercial and open to all. Finally, we must ensure every Evanston resident has access to our beaches by expanding our free beach tokens program.

***3. Why do you want to be alderman? What particular expertise and/or experience would you bring to the position? What are your top priorities?***

My strengths are well suited to the job of alderman because (a) I’m a problem solver who enjoys bringing people together to find solutions, (b) I’m facile with the complexities of public policy thanks to my background as an environmental lawyer, and (c) I have a lifelong passion for public service, starting early on with my work in Washington DC for Common Cause and on Capitol Hill, and my *pro bono* lawyering for low-income families at the Howard Area Community Center.

I’ve decided to seek one more term as alderman because the COVID pandemic has plunged our City into a crisis like no other I’ve seen, wreaking havoc on our business community, our City budget, our residents and our City staff. At this critical time, I strongly believe the combination of my experienced leadership, seasoned judgment and deep knowledge of our policy challenges are valuable to Evanston and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward as we navigate through the tumult of COVID and its aftermath.

My top priorities for the next four years are: (1) post-COVID recovery – rebuilding a better & more resilient Evanston economy; (2) racial equity – assessing every City policy and interaction through an equity lens; (3) climate action – continuing Evanston’s national leadership in climate resiliency and sustainability; and (4) housing affordability – redoubling our focus on underutilized properties, pro-affordability zoning policy, and smart development of our business & residential base.

***4. What do you think the duties and responsibilities of an alderman are? How much time do you expect to spend on aldermanic business?***

The duties of alderman have become increasingly time-consuming as Evanston's challenges have grown more complex. In the past decade, I have typically spent 25-30 hours/week on Council work, but at times the job requires much more.

An Evanston alderman is both a representative of residents and a facilitator/problem solver for residents dealing with City government. Critical to both roles is good communication. I hold 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward Town Hall meetings quarterly at Lincoln School and monthly Office Hours at Brothers K (doing both over Zoom during COVID) . 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.