

Lanesboro Area Chamber of Commerce City Council and Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire

Hello, thank you, and congratulations on running for the office of mayor or city council in our great town!

The Lanesboro Area Chamber of Commerce* is a non-profit 501(c)6 membership organization whose purpose is to serve as a catalyst for economic vitality by providing advocacy, information and services to our members AND to promote the City of Lanesboro and the Lanesboro area as a desirable place to visit, live, work and play.

One of the ways we strive to accomplish our mission is by engaging with candidates for local office and connecting you with local issues our members care about. As such, over the past couple of weeks we have been soliciting thoughts and questions from our members so we could put together this questionnaire. Our goal is to produce an informational document, containing your answers to these questions in full, to be published for the benefit of our membership and community. A character limit has been placed on each response in order to make the resulting voter guide as digestible as possible for those reading it.

Please answer any or all of the following questions and hit "Submit" when you're finished. The questions will be published along with your answers. If you opt to not answer any of the below questions, the phrase "Answer not provided" will be shown underneath those questions in the published voter guide.

Thanks in advance for taking the time to answer these questions on behalf of our members and the Lanesboro community!

**LACC does not endorse or represent any candidate for political office.*

Your name *

Alicia Pearson

What office are you running for? *

(Choose one)

- Mayor
- City council

Please introduce yourself to chamber members and the Lanesboro community. Some potential prompts to help you think about this:

- What's your Lanesboro Story?
- How long have you lived in Lanesboro?
- Why do you want to serve the city of Lanesboro?
- What do you see as your main goal to accomplish as mayor or a city council member?
- Where do you see the biggest needs in our community?

(5,000 character response limit)

I've lived in Lanesboro for just over two years, and in that short time, I've come to deeply appreciate everything this town has to offer. I'm running for mayor because I believe in the potential of this town—not just to maintain what makes it special, but to create opportunities for everyone who lives here.

Professionally, I have over eight years of experience in clinical operations, project management, and strategic leadership. I've successfully led cross-functional teams of 30+ members, developed strategic plans, and driven improvements that have saved resources and maximized efficiency. I've also managed budgets in the millions, ensuring that projects were delivered on time and within budget while maintaining the highest standards. These experiences make me uniquely qualified to tackle the challenges we face, such as the upcoming Hwy 250 project and the need to ensure our local economy thrives during and after the construction process.

Beyond my professional background, I volunteer at a local senior living center, help fundraise at my children's school, and am an active member of the League of Women Voters. I am one of the founding members of the Driftless Poets Society and a huge supporter of Lanesboro Arts. I want to retire here someday, and I want my children to have the option of building their lives here after college. To do that, we need to ensure that Lanesboro offers not only opportunities for young people but also housing, services, and infrastructure that support people at every stage of life. To that end, I also want to create a senior living community right here in Lanesboro.

One of my primary goals as mayor is to build trust through transparent communication. That's why, if elected, I will prioritize open communication with the community through regular town halls, public forums, and accessible digital platforms. I plan to implement initiatives like "Mayor Monday" every other Monday, where I will meet with a different group or community within Lanesboro to ensure that every voice is heard.

The upcoming Highway 250 construction is a pivotal moment for Lanesboro, and one of my top priorities will be ensuring that our community not only survives but thrives during this project. I will work closely with businesses to help them navigate any disruptions, and I'll make sure there is clear communication about the project's timelines and impact.

Another key focus will be improving the city's management of resources. As someone with a background in operations and project management, I know the importance of efficiency, accountability, and strategic planning.

How would you describe the role of the office you're running for [city council/mayor]? If elected, how do you see yourself taking on these responsibilities?

(2,500 character response limit)

The role of the mayor is to balance leadership, communication, and decision-making, acting as a bridge between city government, local businesses, and residents. The mayor should create a shared vision for Lanesboro's future while addressing immediate needs and ensuring the community's voice is reflected in every decision. It's essential that city government operates efficiently, with transparency and accountability, to foster trust among residents.

If elected, I will prioritize open and regular communication with residents, businesses, and organizations. I'll establish communication channels, such as online updates, public forums, and my "Mayor Monday" initiative, where I'll meet biweekly with different groups to ensure their voices are heard.

Accountability is crucial. I will set clear goals and benchmarks for all city projects, from smaller initiatives to large undertakings like the Hwy 250 construction. I'll ensure that city staff and contractors are held accountable for meeting deadlines and maintaining quality, while also keeping the community informed of progress.

In your opinion, what are the top three issues facing the City of Lanesboro over the next 2-4 years?

(2,500 character response limit)

The top 3 issues are interconnected challenges that require thoughtful, proactive leadership.

1. Ensuring the community thrives during & after the Hwy 250 construction project:

This project presents challenges & opportunities for Lanesboro. It will inevitably cause disruptions to traffic, tourism, & business operations during its duration, but we can't afford to simply "survive" it. The focus must be on helping local businesses & residents thrive throughout the project & ensuring that Lanesboro emerges even stronger on the other side. Beyond the construction phase, I'll think strategically about how to leverage the improved infrastructure for long-term growth.

2. Increasing housing & utility affordability:

Affordable housing is an ongoing challenge in Lanesboro, & we must address this issue if we want to attract and retain young families, professionals, and long-time residents. To combat this, we need to work closely with developers to explore affordable housing options, while being mindful of maintaining the town's character. This also means addressing rising utility costs by exploring sustainable energy solutions and energy efficiency improvements.

3. Strengthening communication & accountability within city government:

For Lanesboro to meet its future challenges, we need to strengthen communication between the city government and the public. Clear, consistent communication about city projects, challenges, and progress is essential to building trust and transparency. Accountability is also critical—city projects & vendors must be managed with efficiency & transparency.

How do you describe Lanesboro when defining the town's character and purpose? e.g. The roles of tourism and agriculture as economic drivers, etc.

(2,500 character response limit)

Lanesboro is a snapshot of the ideal town. Its purpose is to keep creating progress and supporting residents while proving that contradictory priorities and viewpoints can exist together in harmony - and be stronger for it.

Lanesboro's agricultural heritage is central to our identity, not only driving our economy but defining a way of life for many of our residents. At the same time, we've become a hub for artists and creatives, with galleries, theaters, and events that showcase local talent and attract visitors from across the region. The balance between agriculture and art is a perfect example of how Lanesboro embraces diversity in experience, where the traditions of working the land coexist with the free expression of creativity.

While we pride ourselves on historic preservation, we are also forward-thinking, especially in our commitment to energy efficiency and sustainability. Our solar field, the hydroelectric capabilities of our dam, and the introduction of a new electric school bus are testament to our town's dedication to renewable energy. This balance of innovation and historic preservation ensures Lanesboro remains both progressive and respectful of its heritage.

Tourism is, of course, a key driver of our economy, and we are proud to welcome visitors to experience all that Lanesboro has to offer. However, the true lifeblood of Lanesboro is the residents who are here year-round, running businesses, raising families, and investing in the community. Balancing tourism with the quality of life for our locals is one of our great strengths. It allows us to reinvest in infrastructure, support our schools, and build opportunities for everyone—whether they are visiting for the weekend or staying for a lifetime.

What do you see the city's role is in supporting Lanesboro businesses during the proposed Highway 250 construction project?

(2,500 character response limit)

The city has a crucial role to play in ensuring that Lanesboro's businesses not only survive but thrive during the proposed Highway 250 construction project.

First and foremost, the city's role is to facilitate clear and consistent communication between all stakeholders, including the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), contractors, local businesses, and residents. Businesses need to be fully informed of construction timelines, changes to traffic patterns, and any disruptions that may impact their operations. By providing regular updates and ensuring that businesses have a clear understanding of what to expect, the city can help reduce uncertainty and allow businesses to plan accordingly. I also believe in the importance of creating a dedicated communication platform, such as a project-specific website or social media updates, so that information is accessible to everyone in real-time.

Second, the city must proactively support local businesses through marketing and promotional efforts. Lanesboro relies heavily on tourism, and the construction may deter visitors if it's not managed properly. The city can counteract this by promoting "construction-friendly" campaigns that encourage both tourists and locals to continue supporting businesses during the project. This could include special events, seasonal promotions, and highlighting alternative routes to access town. By working with local business owners, the city can develop initiatives tailored to their specific needs and ensure that the flow of customers continues.

Additionally, the city should explore financial support or relief options for businesses impacted by the construction. This could include advocating for state or federal grants or low-interest loans, particularly for smaller businesses that might struggle with a temporary decrease in traffic. The city should also collaborate with business owners to understand their specific challenges and work together to develop practical solutions, such as providing temporary signage or offering assistance in adapting to the changes.

Lastly, the city must ensure that any disruptions caused by the construction are minimized. This means working closely with MnDOT and contractors to ensure that construction remains on schedule and that any delays are communicated in advance.

In sum, the city's role is to act as both a connector and advocate, ensuring that businesses receive the support and resources they need to continue thriving.

If elected, how do you plan to work with the Minnesota Department of Transportation, Bolton & Menk, and our state elected officials in regards to the proposed Highway 250 construction project?

(2,500 character response limit)

If elected, I will take a hands-on approach to working with MnDOT, Bolton & Menk, and our state elected officials on the Highway 250 project, ensuring it's completed efficiently and with minimal disruption to businesses and residents. Clear communication, accountability, and collaboration will be key to its success.

First, I will establish a project oversight committee composed of local business owners and community leaders. This committee will bridge the gap between MnDOT, Bolton & Menk, and residents, ensuring transparency and direct feedback. By involving the community, we'll address concerns about Bolton & Menk and hold them accountable, while improving public perception through open communication.

I'll also ensure that MnDOT and Bolton & Menk maintain a clear timeline with progress updates made publicly available. If any delays arise, I'll push for contingency plans to minimize disruptions. Timely, clear communication with business owners and residents will allow for better preparation.

I will work with state elected officials to secure additional funding if necessary, especially for businesses impacted by construction. I'll advocate for grants or relief funds and regularly engage state officials to ensure the project receives the necessary support.

Leveraging my project management background, I'll coordinate regular status updates with Bolton & Menk and MnDOT, providing clear reports on progress to both city council and the public. My goal is to keep the project on track, meet deadlines, and improve accountability, ensuring that Lanesboro emerges stronger from this construction.

In short, my approach will be one of transparency, accountability, and collaboration. By establishing communication lines, involving the community, and ensuring timely progress, I'll ensure this project supports Lanesboro's long-term growth.

Do you have an opinion on the structure of the Lanesboro Public Library board? i.e. Should it be a governing or advisory entity? And why?

(2,500 character response limit)

I believe the Lanesboro Public Library board should remain a governing entity. This structure aligns with Minnesota state statutes for statutory cities, ensuring the library maintains the autonomy needed to fulfill its mission. Libraries serve as essential hubs for learning, creativity, and community engagement, and they should be free from excessive government oversight. A governing board allows for decisions to be made by individuals who understand the library's unique role in fostering intellectual freedom and supporting the community's diverse needs.

Keeping the library board as a governing body ensures that decisions about operations, programming, and resources are made in the best interest of the library's users, rather than being subject to political influence or shifting priorities within city government. This is especially important in maintaining the library as a safe haven where people of all ages and beliefs can access knowledge, explore creativity, and participate in free, open exchange of ideas.

Further, I believe that if the city is interested in changing this, they have the burden of proof to provide clear, concise reasoning for this proposed change that outlines the pros and cons of each option as well as the exact reasoning that led the city to favor one over the other.

If elected, how would you handle an issue that came before the council that you don't know intimately? Describe the steps you would take in fact-finding and your decision-making process.

(2,500 character response limit)

If elected, I would handle any unfamiliar issue with a structured, research-based approach. Here's how I would break down my fact-finding and recommendation process:

1. **Gather Information and Conduct Research:** Using my scientific background, I would first gather all relevant information, data, and research. This includes reviewing reports, seeking expert opinions, and analyzing any applicable case studies. My decisions are data-driven, and I would ensure a deep understanding of the facts before moving forward.
2. **Consult with Experts and Collaborate:** Strong leadership involves recognizing when to seek input. I would engage with subject matter experts, city staff, and council members who may have more experience with the issue. Their expertise would help inform my understanding, ensuring the issue is approached from all perspectives.
3. **Collect Community Input:** Decisions that affect Lanesboro should involve the community. I would actively solicit feedback through public forums, surveys, and one-on-one conversations to understand how the issue impacts residents. Community input is critical to ensuring decisions align with Lanesboro's values and priorities.
4. **Evaluate and Analyze Options:** With the information gathered from experts and the community, I would carefully evaluate all available options, considering the potential outcomes and long-term effects. I would prioritize the solutions that best serve the community's needs and offer sustainable benefits.
5. **Make a Recommendation and Keep the Community Informed:** After conducting thorough research, I would make a well-informed recommendation to the council, advocating for the option that best aligns with Lanesboro's goals. Throughout this process, I would maintain clear communication with the community, offering regular updates on progress and the rationale behind the recommendation.

This approach ensures that each recommendation is thoughtful, collaborative, and transparent, with the ultimate goal of serving the best interests of Lanesboro.

How important is Lanesboro's history and historic preservation for you? Why?

(2,500 character response limit)

Lanesboro's history and historic preservation are incredibly dear to me because they are the heart and soul of what makes our town so special. The beautifully preserved buildings, the stories that echo through our streets, and the traditions passed down through generations all contribute to the unique charm that makes Lanesboro feel like home. Preserving this history isn't just about maintaining structures—it's about honoring the people who built this town and keeping their legacy alive for future generations.

Lanesboro's rich past is a significant draw for visitors, and tourism is deeply tied to our authenticity and historical character. By protecting these historical treasures, we not only maintain our town's unique beauty but also ensure the continued success of local businesses that thrive because of our town's distinctive appeal.

Beyond that, preserving our history strengthens our sense of community. For me, Lanesboro's history isn't just something to be admired—it's something to be cherished, protected, and celebrated.

What are your thoughts on how the City of Lanesboro can encourage more people (particularly families and younger folks) to move to Lanesboro as full-time residents?

(2,500 character response limit)

This question is very close to my heart because, as a young family, we moved to Lanesboro and feel fortunate every day to live in such a beautiful, safe town. I want to ensure that by the time my children are ready to start their own families, if they choose, Lanesboro is still a thriving community where they can find a home, a job, and a fulfilling life.

Affordable housing and utilities are essential to this effort. We need to work with developers to create more housing options while maintaining the town's charm. Incentives for energy-efficient and sustainable homes will also attract those looking to settle long-term.

Additionally, addressing rising utility costs and exploring renewable energy options can make Lanesboro more affordable for families trying to put down roots.

Beyond housing, we must focus on creating meaningful career opportunities. While tourism is important, we need more than seasonal, minimum-wage jobs to sustain a growing population. This could include partnering with neighboring towns and industries to create professional development programs and career paths that allow people to live and work right here in town, rather than commuting or relocating elsewhere for better job prospects.

We also need to continue improving amenities and family-friendly services. We need businesses that can provide more recreational and social opportunities, such as family-friendly entertainment venues, which can help enrich the daily lives of our residents. These will not only create local jobs but also offer more for our growing youth population to enjoy. Additionally, we must expand our school's capacity and continue upgrading our parks and recreational facilities to ensure they meet the needs of a growing young demographic.

In your opinion, is Lanesboro currently an affordable place to live and/or operate a business? If so, what are steps the city can take to keep it that way. If not, what are things the city can do to make Lanesboro a more affordable place to live and do business?

(2,500 character response limit)

Lanesboro has created something truly special, so it's no surprise that living and doing business here comes with a certain premium. However, we must be mindful that as we grow, we don't price ourselves out of becoming an even more vibrant and diverse community. If costs rise unchecked, we risk becoming a place only a select few can afford, limiting opportunities and stagnating instead of growing.

To make Lanesboro more affordable, housing affordability must be prioritized. We should offer incentives for building energy-efficient, affordable homes that cater to both families and retirees. Additionally, we can encourage more year-round residency by creating programs that help people stay here year round and help our summer only residents rent out their properties safely, building a more stable year-round population.

When it comes to utilities, we need to ensure that our utility plants are running at optimum efficiency. We can also explore grants and incentives to help residents convert their homes to energy-efficient systems, easing the cost burden of upgrades.

We must ensure that our prime commercial and industrial real estate serves purposes that elevate the entire town, not just a single resident. By incentivizing businesses to stay open year-round and for longer hours, we can provide more services and jobs to locals. We should also help our businesses find profitable paths forward during the winter months, when tourist traffic slows.

What is your overarching vision for Lanesboro? Where would you like our town to be in 5, 10+ years from now?

(2,500 character response limit)

My goal is to help our town not just survive, but thrive—so that families, young professionals, and retirees can all continue to call it home for years to come.

In the next 5 years, I am hopeful that the Highway 250 project will have begun and ended, on time, within budget, and exceeding our expectations. We will see more traffic and our businesses—whom we've worked hard to support—will thrive, doing more business than ever before. With improved infrastructure and smart incentives, we'll be positioned to attract bigger, more diverse businesses that support Lanesboro's sustainable growth. Our school will have expanded, partnerships with surrounding towns will have deepened, and we will have at least begun construction on a senior living community to allow our older residents to age in place. Additionally, we will have started revitalizing the empty or unused buildings downtown, bringing new life to the heart of our town.

In 10 years, Lanesboro will be a thriving, self-sufficient small town that sets the standard for sustainability and community-driven growth. Our senior community will be flourishing, allowing older residents to stay in the town they love. Lanesboro will be the go-to destination for entertainment and family-friendly activities in Fillmore County—people will think of us before they even consider heading to Rochester. We will have built a community that thrives year-round, with businesses and residents enjoying a vibrant town in every season. Our downtown will be bustling, and Lanesboro will be known not just as a place to retire, but as a place to live, work, and grow, rooted in its rich history but always looking forward.

I believe in Lanesboro's potential and am committed to ensuring that we build a future that honors its past while embracing new opportunities. Together, we can create a thriving, sustainable community for generations to come.

How can the city ensure it is prioritizing our business community and enacting business-friendly ordinances and policies?

(2,500 character response limit)

The city can ensure it is prioritizing our business community by fostering a collaborative environment where business owners feel heard and supported. This starts with open communication—creating regular opportunities for businesses to share their needs and concerns through town halls, surveys, and direct engagement with city leadership.

Enacting business-friendly ordinances means focusing on both immediate needs and long-term growth. The city should streamline the permitting process and reduce unnecessary red tape to make it easier for businesses to open and operate. Providing incentives, like tax breaks or grants, for businesses that create year-round jobs or diversify the local economy will help us attract and retain businesses that make Lanesboro more resilient.

Additionally, we can support entrepreneurship by offering business development resources, helping new and existing businesses thrive. By making decisions that are based on solid data, listening to our business owners, and remaining open to continuous improvement, we can ensure Lanesboro is a business-friendly community that supports local enterprises and encourages long-term growth.

What do you think is the best way the city council can engage with residents and business owners so that their voices can be heard?

(2,500 character response limit)

The best way for the city council to engage with residents and business owners is by creating multiple, accessible channels for ongoing communication. This means going beyond formal council meetings and providing opportunities for open forums where people feel comfortable sharing their thoughts. Regular town halls, community roundtables, and informal gatherings, like "Mayor Mondays," would allow residents and business owners to express their concerns, ideas, and feedback in a more approachable setting.

Additionally, the council can engage more effectively by actively responding to public comments. Rather than only allowing comments at the beginning of council meetings, we should provide an opportunity at the end for follow-up, ensuring that community members feel their voices are truly part of the discussion. Furthermore, by committing to responding to public questions and concerns within a set timeframe, the council can show accountability and responsiveness to the needs of the community.

Feedback mechanisms should be diverse—offering online surveys, open comment periods via the city's website, and social media engagement allows for a broader range of input. These tools help reach residents who may not be able to attend in-person meetings, ensuring that everyone has a voice in shaping the future of Lanesboro.

The city council should also focus on transparency and performance accountability. Making key performance metrics publicly available and committing to driving towards those goals will help the community see tangible progress. Clear updates on how public feedback informs decisions, along with regular reporting on city projects, budgets, and services, can build trust and demonstrate that resident and business input is valued.

By fostering open dialogue, providing multiple ways to engage, responding to public input, and offering clear performance updates, the city council can ensure that the community feels truly heard, respected, and part of Lanesboro's progress.

What else should people know about you and your candidacy? If you have them, include websites or other sources of information where people could find out more information about you.

(5,000 character response limit)

What people should know about me and my candidacy is that my decision to run for mayor comes from a deep love for Lanesboro. My family and I have lived all across the U.S., and there's something magical about this town. I want to retire here, I want my kids to grow up here with the best potential for success, and I want them to be able to come back and raise their own families. I'm running to preserve what makes Lanesboro special while ensuring we grow and thrive sustainably.

I bring nearly a decade of leadership experience in business operations, project management, and clinical research. I've managed multi-million-dollar budgets and led cross-functional teams of 30+ people. My experience in research and clinical operations means I understand the importance of compliance, attention to detail, and data-driven decision-making. I've also been involved in small business development, which gives me insight into the challenges faced by local entrepreneurs.

As mayor, I'm committed to open communication and transparency. I want everyone in our community to feel heard, and I plan to hold regular town halls and informal gatherings like "Mayor Mondays." I also plan to improve how the city council responds to public comments and make performance metrics available to keep the community informed.

If you'd like to learn more about my candidacy or my vision for Lanesboro, I encourage you to reach out. You can follow my campaign on Facebook or reach out via email at aliciapearson4mayor@gmail.com. Thank you for considering me for mayor—I look forward to the opportunity to serve this incredible community.

This form was created inside of Lanesboro Area Chamber of Commerce.

Google Forms