

Respondent



31

Anonymous



19:22

Time to complete



1. Please enter your full name and municipality.

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Allison Knodel - City of Medicine Hat

2. What active role have you played to improve our community prior to running for council/mayor?

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My journey with leadership and participating significantly in the local community began back in college when I decided to become a Peer Supporter. The purpose of this role was to help other students in a social, emotional, and academic capacity. Around the same time I was serving in the college pub and a current executive from the Students' Association recruited me to run in the upcoming student election. I was hesitant because of my lack of experience but gave it a go and was successful. I served 2 terms as VP External and it was a great experience. I built lasting relationships with the school community, staff, administration and local businesses / organizations. Since that time I have been grateful to connect with and support others in the community by: - Teaching Financial Literacy in K-12 classrooms on behalf of a non-profit - Establishing a small photography & videography business - Training young people to film and photograph alongside me. - Working with local businesses to create promotional material, tell stories visually, and make educational content. - Teaching community workshops - Teaching High School - Contributing to my school division and school community by: - Establishing and supervising student clubs / events - Chairing and facilitating school and community based volunteers for school events - Participating in a division wide steering committee - Participating in school wide committees

3. What initiatives would you propose to improve tourism, investment attraction and development to our municipality and region and support business recovery during/after the pandemic? *

Tourism/Relocation: - We need to continue efforts to promote the area via social media and guerilla marketing. Our current Tourism Medicine Hat team does a great job making our community visible (both online and at popular spots within the community). - I'd like to see continued to focus on our historic sites like Medalta and the Duggan House and also promote future, modern ideas like Moose & Squirrel, Station Coffee Co. - I'd like to see further investment in recreation (e-bike rentals, paddleboards / kayak rentals along the river, a network of bike lanes across the community), relaxation (modern and artistic seating in the downtown core). - We need to rebrand Medicine Hat as a place that has opportunities for all ages. Investment Attraction: - We need to make sure infrastructure is maintained and in good working condition - We need to be innovative and inject technology and green initiatives into our community. - We need to prioritize recreation and ensure recreation is maintained. - We need to truly listen to our residents and be open to their feedback. - Portland Oregon has a great mission and vision that is inclusive and discusses taking residents' ideas seriously. "Portland is a prosperous, healthy, equitable and resilient city where everyone has access to opportunity and is engaged in shaping decisions that affect their lives." I am a firm believer that leadership sets the stage for the whole community. The collective goals of those who are in charge has a great impact on how a community feels and functions. I want the goals of Council to be community first. Covid Business Recovery - We need to provide local businesses with connection to training and financial supports (based on their feedback) to help them reestablish their footing. - We need to make community resources visible and easy to access. Many local businesses and residents (especially younger) don't know about the support that is available to them. Specific Initiatives: - Promotion of neighbourhood associations. This is one example of resident advocacy and involvement. - Inspired by the BREWD survey: I want to see a culture shift, rebranding, and targeted marketing of our city to prioritize the younger (40 and less) population. I constantly hear "there is nothing for me here" and see young people moving away. Millennials are the second largest demographic next to Baby Boomers. I hope that meeting the needs of the younger workforce, which will result in retention of skilled residents, stabilization (and growth) of the tax base, and interest in setting up shop in the city.

4. In Medicine Hat, businesses pay a higher proportion of property taxes compared to the residential sector. Medicine Hat's tax gap of 2.35% is one of the highest in Alberta. What is your position on the current approach to taxation and your thoughts on potential strategies to narrow this gap?

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As a municipality we can only generate revenue 3 ways. Fees & charges, taxes, and grants from the provincial & federal government.

As a community we are experiencing higher than average tax rates across the board... and an overabundance of fees and charges. The people in our community worry we have lost our advantage. Rightfully so. What this says is: a) our tax base is not large enough, we are not driving enough people from balanced backgrounds into the community to live and work and therefore increase our revenue pool. Solution: We need to look at modern research about what makes people want to live and work in a community (diverse, supported, and fair opportunities for ALL). The Business Retention Expansion Workforce Development (BREWD) survey has several quality recommendations that we should refer to as council members. Having the reputation of being a retirement community is discouraging young people from relocating here. b) our spending is not prioritized or we are not getting the best return on investment (ROI) based on our spending Solution: Beyond the basic human needs such as housing, utilities, and garbage processing it is important that we conduct research about what our communities highest values are. Once that information is gathered we should then prioritize spending based on those values. We also need to move forward together and reflect on results regularly. Regarding the best ROI we will never be at a loss if we are investing in people. People are the greatest asset we have. If we invest in staff for the purpose of creating a system with better services and strategies we will be able to create more value per dollar that we invest. Right now, there seems to be a trend to investing in physical things over people. Training and supporting workers would be a priority for me so we can ensure that community needs are met, services are top notch, and people want to stay here rather than move away. c) our community values aren't aligned with where the government grants lie. Solution: plan for the future, explore opportunities for grants, reflect on how we can better our community as a result of that grant, and take advantage of them. There is a lot of funding available through the federal government to establish renewable energy industries.

5. If elected, what specific steps would you take to encourage & promote entrepreneurship within the region?

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I would like to see a culture shift in our community that places great emphasis on truly meeting the needs of the people who live and work here. When people know they are supported holistically they are more likely to be creative and take risks (which are both at the root of entrepreneurship) We can promote this culture shift by: - Making opportunities for residents and business owners to give feedback about their community based needs easy and accessible - Using feedback to make specific, inclusive, strategic goals that we can work towards in small steps as a community. - Taking steps together - relying on business networks and community organizations to push out goals. Reflecting on the success of these steps and how close we are to our goals by gathering more feedback. - Revise and repeat.

6. What is your stance on COVID-19 related laws that mandate requirements, including masks and vaccine passports?

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All of these tools are meant to keep people healthy, keep the doors to businesses open and to keep our healthcare system functional. Focusing on the greater good in our society often has an impact on our individual freedoms. It is our job to ensure these tools have the greatest positive impact on people's health and well being and the least impact on their sense of freedom. It's a balancing act and one that I am hyper aware of. This is the number one toughest topic during the campaign because it divides people so heavily. I believe that masking is an essential short term tool to prevent the spread of COVID. Masks do not contribute to immunity but can help flatten the curve. I think that vaccine passports are a reasonable tool but only if a negative covid test is accepted as an alternative. People need to have a choice as to whether they get the vaccine or not. I am currently in the process of personally evaluating the impact of a vaccine mandate. At this time I see the benefits of having employees that are protected from the virus. If vaccines were mandated I would like to see that those who truly are unable to get vaccinated have accommodations. Negative test, work from home, etc. Compassion is essential during this health crisis.

7. What is your plan for publicly-funded services (examples would include Medicine Hat Public Library, power plant, facilities) if elected?

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The Library Act enables a board of community members to establish and maintain library service in our community. I believe The City needs to continue to fund our local library operations as it's a social, and intellectual resource that people of all ages rely on. I believe our Power Plant should remain publicly owned and, as we have in the past, The City should continue to fund its future innovation and maintenance. Our other facilities (especially recreation centers) need to be maintained or re-established. We need to preserve or expand on pool space. Neighbourhood based facilities are also a priority to many community members. The Parks and Rec master plan refers to neighbourhood recreation amenities as neighbourhood hubs. The plan calls on The City to establish more unstructured, spontaneous attractions as well which I love and certainly support.

8. How important is it for our region to have a local Community College? What specific steps could the municipality do to work better with Medicine Hat College to provide ongoing opportunities for future learners?

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Essential. Medicine Hat College (MHC) is an amazing resource for our community. As a teacher I see education as one of the highest value resources we can offer to people in our community. Below are a few amazing things MHC offers to Medicine Hat. MHC is the first local step (after high school) in creating a skilled workforce. Certificates, Diplomas, and Undergrad programs are available to both local and out of area people. (I would like to see graduate programs offered in the community eventually. It would be a motivation for more career aged people to stay here longer). Post secondary education also creates opportunities for, and builds connections in the lives of our residents. MHC offers continuing studies such as accounting, info tech, and social media for business courses. These courses are great resources for locals to make their resume more robust, or a way for employees to become more competent in their current position. The Entrepreneur Development Centre (EDC) to help students build businesses with the help of grants, funding and business consulting. It is extremely important that we work with MHC. Steps to work together better: - First, and most importantly, we need to be open to communication and collaboration with the Board of Directors, Executive Team, and staff of MHC. We could open communication by having roundtable discussions, facilitating unofficial surveys, and using online resources to casually communicate. - We need to be aware of resources available at MHC and promote them to support our residents and business owners. - We need to be open to the feedback of all MHC Stakeholders about education in the community. We should take the information provided to us seriously, and implement suggestions where we can. - We also need to encourage and support recruitment and retention. MHC does a great job touring across Alberta to high schools and other post secondary institutions to bring young people to our community. We need to work with the college to encourage new residents to stay by asking "what can we do differently to support college aged students?"

9. How will you attract newcomers to the district and address the needs for a skilled workforce? *

- Rebrand the community as having opportunities for all (especially families and career aged). - Encourage an inclusive mindset via campaigns such as stickers for businesses that state "Open for All" - I will address the needs of the workforce by looking to local organizations for advice and suggestions about what is needed. - I will encourage access to training and education for employers and employees.

10. What is your stance on the importance of mental health & wellness support in our region? What ideas, implementations, and initiatives would you put forward to improve the overall mental health & wellbeing of our community?

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Essential. In time I would like to establish an unofficial advisory group (even if they are solely web based) for issues like this that have people from a variety of backgrounds that the council can gather information and direction from. For example, psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, community leaders, community members with lived experience, volunteers, etc. With this team we could indicate gaps and establish goals to meet the needs of those in the community. This team could also be an advocacy group to petition the provincial government for funding and changes in our area. - I would like to see community resources in an easy to access and easy to understand list online. Even an app. There are a plethora of mental health resources available in our community that many people are fully unaware of. - I would like to see mental health be a priority within The City and ensure social / emotional support is available to all employees. - I would like to see continued support for stigma reducing programs like the Medicine Hat & District Health Foundation "I'm Not Fine" campaign. - Continued housing first programs (Medicine Hat Community Housing). - I would like to see a permanent daytime shelter in the community based on Trauma Informed and Harm Reduction practices. - I would like to see our police force continue to be educated on trauma and how mental health issues make a person more likely to have an encounter with the police force.

11. How will you further diversity and inclusion initiatives in our region, as it relates to each of the pillars in the Chamber's Vote Prosperity Platform: <https://www.medicinehatchamber.com/voteprosperity2021/> (<https://www.medicinehatchamber.com/voteprosperity2021/>)

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Innovation & Competitive Strategy - Make education and training accessible for all. Have training available in multiple formats and languages. Infrastructure Development - Acknowledge physical space problems by consulting those with disabilities. - Make transportation easy for everyone no matter how much money they have - connected bike routes, affordable and efficient transit. Image & Branding - Campaigns such as pro LGBTQ or "All Welcome Here" - Connect residents to or build new social programs to support demographics that typically have gaps (ex - employment and recreation resources for teens, pre-natal programming). - Celebrate differences in the community (Pride, Culture Days) Workforce Development - Make sure everyone (various backgrounds and abilities)

have a seat at the table when making decisions. - Educate leaders in inclusive practice & hold them accountable Business & Financial Support - Be willing to invest money into people of all backgrounds and abilities - Make access to resources affordable (subsidies)

12. On a municipal level, how do you intend to address climate change and pollution?

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- I am currently in the process of building connections with local experts to help inspire first steps to address the climate crisis at a local level. - I would like to see decreased water usage in the community. - I would like to normalize front yards that aren't manicured. - I would like to see a compost service. - I would like to see the establishment of a solar farm. - I would like to see continued rebate programs to encourage environmental efficiency in homes - I would like to see the City working with developers to build net zero homes.

13. What strategies will you use to communicate and engage with the community and remain accountable to the citizens?

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- We as councillors need to be accessible and responsive online. I would like to see social media used as often as possible as a way to share council's thoughts on community issues and successes - I would like to see opportunities for feedback become visible in the community (engage local business to help promote surveys, use guerilla marketing). - I would like to see more neighbourhood associations established and have a culture of mutual respect and openness with them.

14. Are there any other issues you wish to address or highlight that were not mentioned in the questions above?

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Thank you for reading!